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## Unifying Text and Music: Applying Shurtleff's Twelve Guideposts to Operatic Arias for Soprano

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# **UNIFYING TEXT AND MUSIC: APPLYING SHURTLEFF'S TWELVE GUIDEPOSTS TO OPERATIC ARIAS FOR SOPRANO**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
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in

The School of Music

by  
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## Abstract

In the present culture of operatic performance, artistry is measured not only by singers' musical interpretation and vocal technique, but also by their ability to communicate compelling characterization. This monograph explores a helpful technique for dramatic interpretation in opera. The discipline of musical performance provides helpful guides to characterization through elements such as phrasing, rhythm, harmony, and instrumentation. Techniques borrowed from the spoken theater, particularly those pioneered by Constantin Stanislavski, include the Magic *If*, objectives, actions, and tactics. The literature on auditioning for the theater is useful for synthesizing these techniques for singers, because audition techniques emphasize compelling characterization with particular emphasis on an efficient preparatory process.

*Audition* by Michael Shurtleff, a text in common use by theater practitioners, offers insights into techniques for actors in the audition scenario. Shurtleff's twelve guideposts outline a method for developing a viable interpretation of character without requiring an inordinate amount of time devoted to study of the given circumstances of the play. The guideposts are Relationship, Conflict, the Moment Before, Humor, Opposites, Discoveries, Communication and Competition, Importance, Find the Events, Place, Game Playing and Role Playing, and Mystery and Secret. Shurtleff's book details how each of these can be used to guide character interpretation in a direction that serves the needs of the play and the dramatic medium. The effectiveness of these guideposts can be understood by observing that each can be viewed as a device which clarifies one of Aristotle's six elements of drama: Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Spectacle, and Song. Each of the guideposts can be used in various ways to understand the characteristics of the music in an operatic aria. This study explores the application of Shurtleff's guideposts to five arias for soprano. The arias analyzed are "Zeffiretti lusinghieri"

from *Idomeneo*, "Einst träumte meiner sel'gen Base" from *Der Freischütz*, "Quel guardo il cavaliere" from *Don Pasquale*, "Adieu notre petite table" from *Manon*, and "Monica's Waltz" from *The Medium*. The result is an illustration of a useful process of dramatic interpretation character for operatic performers.

## Chapter 1. Introduction

Many useful books have been written about the technique of acting for opera singers. Many of them have been written by theater practitioners applying ideas from their discipline to help singers embody characters on stage.<sup>1</sup> Other resources are written by music industry professionals offering ideas on how to approach character through musical style.<sup>2</sup> The availability of so much information from various perspectives can work to the advantage of the singer who wishes to create a compelling interpretation of an operatic character, but it also presents some challenges. One key challenge faced by operatic interpreters comes from the variety of components that make up the art form. Operatic audiences today expect a synthesis of musical accuracy and interpretation, beautiful vocal technique, and compelling expression of character. This varied set of considerations leads logically to a technique marked by diversity of approach, combining musical, psychological, and physical techniques. This consideration has sparked an ongoing debate in the disciplines devoted to training these artists: the question of how the operatic performer can approach the material in a way that leads, with as much efficiency as possible, to a synthesis of the disparate elements that make up the operatic art form.

Many texts discuss characterization from the perspective of musical interpretation.<sup>3</sup> The melody, harmony, dynamics, articulation, and instrumentation can influence and inform character in many ways. It can certainly be argued that in opera, the music is the most important source of information about character. However, this approach in its purest form, with no reference to techniques from theater, has two main drawbacks. First, it relies on what I will call

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1. Alan Hicks, *Singer and Actor: Acting Technique and the Operatic Performer* (Milwaukee: Amadeus Press, 2011).

2. Boris Goldovsky, *Bringing Opera to Life: Operatic Acting and Stage Direction* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

3. Ibid.

the *symphonic fallacy* of opera, or the practice of thinking of opera as one would a symphony. It can be articulated with this statement: “the drama is the music, therefore, all that operatic performers need to do is listen to the music, and they will know what to do on stage.” I call this a fallacy because, while music is the defining element of the operatic genre, it is not the only element. Though the music can, and probably should, guide choices made about character, there are many choices to be made in the process of interpreting a role for the stage other than the musical ones. The second problem is that human nature is too complex to be communicated by music on its own. The audience’s engagement with an opera is based in part on their ability to suspend disbelief and imagine that the character is a real human being for the duration of a performance. In order for this to be possible, the actor must understand human motivation and behavior well enough to carry out the character’s actions according to the unspoken rules that govern human interaction. This skill can be learned through exploration of the most prominent techniques of acting that have developed in training programs for the spoken theater.

Resources written about acting for opera often apply these traditional acting techniques from the theater to opera.<sup>4</sup> Several scholars and practitioners have argued that the element that distinguishes opera from other theatrical genres is not necessarily the presence of music. After all, music is present in other genres, such as musical theater and operetta, and is even included in the spoken theater in the form of incidental music. Instead, the argument is that the operatic genre is differentiated on the basis that its stories are told *through* the music.<sup>5</sup> In this view, opera can be understood as any theatrical genre in which the music is an integral part of the drama, perhaps portraying characters’ thoughts or illustrating their actions, or even embedding itself into the

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4. David Ostwald, *Acting for Singers: Creating Believable Singing Characters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

5. Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

texture of the story in more subtle ways. For this reason, the application of acting techniques from other theatrical traditions must be modified to account for the music's role in telling the story. The majority of the texts currently in use to train classical singers in acting techniques for opera advocate some combination of the techniques available from the disciplines of theater and music, though they usually emphasize one more than the other, resulting in varied degrees of balance.<sup>6</sup>

When writing a resource for singing actors, one concern is that singers often find themselves in situations where they must apply acting techniques in the context of learning a large amount of music very quickly. Professional opera singers are expected to have their music memorized, and a flexible but thorough sketch of psychological and physical characterization in place on the first day of the rehearsal period.<sup>7</sup> This is not the case in theater, where professional actors memorize their words in the context of the repetition of rehearsals.<sup>8</sup> Most theater practitioners who create resources for singing actors attempt to communicate a concise account of the detailed techniques in use in the theater. Their efforts are usually not directed at distilling those techniques into a manageable flowchart that can be quickly accessed by the singing actor. When singers have sufficient time available to devote to the preparation process, these resources provide guidance in various techniques that can help to deepen the singer's acting technique. However, there is also a need in academic writing about operatic acting for resources focused on techniques to create characterization of similar depth in a way that is integrated into the process of learning the music, and that therefore does not require singers to devote an inordinate amount of time to characterization in addition to their process of musical preparation.

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6. Ostwald, *Acting for Singers*, 19.

7. Martin Constantine, *The Opera Singer's Acting Toolkit: An Essential Guide to Creating a Role* (London: Methuen Drama, 2020), chap. 13, Kindle.

8. *Ibid.*

One viable avenue to explore in the pursuit of this goal is the small body of literature written on auditioning for the spoken theater. The approach to acting advocated by this discipline has three main advantages for singing actors. First, techniques designed for the audition situation in the theater do not advocate as extensive an approach to character research as the more rigorous disciplines used in acting classes for theater. This is due in part to the time constraints associated with auditioning for a play, as opposed to the more detailed approach that is possible when actors prepare their roles in the context of a rehearsal process. On the other hand, actors auditioning for plays and films must aspire to characterization that is just as compelling as if they had participated in a rehearsal period. Otherwise they cannot hope to compete with the many other actors who are considered for each role. Finally, preparation for the audition situation must leave the actor's understanding of character flexible, since directors will often test auditioners' ability to incorporate direction into their performance at a moment's notice. This attribute of these techniques is particularly valuable to singing actors, since they must collaborate with conductors and directors who may envision the dramatic content of the opera in a way that differs widely from the singer's initial interpretation.

Of particular note in the literature on auditioning for the theater is the book *Audition: Everything an Actor Needs to know to Get the Part*, written by Broadway and Hollywood Casting Director, Michael Shurtleff.<sup>9</sup> A 2007 obituary for Shurtleff in the *New York Times* refers to this book as “a bible for aspiring actors.”<sup>10</sup> In addition to general advice about the process of auditioning, this book relates “twelve guideposts” for the actor. These twelve concepts

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9. Michael Shurtleff, *Audition: Everything an Actor Needs to Know to Get the Part* (New York: Bloomsbury, 1978).

10. Campbell Robertson, “Michael Shurtleff, Casting Director for Broadway and Hollywood, Dies at 86,” *New York Times*, February 12, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/12/arts/12shurtleff.html>.

summarize the acting technique that Shurtleff advocated and taught during his career casting plays and films from the 1960s to the 1990s. This monograph will explore Shurtleff's technique as it relates to the discipline of acting for opera, first by contextualizing Shurtleff's ideas within the body of literature written on acting for singers, and then by applying these ideas to five soprano arias from the operatic literature.

## Chapter 2. Background

### 2.1. Approaches to Operatic Characterization

Three approaches are typically used to approach characterization in opera. One group prefers to approach characterization primarily through the musical cues to the drama.<sup>11</sup> Another school of thought prefers to engage with acting techniques developed within the spoken theater.<sup>12</sup> Contemporary training programs for opera singers tend to focus more heavily on techniques from the spoken theater than they did in the early twentieth century.<sup>13</sup> Compare a title like *Bringing Opera to Life*, written in 1968 by conductor and director Boris Goldovsky with the 2011 text *Singer and Actor* by stage director Alan Hicks. These two resources present opposing views of operatic characterization. While Goldovsky is unconvinced by any staging that does not stem directly from musical characteristics, Hicks views a dramatic interpretation as valid only if it is grounded in Constantin Stanislavsky's *Method* for actors. While both of these writers emphasize an opposite end of this spectrum, it is important to note that Goldovsky does not claim that depth of characterization is unimportant, nor does Hicks advocate ignoring the music. They differ only in the approach they advocate to achieve the same desired synthesis. This case illustrates the reason that the majority of operatic artists prefer some combination of these two approaches, while tending to rely on one more heavily than the other.

#### 2.1.1. Approaches Based on the Music

In opera, the music is the most immediate source of information about the way characters express themselves. The same tools that all musicians use to interpret music can be understood as communicating particular character attributes in the context of opera. The way characters

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11. Kerman, *Opera as Drama*.

12. Hicks, *Singer and Actor*.

13. Martin Constantine, *The Opera Singer's Acting Toolkit*.

expresses themselves can be understood through melody, rhythm, and phrasing. For instance the contour of a melody defines the way a character inflects the text. Its range may give insights into a character's state of emotional agitation by analogy with situations in which a person would speak in that same range. Rhythm dictates the speed and patterns with which ideas are articulated. Faster tempo tends to indicate excitement or agitation, while slower rhythm can be understood to indicate lethargy or calm.<sup>14</sup>

The inner life of the character can be explored through harmony, form, and texture. Harmony, embedded more deeply in the musical framework, may reflect more complex aspects of a character's psychology, such as emotions and inner dialogue. Often, the major tonality is associated with happiness or calm, while the minor mode may be associated with agitation or sadness.<sup>15</sup> Chromaticism, the use of which has varied substantially throughout the history of Western music, often indicates tension, which in most cases leads the listener to expect relief through diatonic intervals. The textures created by various groupings of instrumental colors adds another dimension to the inner world illustrated by harmony. Harmony and texture are articulated in time as musical form, which provides a structural framework for the dramatic action. Operatic scenes may be structured in terms of standard instrumental or vocal forms, or may be through-composed based on the needs of the text and dramatic situation.

The finer shadings of expression can be communicated in opera through dynamics, articulation, and vocal color. These three elements work together to define how the notes and rhythms are sung. Soft dynamics, gentle articulations, and light vocal production create a very different impression than their loud, forceful, and full-throated counterparts. These effects can be

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14. Goldovsky, *Bringing Opera to Life*, 70.

15. *Ibid.*

combined in various ways with reference to the text and musical structure to create a great variety of possibilities for musical interpretation of a character.

As illustrated by this brief summary, operatic composers have a great arsenal of tools at their disposal to create characterization. It is possible to create entire operatic interpretations with reference only to these musical characteristics. However, this approach has a tendency to yield a somewhat superficial interpretation of character, since it may ignore interpretations of the music that are not obvious. This outcome may in fact not fulfill the intentions of the composer, who may have had a more specific and immediate vision of the character in mind. For this reason, it is helpful for the operatic performer to be able to borrow some ideas about the psychological technique of acting from the spoken theater.

#### 2.1.2. Acting Techniques from Theater

The most fundamental tenet of modern acting technique is what Constantin Stanislavsky refers to as the *Magic If*.<sup>16</sup> This term refers to the practice of asking the question “What would I do *if* I were this person in this circumstance?” Stanislavsky describes the result of asking this question as “magic” because it provides the gateway between one’s own psychology and the given circumstances of the play through the use of imagination. This *magic if* is then applied to those facts about the world of the play that are dictated by its author, which are referred to as the play’s given circumstances.<sup>17</sup> All other standard acting terminology relates either to techniques of characterization through application of the *magic if* to the given circumstances, or to the actor’s articulation of the dramatic structure of the play.

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16. Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 49.

17. Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, 54.

The next level of acting technique relates to the development of a character's moment-to-moment life within the play.<sup>18</sup> A play is about visible actions, since we cannot know a character's inner life except through his or her behavior.<sup>19</sup> Stanislavski argues that a character's inner life and his or her observable behavior are linked by motivation. He supports this claim by observing that the most consistent reason for their actions that individuals tend to be able to articulate is some desire or goal.<sup>20</sup> For this reason, the most common place to start character analysis is through the character's *objectives*, or what the character wants within a given scene.<sup>21</sup> In the pursuit of the objective, the character must struggle against obstacles, of which there are two types. Internal obstacles come from within characters themselves, while external obstacles come from other characters and the environment of the play.<sup>22</sup> The character then tries to overcome these obstacles and achieve an objective through actions and tactics. Some writers define actions as the larger behaviors a character uses to achieve an objective, and tactics as smaller shifts of approach within each action, or the way in which each action is pursued.<sup>23</sup> Other writers use the two terms interchangeably to refer to how the character pursues the objective.<sup>24</sup>

With this approach to characterization, the structure of a scene can be articulated through its division into acting *beats*. Some writers believe that this term may be a mishearing of the word "bit" in Stanislavski's Russian accent.<sup>25</sup> However, this terminology is now in common use in acting theory. A beat is a large section of a scene that is unified through the use of the same

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18. Tracey Moore, *Acting the Song: Performance Skills for the Musical Theatre* (New York: Allworth Press, 2008), 30.

19. David Alberts, *The Expressive Body: Physical Characterization for the Actor* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1997), 1.

20. William Ball, *A Sense of Direction: Some Observations on the Art of Directing* (New York: Drama Book Publishers, 1984), 77.

21. Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, 127.

22. Constantine, *Opera Singer's Acting Toolkit*, chap. 3.

23. Moore, *Acting the Song*, 34.

24. Ostwald, *Acting for Singers*, 112-115.

25. Hicks, *Singer and Actor*, p. 36.

*action* throughout, though several different tactics may be used. Each change of action results in a new beat. This process results in the creation of an *action score*, a written break-down of the scene into beats, actions, and tactics, based on the objective. Taken cumulatively, over the course of a whole play, this technique advances the character's *super-objective*, or the overarching goal that unifies the character's role within the work. The result is what Stanislavski refers to as the *through-line of action*,<sup>26</sup> the logical sequence of events that connects each action to form a unified whole.

The final layer of conventional acting technique comes through the concept of *adaptation*. Stanislavski defines adaptation as “the inner and outer means that people use in adjusting themselves to one another in a variety of relationships and also as an aid in effecting an object.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, this is an acknowledgement that people tend to behave differently depending on the situation and relationship. Stanislavski is advising actors to “adapt” their behavior to most effectively achieve their objectives based on the situation of the scene. One element to consider in the context of adaptation is *status*, or the character's standing or rank among the other characters in the play.<sup>28</sup> Another factor that may affect adaptation is the question “what is at stake?” The concept of stakes can best be understood by asking two questions: “What is the worst thing that could happen?” and “What is the best thing that could happen?” The wider the gap between the worst possible and best possible outcome, the higher the stakes, and the more important it is for the character to succeed at his or her objective.<sup>29</sup>

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26. Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, 323.

27. Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, 242.

28. Keith Johnstone, *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1981), 33-74.

29. Declan Donellan, *The Actor and the Target* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2005), 51-52.

### 2.1.3. Toward Synthesis

In order for the musical and theatrical components to work together, it is helpful to assume that every musical element is present for a dramatic reason, whether or not it is likely that the composer was conscious of every detail or in exact agreement with the performer's interpretation. One common obstacle, especially for artists early on in their training as operatic interpreters, is an attitude toward opera that its plots tend to be far-fetched, and its characters overly emotional. In order to achieve a compelling characterization in opera, a more valuable approach might be to view these characters not as people who are overreacting to their situations, but as individuals whose reactions are quite natural in the face of extraordinary circumstances.<sup>30</sup> Opera can invite us into the realm of fantasy, and a successful interpretation may be facilitated by exploring that world on its own terms rather than those of our own day-to-day reality.<sup>31</sup>

The major challenge of adapting acting techniques from the spoken theater as strategies for creating operatic characters is that operatic characters sing to express themselves throughout the story of the opera. Not only that, but very often their inner thoughts and feelings take the form of the orchestral music which can be heard by the audience. It is helpful to think of the music as a new given circumstance that is added to those of a spoken play. According to this view, in the world of the opera, the music is not a convention, it is not artifice, and it poses no threat to verisimilitude: it is a fact of daily life for the characters in an opera. From this perspective the process of preparing an operatic role would involve not only learning the music, but also discovering the processes within and around the character that could be generating the

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30. LizBeth Lucca, *Acting Techniques for Opera* (Pomona, California: Vivace Opera, 2008), 30.

31. Michael Shurtleff, *Audition: Everything an Actor Needs to Know to Get the Part* (New York: Bloomsbury, 1978), 5.

music. In this way, dramatic preparation in opera does not need to be a totally separate process from musical preparation, but part of a holistic one with the goal of using the voice and body to communicate a characterization which is inspired by the clues found in the music.

This view seems to present the operatic artist with a rather daunting task, since learning operatic music is already a difficult feat without adding an additional layer to the process. For that reason, it does not seem prudent to try to adapt acting techniques from theater exactly as they are without some key modifications. Rather, it makes sense to use these techniques to develop a strategy for finding the most compelling dramatic choices while leaving plenty of time and attention available to consider the musical elements. A valuable resource for this purpose is the 1978 book *Audition* by Broadway and Hollywood casting director Michael Shurtleff. This work outlines twelve “guideposts” designed to help stage and screen actors “get the part.” The guideposts are essentially a set of twelve observations about human behavior and its depiction in the theater that guide the interpreter of any dramatic work toward a compelling explanation of characters’ actions within the story. These observations have the potential to be as useful to the singing actor as to the theater practitioner, if the additional given circumstances of the operatic art form are integrated into the interpretive process.

## **2.2. An Approach Guided by Shurtleff’s Guideposts**

Shurtleff wrote *Audition* intending his guideposts to serve as helpful guidelines to allow actors demonstrate their abilities in auditions, where they would not have the same amount of time to prepare as they would in the context of a full performance.<sup>32</sup> The resulting twelve principles taken together represent a framework that is somewhat more complex than might be expected in the context of advice about auditioning. Perhaps this can be explained by many years

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32. Shurtleff, *Audition*, 1.

that Shurtleff spent watching performances and auditions in the context of theater and film, as well as writing and producing his own plays Off-Broadway. Far from a simple how-to guide, *Audition* has been recognized since its first publishing as a provocative manifesto on the art of acting.<sup>33</sup> This is likely the reason why, at the time of this writing, the book is required reading for many graduate and undergraduate theater students in the United States. A list of Shurtleff's twelve guideposts is enumerated in table 2.1. below.

Table 2.1. Shurtleff's Guideposts

Guidepost 1	Relationship (Find the Love)
Guidepost 2	Conflict (What are you fighting for?)
Guidepost 3	The Moment Before
Guidepost 4	Humor
Guidepost 5	Opposites
Guidepost 6	Discoveries
Guidepost 7	Communication and Competition
Guidepost 8	Importance
Guidepost 9	Find the Events
Guidepost 10	Place
Guidepost 11	Game Playing and Role Playing
Guidepost 12	Mystery and Secret

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33. Michael Shurtleff, "Shurtleff on Acting," directed by Mitchell Gabourie (Los Angeles: TMW Media Group, 1993).

### 2.2.1. Context from Aristotle's *Poetics*

It is possible to conceptualize the unique perspective of Shurtleff's guideposts in several different ways. Since the beginning of the modern theater, it has been customary to turn to Aristotle's *Poetics* to explain theatrical phenomena. The present study will therefore situate Shurtleff's work in the context of Aristotle's six elements of drama. According to Aristotle, these six fundamental parts of any dramatic work are plot, character, idea, diction, song (rhythm), and spectacle.

Aristotle defines *plot* as the arrangement of incidents in the play.<sup>34</sup> Plot is different from story in that all plot happens or is related onstage, while the story may continue offstage. Aristotle rates this element as the most important of the six, because without it, the play could not exist. As Aristotle states, "for tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of life, and life consists in action."<sup>35</sup> Therefore, for Aristotle, a play is to be judged primarily on the basis of plot. The second element, *character*, refers to the people who populate the world of the play, often referred to as the *dramatis personae*.<sup>36</sup> All of the acting techniques discussed in the previous section are devoted primarily to developing the actor's approach to character. These techniques assume that actors will then use their embodiment of character to enact the events of the plot.

*Idea*, sometimes translated as *thought*, refers to the themes and intellectual concepts expressed through the drama.<sup>37</sup> This element is the answer to the question, "What is the play trying to say about the human condition?" *Diction*, also translated as *language*, is the way in which the idea and plot are communicated.<sup>38</sup> Aristotle uses this term, not to refer to the language

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34. Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics: A Translation and Commentary for Students of Literature*, trans. James Hutton (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 50-52.

35. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 50-52.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

per se, but rather to “the expression of the meaning in words.”<sup>39</sup> This is an important distinction for the actor, since it places emphasis not necessarily on the words themselves, but on the meaning that the performer expresses through them.

Aristotle’s fifth element of drama, *song*, is particularly relevant to the present study. The Greek word that Aristotle used to refer to this element was *melos*. It seems that Aristotle was using this term to refer to actual interjections of music in the drama. However, modern theorists have extended the definition of this element to include the rhythm and pacing of theatrical events.<sup>40</sup> This interpretation of this element will yield particularly useful insights about the relationship between music and drama. The tempo-rhythm is the primary element that is dictated to the operatic performer by the composer of the work. This is one of the defining differences between performing musical drama and performing in the spoken theater. Aristotle’s final element, *spectacle*, refers to the physical elements of the production, or the *mise-en-scène*. This element includes every visual part of a performance, from costumes and scenery to the actors’ use of space on stage.

### 2.2.2. Shurtleff’s Twelve Guideposts

This section will present an argument that Shurtleff’s twelve guideposts are an interpretation of Aristotle’s six elements of drama designed to resonate with our modern theatrical culture. Three of the guideposts relate to plot, five to character, and one each to thought, diction, rhythm, and spectacle. Shurtleff’s order of presenting the guideposts seems to be based on how essential he believes each one is in the context of an audition. This section will present them in a different order to connect each with its relevant Aristotelian element of drama.

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39. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 50-52.

40. Jeffrey Hatcher, *The Art and Craft of Playwriting* (Cincinnati: Story Press, 2000), 47-49.

Shurtleff explores character primarily through his first guidepost, *Relationship*. This approach makes sense from Aristotle's plot-focused perspective. This emphasis supports the forward motion of the plot by prioritizing each character's role within the world of the play over his or her subjective sense of self. Shurtleff has two revelatory ideas to relate to actors concerning character. First, he advocates that actors use their *own* emotional life to create characters, not try to imagine some other kind of consciousness than their own. As Shurtleff points out to actors, trying to relate to a character through anything other than your own experience "can lead you far astray from your own emotional life, which is what you will have to use in the scene no matter how much you study and analyze *her*."<sup>41</sup> This idea has some precedent in the work of Stanislavski, who says, "The moment you lose yourself on the stage marks the departure from truly living your part and the beginning of exaggerated false acting."<sup>42</sup>

Second, Shurtleff says that with respect to any onstage relationship, the actor should ask the question "Where is the love?" He contends that "the desire for love, to give it or receive it, and preferably at the same time, is the chief propellant in human beings."<sup>43</sup> To Shurtleff, any successful relationship between characters on stage is characterized by a strong presence or lack of love. This insight simultaneously reduces the number of choices available, facilitating a quicker interpretation process, and deepens the importance of the relationship in the scene. Without adding time or research, this concept reduces the number of acceptable dramatic choices for actors and facilitates their creation of meaningful relationships onstage. Though this guidepost may seem simple, Shurtleff warns actors that it is not a quick-fix. Its successful

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41. Shurtleff, *Audition*, 25.

42. Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, 192.

43. Shurtleff, *Audition*, 29.

implementation requires a nuanced understanding of the nature of love; one which includes all the perverse forms that it can take.

Shurtleff's second guidepost, *Conflict*, establishes the relationship between the character and the plot of the work. This guidepost gives the character a specific role in furthering the plot. It is the same concept that acting teachers often call the objective, goal, or motivation. Shurtleff prefers to use the question "What are you fighting for?" for two reasons. The first is that the word "fight" implies the high stakes that are needed for the actor to achieve an engaging interpretation. The second is that the word "for" implies a specific goal that can be achieved within the context of the scene.<sup>44</sup> Shurtleff has a few suggestions for how to find the most useful answer to the question. In a 1993 workshop video, Shurtleff advised actors to approach the answer to this question by asking themselves a second question: "What would I want from this person if I could have anything in the world that I need?" Shurtleff insists that in this guidepost, actors should be looking for maximum conflict, since that will produce the most interesting dramatic interpretation. He contends that actors ought not to hold back just because they think they "won't have anywhere to go." He is convinced that "attractions to someone don't get 'used up.' Attractions that are emotional grow."<sup>45</sup>

Shurtleff's fifth guidepost, *Opposites*, refers to the opposite of the goal that the actor has established for the character in the scene. This can be thought of as a particular kind of internal obstacle. In his video tape, Shurtleff says of this guidepost, "the opposite is our destructive side."<sup>46</sup> In other words, it is whatever force within a character is holding them back from what they have decided to fight for. Shurtleff warns actors not to start with the opposite, but to start

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44. Michael Shurtleff, "Shurtleff on Acting," directed by Mitchell Gabourie (Los Angeles: TMW Media Group, 1993).

45. Shurtleff, *Audition*, 45.

46. Shurtleff, "Shurtleff on Acting."

with what they are fighting for. This is because the opposite is a negative force, and Shurtleff believes that actors should always start with a positive: “We start a scene going in to fight for what we need. Then the opposite comes in when somebody hurts us and does not give us what we need, so then we hurt them back.”<sup>47</sup> The opposite is a valuable device to create variety in a scene or an entire role.

While relationship is defined by objectives and their opposites, guideposts three and twelve, *Humor* and *Mystery and Secret*, are devices related to socialization that help characters to seem more realistic and interesting on stage. In focusing so much on “fighting for” an objective, it is easy to forget that there are tactics available other than brute force. Humor and mystery and secret are devices that can help actors navigate what Stanislavski called “adaptation,” thereby developing a wider range of tactics. Shurtleff defines humor this way: “Humor is not jokes. It is that attitude toward being alive without which you would have long ago jumped off the fifty-ninth street bridge.”<sup>48</sup> Finding a character’s sense of humor helps actors to discover what is likable about their characters, what they have to offer others in exchange for what they want.

If humor is what is on the surface, how individuals socialize and make themselves acceptable to others, mystery and secret is the opposite of that. It is what is underneath the surface, that which characters hope will not be revealed about their nature to others because it would not be socially acceptable. This concept is important for the actor because, as Shurtleff says, “the most fascinating acting always has a quality of mystery to us.”<sup>49</sup> If nothing else, this guidepost simply absolves the actor of the need to be able to explain everything he or she does on stage. It acknowledges that some things about human nature are mysterious, and far from

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47. Shurtleff, “Shurtleff on Acting.”

48. Shurtleff, *Audition*, 53.

49. Shurtleff, *Audition*, 95.

being a negative quality for the actor, that which is mysterious can make one fascinating to an audience.

The next three guideposts to be discussed relate to Aristotle's element of plot. Most obviously, guidepost number nine, *Find the Events* refers to the same concept as Aristotle's "incidents," with a slightly different distinction. While for Aristotle an incident is anything that happens in the play, for Shurtleff an event is defined by a change in relationship.<sup>50</sup> This guidepost reminds actors that their most fundamental job is to find and articulate the events of the plot, through relationship with other characters. Closely related to the events is Shurtleff's sixth guidepost, *Discoveries*. This term refers to moments in the course of a scene when a character or characters find out something new. Shurtleff distinguishes between two types of discoveries: "Discovering something new about your partner or about yourself," and "getting confirmation of what you suspected was true."<sup>51</sup> From Shurtleff's description of discoveries and events, it seems that each discovery leads to a new event, and every change of event is precipitated by a discovery. This creates a chain reaction of event–discovery–event..., which defines the structure of each scene. In this way, Shurtleff facilitates the actor's development of what Stanislavski called a through-line of action.

To complete this through-line, the last step is to address the theatrical convention whereby every scene begins in the middle. The third guidepost, the *Moment Before* establishes what has happened immediately before the actor enters the scene. This guidepost is particularly important in the audition situation because it will establish the way that the scene begins, setting the tone for the rest of the performance. Therefore, Shurtleff insists that actors should choose a moment before that sparks in them an urgent need to enter the scene and begin fighting for the

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50. Shurtleff, "Shurtleff on Acting."

51. Ibid.

character's objective.<sup>52</sup> The moment before is also the first event of the scene, though it takes place offstage. Thus, a useful strategy is to begin the scene with a discovery that drives the character onstage. When used effectively, these guideposts can create a wave of momentum that carries the actors through the scene.

Shurtleff's eighth guidepost, *Importance*, is an acknowledgement of the convention of performing on stage. Shurtleff observes that "plays are written about the most important moments in people's lives."<sup>53</sup> This also relates to his insistence in the second guidepost that actors seek maximum conflict. One explanation for the high importance in stage action relates to Aristotle's third element of drama, idea. Idea, as defined by Aristotle can be thought of as that in a play which relates to the human condition. The importance of stage action can be thought of as a by-product of the fact that the characters inhabit a world that is designed to communicate a particular message to the audience. In other words, what makes the stage action important is the relationship between the characters' lives and the message that the play was written to communicate to its audience.

Shurtleff's tenth guidepost, *Place*, addresses the actor's relationship to what Aristotle's element of spectacle, or the physical aspects of the production. Shurtleff writes, "it's up to the actor to create a place" for the audition.<sup>54</sup> In other words, actors must demonstrate that they can create a relationship with the physical aspects of the production. Shurtleff emphasizes that the actor's sense of place is necessary not for the auditors, but for his or her own sense of reality in the scene. He also advocates the idea that it is not as important to establish the reality of the place itself as it is to communicate how the character feels in the context of that place.<sup>55</sup> Thus, through

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52. Shurtleff, *Audition*, 49.

53. Shurtleff, *Audition*, 66.

54. Shurtleff, *Audition*, 82.

55. Ibid.

these two guideposts, Shurtleff establishes the actor's relationship with the idea and spectacle in a theatrical work.

Shurtleff's seventh guidepost, *Communication and Competition* relates to Aristotle's concept of diction. As mentioned earlier, diction does not concern itself only with the words that are spoken or sung, but also with the meaning that the actors communicate through that text. Thus, Shurtleff's concept of communication is aimed at articulating the actor's role in this process. Shurtleff talks about communication as a three-step, circular process. In the first step, the actor sends a message to another character onstage. In the second step, the other actor receives and duplicates that message. In the third step, the one that Shurtleff contends is most often neglected, the recipient sends the duplicated message back to the sender, closing the loop.<sup>56</sup> The competition part of this guidepost is a consequence of the fact that the goal of a character in communicating is to convince the other character of his or her own way of thinking. This establishes a situation in which each character is continuously saying to the other, "my opinion is right and yours is wrong."<sup>57</sup> Shurtleff was careful to stress that he did not mean for this guidepost to refer to mean-spirited competition. Rather, its goal is to establish a playful give-and-take in the way the characters communicate.

Modern scholars in the theater have broadened the concept of Aristotle's fifth element of drama, *melos*, to refer to the sense of rhythm established by the performers in a scene. Using this definition, the best of Shurtleff's tools for addressing this consideration is his eleventh guidepost, *Game Playing and Role Playing*. Shurtleff observes that all human beings play various roles and games in their lives to get what they want. He does not use the term "game playing and role playing" to refer to something that is insincere. Rather, he is referring to what people naturally

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56. Shurtleff, *Audition*, 82.

57. Donellan, *Actor and Target*, 143-149.

do to adapt to each situation in their lives.<sup>58</sup> In the context of a dramatic scene, the most tangible result of the games played by the characters and roles they take on for that purpose is to establish particular rhythmic patterns in the service of each player's tactics. This concept will become clearer through examples in the context of analysis.

### 2.2.3. The Guideposts' Relationship to Music in Opera

In relating this information to operatic music, some guideposts are more relevant than others. Relationship, conflict, and importance are generally attributes of the libretto and are not usually inherent characteristics of any musical element. Instead, they are overriding concepts that govern the character of the music, not any musical detail in particular. The part of relationship that can be heard in the music can usually be better explained by game playing and role playing. Shurtleff's ideas about relationship are best used in the context of the music as a way to understand the nature of the game. Like relationship, conflict is a concept the actor needs to address in order to understand the deeper ideas under the musical surface. Importance, too, is better understood as a general characteristic of opera than as a function of any particular musical gesture. However, importance does have a key relationship to music. The presence of music establishes the fact that this dramatic content was important enough to set to music. The time and effort entailed in this task can be taken as an indication that the scene set to music must be dramatically important. Not only does the situation itself gain in importance, but the music to which it is set inherently contains a great deal of importance for the drama, as does the relationship between the words and the music.

In opera, the events can be found within the structure of the music. A characteristic of opera as a genre is that musical form almost always illustrates the dramatic events in a scene.

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58. Shurtleff, *Audition*, 85.

The exception comes in some parts of *secco recitativo*—notably not at the beginning, end, entrances or exits of characters; these events are almost always dictated by musical factors.

Whereas actors in spoken drama must create the events, in opera, one can usually find the events dictated by the music. Shurtleff insists that actors who succeed in auditions are those who show the auditors that they can create events, because that is what causes productions to succeed or fail. But in opera, the singer's task is to match dramatic interpretation to the structural events in the music. Singing actors are likely to find it difficult to create their own events without reference to the music. In the same way, operatic characters' discoveries are can be used to motivate changes and transitions within the musical form. The singer can apply this guidepost by using the phrase groupings and sectional structure of a work to locate the characters' discoveries in the music. This technique of allowing the music and the drama to support one another helps to create the illusion that the singing actor is generating the music in tandem with the character's thoughts.

Some guideposts can either be illustrated through the music or simply relate to the actor's process of characterization. For example, the very first event of a scene, the moment before, may be included in the opera as an overture or interlude, or it may be an event that the created in the actor's imagination to create context for the upcoming scene. Similarly, the music may or may not provide any information about the place. The music may illustrate place through any number of analogies or references. More important for the actor according to Shurtleff's thinking, the music very often gives indications about how the character feels about that place. Rather than trying to indicate an exact location where the scene takes place, the singing actor can use the music to create a relationship with the characer's surroundings.

Humor and Mystery and Secret may also either relate directly to the music, or to non-musical aspects of characterization in the context of sung drama. In the process of analysis, it is helpful to divide each of these guideposts into two categories: instances defined by musical cues, and examples reflected in the singer's dramatic choices about the character and the scene. Humor often does coincide with the music, especially if the composer and librettist intend for the audience to laugh. Examples of musical humor typically involve jarring contrasts or deviations from the expectations the composer has established. On the other hand, this guidepost may also be implemented in non-musical ways. For example, it could simply be a sense of playfulness in the way the singing actor performs the role. Very often, considering a character's sense of humor is a good way for a singing actor to achieve more believable characterization, especially with those operatic characters who seem to be perpetually serious or sad. Discovering what is mysterious about a character and considering what information he or she wants to keep secret can have a similar effect with characters who may seem superficial at first glance. This non-musical form of mystery and secret can free the actor to create singing characters who have more to them than meets the eye. An example of this guidepost illustrated through music might be a melodic figure or harmony that is not easily explained by the situation. In this case, the singer could imagine some secret reason for the unexplained music, thereby cultivating an air of mystery around the character.

The remaining three guideposts are best understood in the context of opera with reference to the individual musical gestures that illustrate characterization. Opposites, communication and competition, and game playing and role playing can be traced directly through their influence on the moment-to-moment musical context. More than any other guidepost, the music's exact character can be understood through game playing and role playing. The singer can develop a

performance that blends musical and textual elements by using the situation and text to define the rules of the game, and the music to dictate how the game is played. Singers can still play the game their own way, but for the most advantageous synthesis of music and drama, the music should seem to be “playing along.” Communication and competition in the context of opera includes communicating both the verbal and the musical ideas in the scene. In this case, competition takes on an additional meaning. Not only are operatic characters trying to convince each other of verbal opinions, they are also competing to show that their own musical expression is the most definitively appropriate for the moment at hand.

The opposite can present itself through music in two ways. First, the music can create a mood that is the opposite of what the text is saying. Second, contrasting musical sections can aid the singer in communicating opposites. Shurtleff suggests that the actor not try to play two opposites at the same time, but rather alternate rapidly between the two. In this view, the singer can use momentary musical contrasts to express the character’s dramatic opposites. For example, music that contrasts with what came immediately before may illustrate a character’s doubts about what he or she is fighting for. This approach involves deciding which elements constitute the musical norms in the piece, and assigning meaning to deviation from those norms. Finding opportunities to use opposites can keep the singing actor from feeling stuck in a one-dimensional approach to the character’s emotional life.

### **2.3. Conclusion**

This brief summary of potential relationships between Shurtleff’s twelve guideposts and operatic music illustrates an important point about operatic music. Though music can be an effective communicator of specific information within the context of verbal clues to its meaning, it remains in essence a subjective form of communication. Any interpretation of the meaning of

music in the context of opera is only one of many possible interpretations. The study of five operatic arias for soprano that follows is not meant to represent a definitive interpretation of any of these works, but rather to illustrate the way that Shurtleff's guideposts can be used a tool to unify textual and musical details into a well-rounded characterization without adding considerably to the time it takes to prepare a piece musically.

## Chapter 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Aims of Analysis

This study will analyze five operatic arias for soprano following a process derived from Michael Shurtleff's twelve guideposts. The purpose of this analysis is to gain insight into the ways in which Shurtleff's approach can be used in the context of operatic preparation and performance. This section will describe the rationale for the selection of the five arias that will be discussed, and outline the analytical process that will be followed with respect to each aria.

In the book *The Opera Singer's Acting Toolkit*, director Martin Constantine suggests that singers organize musical information into two lists. He proposes that singers keep a running list of musical facts, and another list of questions about the music that remain unanswered. As singers collect more information about the opera, some of the musical questions are answered, while others require the singer to devise a plausible answer through an interpretation of the facts.<sup>59</sup> This model will help to clarify the procedure of the analysis to be conducted in the pages that follow. This study's analytical process will use Shurtleff's twelve guideposts to suggest workable answers to various interpretive questions that arise from examination of the libretto and its musical setting.

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59. Constantine, *Opera Singer's Acting Toolkit*, chap. 7.

### 3.2. Selection of Arias

The following arias to be analyzed are enumerated in table 3.1. above. These arias have been selected in order to provide a range of languages and styles. The primary operatic languages of Italian, German, French, and English are each represented by at least one aria, with two in Italian for the sake of stylistic coverage. The five arias have also been selected on the basis that they are all classified in the same *Fach* designation of light lyric or coloratura soprano.<sup>60</sup> This means that these five arias could all be performed by the same soprano, for example in the context of an audition. Another consideration when choosing these arias was the use of works that are established members of the operatic canon, while being performed or analyzed relatively infrequently. This was done to achieve a degree of relevance to the modern professional or collegiate singer, while retaining a fresh perspective by considering repertoire that is somewhat off the beaten path.

Table 3.1. Arias for Analysis

Composer	Opera	Aria	Character
W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)	<i>Idomeneo</i> (1781)	“Zeffiretti lusinghieri”	Ilia
Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826)	<i>Der Freischütz</i> (1821)	“Einst träumte meiner sel’gen Base”	Änchen
Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)	<i>Don Pasquale</i> (1843)	“Quel guardo il cavaliere”	Norina
Jules Massenet (1842-1912)	<i>Manon</i> (1884)	“Adieu notre petite table”	Manon
Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007)	<i>The Medium</i> (1947)	“Monica’s Waltz”	Monica

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60. Pearl Yeadon McGinnis, *The Opera Singer’s Career Guide: Understanding the European Fach System* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 228-230.

The arias will be analyzed in the chronological order in which they were written, representing the following historical styles of music: Classical Period, *Bel Canto*, German Romantic, French Romantic, and Twentieth Century.

### **3.3. Method of Analysis**

Text will be provided at the beginning of each analysis, as well as translation for all non-English arias. Next, a brief summary of the opera will be provided, illustrating the context of the aria within the larger context of the plot. The summary will situate the aria to be analyzed, and will include the entire length of the opera. This is to ensure that this analysis considers all the information available about the character in the opera, including that which is revealed after the scene to be analyzed. Shurtleff's twelve guideposts will then each be discussed in relation to the aria at hand, concluding with a table correlating large sections of the musical form with the events unfolding in the scene. For best effect, it is suggested that the reader listen to each aria, and where possible, follow along with a score.

#### **3.3.1. Analytical Questions**

Having discussed the guideposts as they relate to Aristotle's six elements of drama and how they each interrelate with the music, this study will address them in the order in the table below, in an attempt to create the feeling that each guidepost leads logically to the next. Table 3.2 details the analytical questions that will be used to guide the analytical approach to each of Shurtleff's guideposts as they relate to the operatic arias to be studied.

Table 3.2. Questions for Analysis

<b>Importance</b>	Why is this aria one of the most important moments in the character's life?
<b>Moment Before</b>	<p>What has just happened within the context of the opera?</p> <p>What information earlier in the story is helpful in launching the actor into this scene?</p> <p>If none exists in the given circumstances of the opera suggest an imaginary moment before that would create a compelling <i>need</i> for the character to begin the aria.</p>
<b>Place</b>	<p>Where does the libretto indicate that this aria takes place?</p> <p>How does the character feel in this place?</p> <p>How does the character's perception of the place affect the other guideposts?</p> <p>How is it illustrated in the music?</p>
<b>Relationship</b>	<p>To whom is the character addressing the aria?</p> <p>Where is the love?</p>
<b>Conflict</b>	<p>What are you fighting for?</p> <p>How does the chosen objective create maximum conflict in the scene?</p>
<b>Communication &amp; Competition</b>	<p>Identify a sense of friendly competition in the relationship.</p> <p>Find a good reason for the character to close the loop of communication.</p>
<b>Opposites</b>	<p>What is the opposite of what the character is fighting for, the force that is holding her back?</p> <p>Where does it appear in the scene?</p>
<b>Humor</b>	Are there any suggestions of humor in the music?

(Table cont'd.)

	Describe the character's sense of humor.
	Where does it appear in the aria?
	What influence might it have?
<b>Mystery &amp; Secret</b>	After addressing the previous eleven points about the aria, what is still a mystery?
	What musical gestures are not easy to justify?
	What about the character remains mysterious?
<b>Find the Events</b>	List the events in the aria.
	How do musical shifts indicate the change of event?
	What victory does the character win by the end of the aria?
<b>Discoveries</b>	What important discoveries does the character make?
	What discoveries generate the musical shifts that lead to each event?
<b>Game Playing &amp; Role Playing</b>	What game(s) are being played in this aria?
	What is the character's role in the game?
	How does the music reflect this?

### 3.3.2. Expected Results

The intent of this study is not to articulate a definitive interpretation of any of the arias to be discussed, but rather to explore interpretive possibilities through the lens of the advice Shurtleff offers about auditioning in the spoken theater. The desired outcome of this study is to gain insight into the ways Shurtleff's twelve guideposts can be used to create depth of characterization in operatic arias while allowing sufficient time for musical preparation. The intended result is, therefore, not a product, but a process. The analysis that follows is intended to illustrate one direction that the process might take the interpretation of each aria. This

demonstration of its use is meant to provide a jumping-off-point for further use of the guideposts in whatever ways may prove beneficial to the interpreter of sung drama.

## Chapter 4. Analysis

### 4.1. “Zeffiretti lusinghieri” from *Idomeneo*<sup>61</sup>

#### 4.1.1 Text and Translation

Solitudini amiche, aure amorse, Piante fiorite, e fiori vaghi! Udite d'una infelice amante i lamenti, Che a voi lassa confido.	Friendly isolated places, fair winds, Flowering plants and lovely flowers, Listen to a miserable lover's laments, To one who, wearied, confides in you.
Quanto il tacer presso al mio vincitore, Quanto il finger ti costa Afflitto core!	How much my silence toward my champion, How much pretending costs you, Afflicted heart!
Zeffiretti lusinghieri, Deh, volate al mio tesoro: E gli dite, ch'io l'adoro, Che mi serbi il cor fedel.	Charming breezes, Pray, fly to my treasure, And tell him that I adore him; That he might keep his heart faithful for me.
E voi piante, e fior sinceri, Che ora inaffia il pianto amaro, Dite a lui, che amor più raro Mai vedeste sotto al ciel.	And you, plants and sincere flowers, That now moisten with bitter tears, Tell him that love more rare You have never seen beneath heaven. <sup>62</sup>

#### 4.1.2. Context

*Idomeneo* centers on the fate of its title character, the king of Crete, who, in exchange for safe passage through a terrible storm, promises Neptune that he will kill the first person he sees when he reaches the shore. Meanwhile, Idomeneo's captive, the Trojan princess Ilia, daughter of their King Priam, who was killed by Idomeneo's men, has been transported to Crete with other Trojan prisoners. On the journey, another terrible storm threatened to kill her and the crew transporting her, when they were rescued by Idomeneo's son, Idamante, who had been ruling Crete in Idomeneo's absence. Despite their families' sworn enmity, Ilia and Idamante have fallen in love. However, Idamante is promised to Elettra, the princess of Argos, who is currently exiled

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61. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Idomeneo* (Basel, London, New York: Bärenreiter, 2005).

62. Robert Larsen, ed., *Arias for Soprano*. (New York: G. Schirmer, 2004) 2:8.

in Crete. As a gesture of good will toward Ilia, Idamante grants her and the other Trojan prisoners their freedom. Shortly thereafter, Idomeneo's trusted servant, Arbace, enters to tell Idamante that a storm has hit Idomeneo's ship and that he and his men are presumed dead. Idamante takes a walk along the shore, lamenting his father's fate, when he and Idomeneo come face to face. At first they do not recognize one another, but when Idomeneo realizes that he is speaking to his son, he becomes cold and distant in the realization that he must kill Idamante to fulfill his vow to Neptune. The first act ends with Idamante hurt and confused at his father's coldness while the soldiers happily disembark from their ship.

In the second act, Idomeneo reveals his predicament to Arbace, and the two decide that Idamante must be protected from his fate. They decide that it is best to send him to Argos with Elettra to be married and take control of her paternal throne. At the end of their conversation, Ilia enters, and vows her loyalty to Idomeneo because of Idamante's kindness in freeing her countrymen. At this moment, Idomeneo realizes the full tragedy of sending Idamante away, as he can see that Ilia loves him. The scene changes to a port where Elettra and Idamante are preparing to leave for Argos. As they are about to embark, a monster of the sea begins terrorizing the citizens of Crete as revenge for Idomeneo's failure to fulfill his promise. The act ends as the terrified citizens flee from the monster.

"Zeffiretti lusinghieri" comes at the beginning of the third and final act of the opera. Alone by the sea, Ilia confesses to the breezes that she loves Idamante and wishes they could be together. Just after the aria, Idamante enters and the two declare their love for one another. Idomeneo and Elettra enter and Idomeneo tells Idamante that he has incurred Neptune's wrath, but does not explain the exact nature of his promise. Shortly afterwards, Arbace enters and relates that a mob has appeared in front of the palace demanding that Idomeneo make the

sacrifice he promised to Neptune in order to stop the sea monster's reign of terror. Idomeneo goes to where the mob is gathered and reveals that the one he must sacrifice is Idamante, to the horror of the citizens and the high priest of Neptune. As the altar is being prepared for the sacrifice, Arbace enters and tells them that Idamante has vanquished the sea monster. Idomeneo declares that this will cause Neptune to be inflamed with anger against them. As he says this, Idamante runs into the chamber and offers himself to be sacrificed. Before he can be killed, Ilia offers herself to be killed in his place. As she does this, Neptune appears and absolves Idomeneo of his obligation on the condition that he will step down from his throne and allow Idamante and Ilia to rule as husband and wife. The opera ends as all rejoice, except Elettra, who swears revenge.

#### 4.1.3. Guideposts

This aria begins the third act, and the last thing the audience saw was the chaos of Neptune's sea monster attacking bystanders at the seaside as Idamante and Elettra were trying to leave for Argos. Since the libretto itself does not provide a moment before, the singer must create one in her imagination. Ideally, this moment before should help to clarify the character's motivation in the scene, and lead to a compelling need for the character to begin the aria. Consider the following example for this aria:

After the final scene of Act II, as Ilia is running away from the Monster with the rest of the crowd, she sees Idamante valiantly fighting against the monster and is filled with awe. As Idamante leaves, Ilia sees him take Elettra's hand to lead her to safety. Ilia sees this as confirmation that Idamante no longer loves her, and is now infatuated with Elettra. Ilia returns to the palace with Idomeneo and his guards, but she cannot bear to be near Idamante and Elettra.

She leaves the palace and seeks solace in the palace garden. When she is alone, she begins the first line of the recit: “Solitudini amiche.”

This imagined moment before, or another one like it that resonates for the soprano performing the aria, helps to connect gaps in the story line. The key to an effective moment before is that it should frame the scene so that the character’s actions follow logically from her circumstances. In this example, the previous scene is connected to the present one in a way that has several effects. It strengthens the importance of the scene by renewing Ilia’s affection for Idamante. It creates a conflict by renewing her doubt in Idamante’s fidelity to her. It gives her a reason to be in the garden. It provides a moment when her conflict becomes so intense that she must begin to sing the recitative.

It would be easy to see this aria as overly sentimental. The problem with that view is that it was almost certainly not intended to be understood that way by its composer and librettist. This is why importance is such a key guidepost for pieces like this. It is imperative to establish what makes this moment important, so that it cannot become boring. A clue to the importance of this scene can be found in what happens immediately after the aria. As soon as the aria is over, Idamante will rush on stage and declare his love for Ilia, with the result that the two will be united at last and will sing an extended love duet. Ilia’s aria must lead logically into this next event.

Ilia has spent the majority of the opera until this point conflicted about her love for Idamante and her loyalty to her country. In this scene, she will beg the breezes to carry her love to him. Something has changed. First she was grateful to Idamante for freeing her, so she pledged her loyalty to his father’s kingdom. Then, she saw Idamante departing for Argos to marry another woman. This aria is the moment when she makes a concrete decision that what

she wants more than anything else is Idamante. She is by now so sure of this that she hopes with all her power that he will discover her love. And it is of life or death importance to her that she succeeds. If she cannot have Idamante, her life will lose all meaning. This interpretation may seem melodramatic, but from Shurtleff's perspective it is essential to view dramatic moments from this perspective to create a maximum of theatrical interest and emotional meaning. The place in which Ilia sings this aria is the garden of the palace. The vivacious scales and lilting triplets in the orchestra illustrate the winds to which Ilia is addressing the aria. The music and text paint a picture of a place that provides Ilia with a peaceful respite from her inner torment over her love for Idamante.

Ilia addresses this aria to "the breezes." Her primary relationship in the scene is with nature. It makes sense that she is begging the forces of nature to come to her aid, since it is nature itself in the form of Neptune that poses the most immediate threat to her relationship with Idamante. Ilia loves the beauty of the nature that surrounds her, but she feels at this moment as though nature is conspiring against her wishes to be with Idamante. Thus she feels the need enlist nature itself to come to her aid. A secondary relationship in the scene is the one between Ilia and Idamante, as Ilia fights to obtain Idamante's love. Her appeal to nature is intended to secure his love by expressing her own. Her sense of competition and need to communicate come from her desire to win over the forces that would prevent her wishes. She wants to convince the winds, trees, and flowers, and the force that rules over them, that she is right and they are wrong, that fate should reverse itself and allow her to be with Idamante. The game she is playing, or the tactic she is taking in trying to achieve her objective, is a very sincere one. For her, nature is an intimate friend, and she is humbly entreating it to help her.

The next three guideposts help to add nuance to Ilia’s disposition. The opposite at work in the scene is another voice within Ilia that tells her that she and Idamante will never be together. The music seems to suggest the strengthening of this voice in the middle section of the aria (“E voi piante...), with a chromatic transition into a series of quickly alternating key areas that undermine any sense of harmonic stability. Ilia must fight against this voice to return to the more stable material of the opening section. In this aria Ilia’s sense of humor is likely to be very subtle, as the stakes in the situation are very high and the music does little to indicate humor. However, in the recitative or perhaps in musical interludes a sense of playful irony at how terrible her situation has become could help to frame the more intense moments, and add to the pathos of the situation. This could also help Ilia seem relatable, as this is one kind of coping strategy that people really use when they are under stress. A key example of mystery and secret that is present throughout the opera, especially in this aria, is the role of nature in the characters’ lives. Here, Ilia’s melismas synchronize exactly with the music illustrating the breezes referred to in the title of the aria. This connection introduces the question: is Ilia influencing the wind, or is it influencing her? Is it a combination? These are questions that are best answered by the performer individually for each moment in the aria.

Table 4.1 tracks the large musical sections of the aria and suggests one possible event and discovery for each section.

Table 4.1. Ilia’s Events and Discoveries		
(Before the music)	<b>Moment Before</b>	Ilia is alone at last.
	<i>Discovery</i>	- She cannot keep her feelings bottled up inside anymore.
<b>Recitative</b>	<b>Music</b>	Chordal support for a declamatory melody.

(Table cont’d.)

“Solitudine amiche...”  
(mm. 1-11)

The final cadence on the subdominant of the aria that follows. We would normally expect the dominant. This creates the impression that this is a very special, tender moment.

**Event** She confides her sorrows to the nature around her, like an intimate friend.

*Discovery* - ‘I wish Idamante knew how much I love him.’

**A** **Music** The orchestra plays an introduction. Ilia sings the same melody when she enters.

“Zeffiretti lusinghieri...”  
(mm. 12-74)

She is thinking the same sentiments that she is about to sing, maybe debating if she dares ask the winds for their help.

This first section modulates to the dominant key.

**Event** Ilia prays to the breeze to help her.

*Discovery* - ‘If I cannot be with Idamante, my life will have no meaning.’

**B** **Music** This whole section is in the dominant key. It is more chromatic and less harmonically stable than the A section.

“E voi piante...”  
(mm. 75-92)

**Event** She asserts that what she feels for Idamante is true love.

*Discovery* - ‘That makes it even more important that Idamante knows I love him.’

**A’** **Music** Some melodic alterations from the first A section.

“Zeffiretti lusinghieri...”  
(mm. 93-139)

Concludes in the tonic. The whole aria is essentially in Sonata Form.

**Event** She invokes the power of nature to bring Idamante to her.

*Endpoint* – Ilia ends with a win. The ritual has worked, she has faith that she will win Idamante. She can experience doubt again in the next scene, but the aria is best ended on a with a victory.

## 4.2 “Einst träumte meiner sel’gen Base” from *Der Freischütz*<sup>63</sup>

### 4.2.1. Text and Translation

Einst träumte meiner sel’gen Base, Die Kammertür eröffnete sich, Und kreideweiss ward ihre Nase, Denn näher, furchtbar näher schlich	Once my late aunt dreamt that Her bedroom door opened, And her nose turned chalk-white Because closer, frightfully closer crept
Ein Ungeheuer mit Augen wie Feuer, Mit klirrender Kette— Es nahte dem Bette, in welchem sie schlief - Ich meine die Base Mit kreidiger Nase—	A monster with eyes like fire, With clanking chains— It approached the bed in which she slept— I mean my aunt, With the chalk-white nose—
Und stöhnte, ach! so hohl! Und ächzte, ach, so tief!	And it moaned, ah, so hollowly, And it groaned, ah, so deeply!
Sie kreuzte sich, rief, Nach manchem Angst- und Stossgebet: Susanne! Margaret!	She crossed herself and cried out, After many anxious and fervent prayers: Susan! Margaret!
Und sie kamen mit Licht— Und - denke nur!—und— Erschrick mir nur nicht!— Und - graust mir doch!—	And they came with lights, And—only think of it!—and— Only don’t startle me!— And - but it makes me shudder—
Und - der Geist war: Nero, der Kettenhund!	And - the ghost was: Nero, the watch-dog!
Du zürnest mir? Doch kannst du wähen, Ich fühle nicht mit dir? Nur ziemen einer Braut nicht Tränen!	You’re angry with me? But can you really think, That I’m not on your side? It’s just that tears are not becoming to a bride.
Trübe Augen, Liebchen, Taugen einem holden Bräutchen nicht.	Sad eyes, dearest, Do not suit a lovely young bride.
Dass durch Blicke sie erquicke, Und beglücke, und bestricke. Alles um sich her entzücke. Das ist ihre schönste Pflicht.	For with her glances she should enliven And delight and charm. She should delight everyone around her. That is her loveliest duty.
Lass in öden Mauern, Büsserinnen trauern;	Let penitents mourn within bleak walls;

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63. Carl Maria von Weber, *Der Freischütz* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1963).

Dir winkt ros'ger Hoffnung Licht!

Schon entzündet sind die Kerzen  
Zum Verein getreuer Herzen!  
Holde Freundin zage nicht!

To you beckons the rosy light of hope!

Already lit are the candles  
For the union of faithful hearts;  
Lovely friend, have no fear!<sup>64</sup>

#### 4.2.2. Context

The opera begins in a tavern. Max, a huntsman who has been chosen by Cuno to succeed him as Gamekeeper to the local Prince, Ottokar, has just been defeated at target practice by a peasant named Killian. He is distraught because the next day he must pass a shooting exhibition in front of the prince and the whole town in order to become Gamekeeper and be allowed to marry Agathe, his sweetheart and Cuno's daughter. As Killian taunts Max and Cuno tries to console him, another villager, Caspar, reveals that he caused Max to miss his shots with the help of the devil, in the form of the evil huntsman, Samiel. A while later, when Max and Caspar are alone in the tavern, Samiel lurks in the background as Caspar convinces Max that he will need magic bullets to succeed at the trial shot the next morning. When he tries one of Caspar's magic bullets and easily shoots a large bird, Max wants some magic bullets of his own. Caspar tells Max that he will obtain more that very night, and Max agrees to meet him at the Wolf's Glen at exactly the stroke of midnight. The act ends as Caspar delights in having ensnared Max in hell's net.

Act two opens in Cuno's house, where Agathe is seen with a bandage on her head, while her cousin Ännchen rehanges a portrait of Cuno's ancestor, the first gamekeeper to be appointed by a shooting trial, that has fallen from the wall, injuring Agathe. Ännchen tries to lighten the mood, fantasizing about when she will meet a young man and get married (her first aria), while Agathe worries about why Max has not yet returned home. Agathe reveals that when she visited

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64. Robert Larsen, ed., *Arias for Soprano*. (New York: G. Schirmer, 2004) 2:10-11.

the Hermit earlier that day, he warned her about a great unknown danger. Max arrives home and lies to Agathe, telling her that he must leave again to fetch a stag that he shot in the Wolf's Glen earlier that day. Agathe tries to convince Max not to go, but he will not heed her warning. The scene changes to the Wolf's Glen, where Caspar, alone before Max arrives, reveals that tomorrow his time is up and he is fated to join Samiel in his Evil Realm. He offers Max's soul in exchange for his term's extension. He reveals that, of the seven bullets that will be molded, six will hit their target, and the seventh belongs to Samiel, to direct wherever he chooses. Shortly afterwards, Max arrives, and in one of the most famously frightening scenes in opera, Caspar invokes Samiel and molds seven magic bullets with Max by his side. The act ends as Samiel appears and reaches out toward Max, who makes a sign of the cross and falls to the ground, unconscious.

The third act opens in the forest on a sunny morning. Caspar and Max have been hunting with Prince Ottokar and his entourage. Max has shot five of his magic bullets so far. Caspar convinces him to shoot the sixth one at a fox that is running by, leaving only the seventh cursed bullet for Max's trial shot. The scene changes to Agathe's bedroom, where she has just awoken from a nightmare and sings a prayer for protection from God. When Ännchen enters, Agathe tells her that she dreamt that she was a white dove and that Max shot her. As soon as the bullet hit her, the white dove disappeared, she was herself again, and a large black bird was writhing in pain on the ground. In "Einst träumte meiner sel'gen Base," Ännchen lightens the mood again, this time telling a mock-ghost-story, and then encouraging Agathe to be happy, since it is her wedding day. At the end of this aria, Agathe's bridesmaids enter carrying a box containing her bridal wreath. She opens the box and finds instead a funeral wreath, which she interprets as an omen of what is to come. The scene changes to the encampment where the trial shot is to take

place. Prince Ottokar points to a dove on a branch overhead and tells Max that his trial is simply to shoot the dove. As he aims, Agathe screams at him not to shoot, saying that she is the dove. He shoots, and Agathe and Caspar both collapse. When the confusion settles, all discover that Agathe is unharmed, and Caspar has been shot and is dying. Max confesses what he has done, and as the Prince is about to banish him forever, the Hermit intercedes on his behalf and recommends he only be banished for a year, and then be allowed to return and marry Agathe. The Prince respects the Hermit as a holy man, and grants his wish. The opera ends as all rejoice in this happy outcome.

#### 4.2.3. Guideposts

For this aria, the moment before takes place on stage. Agathe, having awoken from a terrible nightmare, sings a prayer to God to protect her from evil. She then tells Ännchen that in her dream she was a white dove and Max shot her during his shooting trial. This dark and brooding atmosphere on Agathe's wedding day creates an important impetus for Ännchen to lighten the mood. It is vitally important to Ännchen for gaiety and fun to win out over Agathe's fears. If Agathe does not cheer up, she will not enjoy her wedding day, one of the most important events of her life. Even worse, if she is right that her dream is an omen, she is destined to die. This gives life-or-death importance to Ännchen's attempt to cheer her cousin.

The place is Agathe's bedroom just after her nightmare. At first this creates a spooky atmosphere influenced by the events Agathe described in her dream, and those Ännchen relates regarding her aunt. After Ännchen reveals that her horror story is a joke, she succeeds in transforming the room back into the bright cozy place that a bedroom is supposed to be, especially on a wedding day.

Ännchen's relationship in the scene is with her cousin, Agathe, whom she loves very much and wants to see happy on her wedding day. It will help the singer to assume that Ännchen is not just annoyed with Agathe's fears, she is worried about her. Her attempts to lighten the mood are not an indication that she does not feel for her cousin. Rather, this is her way of coping with the situation and trying to improve it. Ännchen is fighting to cheer Agathe so that she can enjoy her wedding day. She is fighting for joy to win out over fear. This changes the dynamic that often takes hold of this scene of an overly cheerful girl simply dismissing the concerns of an excessively gloomy one. Instead, Ännchen has a very real adversary in her pursuit of joy and happiness. Caspar really is seeking to destroy both Max and Agathe. The aria integrates better into the opera's story if Ännchen can sense that. Her joy and love of life is her chosen weapon against evil. It is her expression of her faith in good that negates her fear of evil.

The sense of competition can help this scene come alive. Ännchen's need to convince her cousin that her way of seeing the world is the right one creates the playful competitive drive. Each of Ännchen's appeals to fun and enjoyment are motivated by Agathe's determined foreboding. In keeping with her playful disposition, Ännchen first plays the role of a story teller in a game wherein she tries to frighten her cousin even more to tease her. When she reveals that there was nothing to fear in her story, she switches to the role of a bridesmaid in the game of wedding-day festivities.

The opposite of Ännchen's drive to cheer her cousin is her fear that her attempts will fail. This could either be because Agathe is too upset, in which case her wedding day will be ruined, or even worse, Agathe could be right that she is cursed. This opposite gives the singer something to fight against, which is especially helpful in repetitive sections or moments when it is not obvious what should be happening. The default is the opposite. If Ännchen does not fight it, it

will win. Ännchen’s sense of humor is perhaps more obvious than the other characters covered in this section. Her primary tactic with Agathe is to tease her and to try to lighten the mood.

Mystery and secret can go hand-in-hand with Ännchen’s humor. For example, in the opening section we do not know if Ännchen is serious or joking until the very last moment. The music supports this, with all the tremolos and unstable key areas of a sincerely frightening *Ballad*, a contemporary genre of art song that specialized in telling horror stories through music.

Table 4.2 tracks the large musical sections of the aria and suggests one possible event and discovery for each section.

Table 4.2. Ännchen’s Events and Discoveries		
(Before the music)	<b>Moment Before</b>	Agathe is terrified because of her dream.
<i>Discovery</i> - ‘I know! I’ll tell her a horror story of my own.’		
<b>Romanze</b>	<b>Music</b>	A <i>Romanze</i> (or Romance) is a narrative ballad.
“Einst träumte...” (mm. 1-43)		This whole section is one long phrase, since there are no Perfect Authentic Cadence (PAC) to fully establish the key until after “Kettenhund.”
	<b>Event</b>	Ännchen teases Agathe by telling her a horror story in which, actually, nothing bad happened.
<i>Discovery</i> - ‘Agathe is angry with me for tricking her.’		
<b>Recitative</b>	<b>Music</b>	Free and declamatory.
“Du zürnest mir...” (mm. 43-51)		
	<b>Event</b>	Ännchen tries to talk sense into Agathe.
<i>Discovery</i> - ‘It’s your wedding day! Let’s be cheerful!’		

(Table cont’d.)



### 4.3. “Quel guardo il cavaliere” from *Don Pasquale*<sup>65</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Text and Translation

“Quel guardo, il cavaliere  
In mezzo al cor trafisse,  
Piegò il ginocchio e disse:  
Son vostro cavalier.

“That glance pierced the knight  
To the depths of his heart,  
He bent his knee and said:  
I am your knight.

“E tanto era in quel guardo  
Sapor di paradiso,  
Che il cavalier Riccardo,  
Tutto d'amor conquiso,  
Giurò che ad altra mai,  
Non volgeria il pensier.”

And there was in that glance such a  
Taste of paradise  
That the knight Richard,  
Totally conquered by love,  
Swore that to another woman never  
Would he turn his thoughts.”

Ah, ah!

Ha ha!

So anch'io la virtu magica  
D'un guardo a tempo e loco,  
So anch'io come si bruciano  
I cori a lento foco.

I too know the magic power  
Of a glance at the right time and place;  
I too know how to make hearts smolder  
At a slow burn.

D'un breve sorrisetto  
Conosco anch'io l'effetto,  
Di menzognera lagrima,  
D'un subito languor.

Of a fleeting little smile  
I also know the effect,  
Of a furtive tear,  
Of a sudden languor.

Conosco i mille modi  
Dell'amorose frodi,  
I vezzi e l'arti facili  
Per adescare un cor.

I know the thousand ways  
Of amorous tricks,  
The charms and easy skills  
For enticing a heart.

So anch'io la virtu magica  
Per ispirare amor.

I too know the magic power  
Of inspiring love.

Ho testa bizzarra,  
son pronta, vivace,  
Brillare mi piace,  
Mi piace scherzar.

I have an eccentric mind,  
I'm quick-witted, high-spirited;  
I like to sparkle,  
I like to have fun.

Se monto in furore  
Di rado sto al segno,  
Ma in riso lo sdegno

If I fly into a rage,  
Rarely do I hit the target;  
Rather, I make my anger

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65. Gaetano Donizetti, *Don Pasquale* (Milan: Ricordi, 2006).

Fo presto a cangiar,

Quickly change to laughter.

Ho testa bizzarra,  
Ma core eccellente, ah!

I have an eccentric mind,  
But an excellent heart. Ah!<sup>66</sup>

#### 4.3.2 Context

*Don Pasquale* begins with the title character, a wealthy Roman nobleman in his seventies, alone in his home awaiting the family physician, Doctor Malatesta, who has promised to find him a pretty young bride. Doctor Malatesta arrives and says he will introduce Pasquale to his sister, Sofronia, who until now has been in a convent. When Malatesta leaves, Don Pasquale's nephew, Ernesto, enters, and Pasquale reveals why he summoned him. He recounts how he offered Ernesto the hand of a rich young lady, and that Ernesto refused because he is in love with Norina, a beautiful girl with no money. He reminds Ernesto that if he refused to marry the rich young lady, Pasquale had threatened that he would not only disinherit Ernesto, but he would take a new wife of his own just to make it more difficult for Ernesto to get his money. He gives Ernesto one more chance to marry the rich girl, and when he refuses again, Pasquale reveals that he will marry Malatesta's sister, Sofronia. Ernesto is livid, having counted Malatesta a close friend and ally.

The scene changes to Norina's house, where she is alone, reading a fairytale. In "Quel guardo il cavaliere," Norina laughs at the simplicity of the fairytale, in which the knight, Riccardo, is so taken with his lady's beauty that he vows to be faithful to her always, and muses that she herself is very skilled at attracting men. At the end of the aria, Malatesta enters, telling Norina that his plot is working to help Ernesto. She is disinterested in helping Ernesto, showing Malatesta a note that he wrote to her, telling her he is being disinherited and that he has decided

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66. Robert Larsen ed., *Coloratura Arias for Soprano* (New York: G. Schirmer, 2002), 13-14.

to move away from Rome, leaving Norina behind. Malatesta relates his plan to Norina: he will pass her off as his sister from the convent, she will seduce Don Pasquale, and then once they are married, become insufferable, so that he swears off the idea of marrying again and gives Ernesto his inheritance. The first act ends with Norina and Malatesta planning the tactics they will use to outwit Don Pasquale.

At the beginning of the second act, Malatesta introduces Norina to Don Pasquale as “Sofronia.” He is taken with her shy manners and wants to be married right away. The notary marries them on the spot, and as he does so, Ernesto enters. He recognizes Norina, and confusion ensues. After Norina signs the marriage papers, she immediately begins to bully Don Pasquale. Ernesto, now in on the joke, laughs with Malatesta at Norina’s antics. Act two ends as the ensuing chaos reaches its highest point.

In the beginning of the third act, Pasquale reviews all the various expenses that “Sofronia’s” extravagance has incurred. As Norina leaves the house, telling Pasquale she is going to the theater, she drops a note on the ground behind her. Pasquale picks it up and finds that it is a note from a lover asking her to meet in the garden in the evening. He calls for Malatesta to hatch a plan to get rid of his new wife. As Malatesta enters Don Pasquale’s house, he and Ernesto stand on the threshold reviewing their own plan: Ernesto will go into the garden, pretending to be “Sofronia’s” lover. Malatesta then goes to see Pasquale. He reads the note and agrees that they should spy on Pasquale’s bride in the garden.

The final scene of the opera takes place in Don Pasquale’s garden, beginning with a love duet between Norina and Ernesto that Malatesta and Pasquale overhear from their hiding place. Norina sees them, and cries for help, pretending to think they are thieves. Ernesto disappears, and Pasquale confronts Norina about her lover, and she says no one was there. Malatesta tells

“Sofronia” that she must leave because the next day, Ernesto’s new bride Norina will move into the house. “Sofronia” reveals that she knows Norina, and vows that she will not live under the same roof as that terrible girl. She says that if Norina is moving in, she will leave, but first she wants proof that the marriage will really happen. Malatesta suggests that Ernesto and Norina be married right now, so that Sofronia will leave. Ernesto enters, and Malatesta tells him that his uncle will give him both Norina’s hand and a generous annual allowance. “Sofronia” says she is against it, so Don Pasquale consents. At this moment, Norina reveals her identity, and she, Ernesto, and Malatesta entreat Pasquale to let them be married without disinheriting Ernesto. Shocked and amused, Don Pasquale gives in, and the opera ends with all rejoicing at the good news.

#### 4.3.3. Guideposts

The “moment before” of this aria does not occur on stage, but we learn about it after the aria when Norina relates it to Malatesta. She has just been interrupted in reading a fairy tale with a note from Ernesto that says he will be leaving her behind in Rome since Don Pasquale will not give him his inheritance. She goes back to reading her fairy tale and scoffs at the eternal love that the knight in the story swears to his lady. This moment before frames the scene as a very important moment in Norina’s life. She thinks that she is losing Ernesto forever. She must laugh it off or she will fall into despair. If she keeps a cool head, maybe she could even devise a plan to keep Ernesto, but if she falls to pieces there is no hope.

The place in this scene is Norina’s bedroom. In this environment, she is completely at her ease. This allows her to fly freely into fantasy and brag about her skills of seduction in a way she might not in public. It gives the audience a clear view directly into Norina’s mind.

Norina's relationship in this scene is primarily with her inner psyche, personified as the audience. She is alone, talking to herself, but because the singer is actually on stage in an opera, the things she says to herself are directed to her constant companion, the audience. She is fighting to reclaim her self esteem and composure since she has received the news that Ernesto is leaving. The competitive edge to the scene comes from Norina doubting herself. She emphatically declares how skillful she is at seduction, because a voice in her head whispers, "How good can you really be if Ernesto is leaving you?" At all costs, she must convince this voice, in the form of the audience, that she has not lost her touch, but is as cunning and resourceful as ever. Norina is an expert at game playing and role playing. Throughout the scene she deftly navigates an array of roles that she knows how to use in the game of seduction. From charming smiles to full-scale tantrums, Norina is equipped with everything she needs to get what she wants.

The opposite in this scene is the voice inside Norina telling her that she is not worthy of love. After all, Ernesto did decide to leave her with apparent ease. This voice wants her to give up and fall into depression. This gives her something strong to fight against, helping safeguard against all her bragging becoming tedious. Norina herself defines her sense of humor, saying in the middle section of the cabaletta that she prefers to laugh rather than cry or be angry. She gets revenge with a smile on her face. It is important from the perspective of Shurtleff's guidepost that this humor is real and not just passive aggressive. We can take Norina at her word that she genuinely prefers to be good humored, even if she does occasionally lose her temper. Mystery and secret is closely tied to Norina's sense of humor and game playing. Norina has a hundred tricks up her sleeve. Every time we think she has exhausted her tactics, she reveals a new one. She cultivates an identity based on mystery and secret, keeping the audience asking "What will

she do next?” This manifests itself in the music when, at the end of the cabaletta, Norina launches into a coda that quickly jumps to coloratura fireworks in a new key area, as if to defy anyone who would say she is predictable.

Table 4.3 tracks the large musical sections of the aria and suggests one possible event and discovery for each section.

Table 4.3. Norina’s Events and Discoveries		
(Before the music)	<b>Moment Before</b>	Norina has just read Ernesto’s note and became very upset. To console herself, she starts thinking about the fairytale she has just read.
<i>Discovery</i> - ‘What does Riccardo’s lady have that I don’t?’		
<b>Introduction</b>  Instrumental (mm. 1-9)	<b>Music</b>	Harmonic / melodic sequences to measure 8 represent Norina obsessing over her insecurities.  The resolution to G-major illustrates Norina momentarily calming her anger to review the story.
	<b>Event</b>	Norina ponders why Riccardo is so faithful, but Ernesto is so quick to leave.
<i>Discovery</i> - ‘Let’s go back over the events of the story—that will clear it up.’		
<b>Cantabile</b>  “Quel guardo il cavaliere...” (mm. 10-31)	<b>Music</b>	Small internal ABA’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A (mm. 9-18) - PAC</li> <li>● B (mm. 19-22) - Half Cadence (HC)</li> <li>● A (mm. 23-30) - PAC</li> </ul>
	<b>Event</b>	Norina imagines herself as the lady in the story.
<i>Discovery</i> - “If only it were that simple!”		
<b>Cabaletta (A)</b>  “So anch’io la virtù magica...” (mm. 32-87)	<b>Music</b>	Internal ABA’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A (mm. 43-59) - PAC</li> <li>● B (mm. 60-67) - HC</li> <li>● A’ (mm. 68-87) - PAC</li> </ul>
(Table cont’d.)		

**Event** Norina reassures herself that she can seduce whomever she chooses.

*Discovery* - 'I do have my quirks.'

**Cabaletta (B)** **Music** Harmonically unstable and much shorter than A.

"Ho testa bizzarra..."  
(mm. 88-113)

**Event** Norina talks through her quirks and decides they are charming.

*Discovery* - 'I'm in control of my own destiny.'

**Cabaletta (A)** **Music** Bars 125-140 are often cut, which skips the A and B portions, going straight to A'.

"Ah!...So anch'io come  
si bruciano..."  
(mm. 114-160)

**Event** Norina brags about all her skills of manipulation.

*Discovery* - I don't need Ernesto, forget him!

**Coda** **Music** Fireworks and cadential figuration.

"Ho testa bizzarra..."  
(mm. 160-202)

**Event** Norina revels in her brilliance.

*Endpoint* - 'Whatever happens next, I'll be in charge.'

#### 4.4. “Adieu notre petite table” from *Manon*<sup>67</sup>

##### 4.4.1. Text and Translation

Allons! Il le faut pour lui-même... Mon pauvre chevalier! Oh! Oui, c'est lui que j'aime! Et pourtant, j'hésite aujourd'hui.	Come on! It is necessary, for his own sake! My poor chevalier! Oh yes, it is he whom I love! And yet, I hesitate today.
Non, non!... Je ne suis plus digne de lui! J'entends cette voix qui m'entraîne contre ma volonté: Manon, Manon, tu seras reine... Reine... par la beauté!	No, no!...I am no longer worthy of him! I hear that voice which entices me Against my will: Manon! Manon, you will be a queen... A queen...through your beauty!”
Je ne suis que faiblesse et que fragilité... Ah! malgré moi, Je sens couler mes larmes... Devant ces rêves effacés, l'avenir aura-t-il les charmes de ces beaux jours déjà passés?	I am nothing but weakness and fragility... Ah, in spite of myself, I feel my tears flowing... In the face of those destroyed dreams! The future...will it have the charms Of these beautiful days already past?
Adieu, notre petite table, qui nous réunit si souvent! Adieu, adieu, notre petite table, si grande pour nous cependant! On tient, c'est inimaginable... Si peu de place... en se serrant...	Farewell, our little table Which brought us together so often! Farewell, our little table So large, however, for us! One takes up—it's unbelievable— So little room sitting close together!
Adieu, notre petite table! Un même verre était le nôtre, chacun de nous, quand il buvait y cherchait les lèvres de l'autre ... Ah! pauvre ami, comme il m'aimait!	Farewell, our little table! A single drinking glass was ours; Each of us, when he drank, Searched in it for the lips of the other. Ah, poor friend, how he loved me!
Adieu, notre petite table, adieu!	Farewell, our little table, farewell! <sup>68</sup>

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67. Jules Massenet, *Manon* (New York and London: G. Schirmer, 1986).

68. Robert Larsen, ed., *Arias for Soprano* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1991) 1:16.

#### 4.4.2. Context

*Manon* begins at a tavern in Amiens, where two noblemen, Guillot and Brétigny are dining with three actresses named Pousette, Javotte, and Rosette, while the townspeople watch the travelers arriving and departing by carriage. One of the travelers is the beautiful young girl, Manon, who has come to see her cousin, Lescaut, a soldier who loves to gamble, and who has been charged with taking Manon to the convent nearby. Lescaut greets her, and as he goes to get her bags, the elderly Guillot flirts with her and offers her his carriage to take back to his home, where he will meet her later. Manon simply laughs at him, but Lescaut, having overheard Guillot's advances, threatens him and sends him away. He then goes inside to gamble, admonishing Manon not to speak to anyone, lest another man try to seduce her. When Lescaut has gone, the young nobleman Des Grieux arrives to take a carriage to visit his father. He sees Manon, and the two instantly fall in love. They run away together in the coach that Guillot had offered Manon. The act ends with Lescaut frantically looking for Manon and accusing Guillot of abducting her, as Guillot realizes that she has stolen his coach.

The second act takes place in a small apartment in Paris, where the Chevalier des Grieux and Manon have been living together for some time. He is writing a letter to his father, asking for permission to marry Manon, and she is trying to read it over his shoulder. He reads it out loud to her and starts to leave to post the letter. As he is leaving, he notices a bouquet of flowers that he does not recognize. He asks Manon where they came from and she claims someone threw them in the window. She brushes off the incident, accusing Des Grieux of being too jealous. Suddenly, the two lovers hear a racket outside, and Lescaut bursts into the room, accompanied by Brétigny. Lescaut buys Manon and Brétigny some privacy under the pretense of wanting to know whether Des Grieux intends to marry Manon. While Des Grieux reads his letter to Lescaut, outlining all

of Manon's virtues and begging his father's permission to marry her, Manon and Brétigny are able to converse privately. Manon is shocked to see him in Des Grieux's home as it becomes clear that the flowers were a gift from him. Brétigny relates to her that Des Grieux's father will never consent to their marriage, and that his men will come later that evening to take the Chevalier away from her. He tells her that if she warns Des Grieux, his father will disinherit him, but if she does not tell him, the Chevalier will be able to keep his wealth, and he, Brétigny, will make her as rich as a queen in exchange for her companionship. The two guests leave, and Des Grieux goes to post his letter. In the aria, "Adieu, notre petite table," and its preceding recitative, Manon wrestles with the conflict between her love for Des Grieux and her desire for wealth and glamor. She finally decides to let Des Grieux be taken, and bids farewell to the small table they shared together. When Des Grieux returns, the two sit down to dinner at the table together. When a knock is heard at the door, Manon loses her resolve, and tries to stop the Chevalier from answering it. But he does not believe her warnings, and the act ends as he is taken away.

The first scene of the third act takes place on the Cours-la Reine on a feast day. As a chorus of vendors sell their wares, Manon enters on Brétigny's arm, dressed in glamorous clothing and jewels. She sings a song to the people gathered around about the pleasures of being young and beautiful. When she has finished singing, the Chevalier's father, the Comte des Grieux appears and enters into conversation with Brétigny. Manon overhears the Comte thanking Brétigny for his help removing his son from her company, and telling him that the Chevalier has gone into the church and will be giving an oratory that evening at the church of Saint Sulpice. When Brétigny goes to find Manon a new bracelet, she addresses the Count, and asks him whether his son has been able to forget the young woman he abandoned. The Count assures her that his son has forgotten all about her, and is now studying to be a priest at the and

then departs. As Guillot attempts to win Manon's favor by paying for a lavish opera performance to take place for her at the Cours-la-Reine, she leaves for the church of Saint Sulpice in the hopes of being reunited with the Chevalier.

The second scene of the third act begins as a chorus of ladies who have attended Des Grieux's lecture sing the praises of the young preacher's rhetorical skills and handsome personage. A dialogue follows between Des Grieux and his father, in which the Chevalier tells his father he will take his vows to enter the ministry, and the Count tries to convince his son to marry an eligible woman instead. Seeing that his son is determined, the Count leaves him. When alone, Des Grieux prays to heaven to take away Manon's image from his heart so that he can find peace. At the end of his prayer, Manon herself enters the chapel and begs Des Grieux to forgive her and to take her back. After much resistance, the Chevalier agrees, and the act ends as the reunited couple leave the church together.

The fourth act takes place in a tavern where a crowd of gamblers is gathered. Manon convinces Des Grieux to try to win a fortune through gambling, since they are now destitute. Guillot plays the Chevalier at cards to try to defeat him to exact revenge for stealing Manon away from him. When the Chevalier is winning, Guillot leaves and comes back with the police, saying that Des Grieux stole from him. The Comte des Grieux enters and tells the police to arrest his son, then whispers in his ear that he will soon be released. The Chevalier asks what will become of Manon. The Count replies that she will be arrested and exiled with the other women of loose morals. The act ends as Des Grieux tries desperately to protect Manon, until she is finally arrested.

In the final act, Des Grieux and Lescaut stage an attempt to rescue Manon from her captors. By the time Des Grieux is able to see Manon, she is too weak and sick to go with them.

The pair reminisce about the happy moments they shared together, and Manon dies in the Chevalier's arms.

#### 4.4.3. Guideposts

As with Ännchen's aria, this moment before happens on stage. Manon has just been told that Des Grieux's father will disinherit him if he insists on marrying her. Brétigny, in telling her this, has promised to make her rich in exchange for her companionship. Her dilemma is whether she should give up her dreams of wealth to be with the man she loves, or abandon him so that they both can want for nothing. This creates an important crossroads in Manon's life. At this moment she must choose between glamor and love. The place in this aria is the little apartment in Paris that Manon and Des Grieux have been sharing. This place creates an atmosphere of nostalgia and longing for the hours the couple have spent together. The music, rather than illustrating any specific aspect of this place, reveals the feelings that Manon associates with it.

The relationship that Manon explores in the scene is that of the two sides of herself, the one that wants to stay with Des Grieux, even if they have to live in poverty, and the one that wants to live like a queen. It is helpful to personify these two sides as Des Grieux and Brétigny. This way, Manon has two people with opposing worldviews to argue with in the recitative. Manon is conflicted over her love of Des Grieux and her excitement at the thought of wealth and status. Her need to know which view is right and which one is wrong creates a sense of competition between the two ideas and an urgency of communication between the two voices within Manon that are arguing the case for each perspective. This also produces the sense of game playing and role playing in the scene as Manon alternates between each perspective.

There are two ways to answer the question, "What is Manon fighting for?" She could either be fighting to leave Des Grieux, in which case she is fighting *against* her love for him, or

she could be fighting to choose Des Grieux, against her desire for wealth and comfort. This is a case in which Shurtleff leads us in a direction that might not be intuitive just from looking at the text. After all, Manon spends the majority of the recitative talking about her desire for wealth, and the entire aria bidding farewell to the home the two have shared. However, Shurtleff encourages actors to always make the positive choice of objective, to fight for something they actively want.<sup>69</sup> For this reason, this paper will suggest choosing that Manon is fighting *for* her love of Des Grieux. She is fighting against all the reasons she mentions in the aria that it would be better to leave. This interpretation gives her a more compelling reason to be on the stage singing this aria. It is less interesting to watch someone reminisce about a decision that they have already made than to see two sides of an issue being weighed in real time. In this interpretation, Manon does not fully decide to leave Des Grieux until her final “Adieu.”

This aria is characterized by a very strong opposite. Though Manon is fighting to stay with Des Grieux, there is a strong voice inside her that tells her she would be better off living like a queen. Manon spends most of the aria contemplating this opposite, rather than her positive objective. In fact, the opposite wins out by the end of the aria, though not the end of the act, as Manon changes her mind just before Des Grieux is captured, maximizing the tragedy of the situation. All Manon’s bidding farewell to the table can be seen as a desperate attempt to hold on to every instant of their love. This is a compelling interpretation, as it gives her a positive reason to stay on the stage. It also helps cultivate mystery and secret, since it will be unclear, even by the end of the aria, what it is that Manon really wants. Throughout the opera, Manon’s sense of humor is a constant presence. Though it will be more subtle in this scene, it would not make

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69. Shurtleff, “Shurtleff on Acting.”

sense for it to disappear entirely. She might laugh at the irony of her situation, or at something funny that happened in the moments she is remembering between herself and Des Grieux.

Table 4.4 tracks the large musical sections of the aria and suggests one possible event and discovery for each section.

Table 4.4. Manon's Events and Discoveries		
(Before the music)	<b>Moment Before</b>	Des Grieux leaves. Manon is alone for the first time since she learned about the choice she must make.
<i>Discovery</i> - 'Now is the moment I must decide.'		
<b>Recitative Part 1</b> "Allons! Il le faut!..." (mm. 1-18)	<b>Music</b>	The scene immediately preceding this one, in which Des Grieux cheerfully said goodbye to Manon, was in G-major. The opening of this recitative recontextualizes the tonic as the third of the flat-submediant (Eb-major). This gives the impression that Manon wants to be as sure of their love as is Des Grieux, but she cannot find that level of certainty within herself.
		Unstable tonality coming from G-major via Eb-Major and Bb-major.
	<b>Event</b>	Manon tries to convince herself to give up wealth and stay with Des Grieux, but is seduced by glamor.
<i>Discovery</i> - 'I'll never be able to live in poverty, I'm too fickle.'		
<b>Recitative Part 2</b> "Je ne suis que faiblesse..." (mm. 19-26)	<b>Music</b>	Transition to G-minor.
	<b>Event</b>	Manon dreads what the future would be like without Des Grieux.
<i>Discovery</i> - 'If I leave, I'll never eat another meal with him again.'		

(Table cont'd.)

**Aria**

“Adieu, notre petite table...”  
(mm. 75-92)

**Music**

Very Small ABA Pattern

- A (27-34, “Adieu notre petite table...”)
- B (35-38, “On tient, c’est inimaginable...”)
- A (39-50, “Adieu notre petite table...”)

There is no PAC anywhere in the piece until the final “Adieu.” It could be argued that the whole aria never actually leaves G-Major. The only PAC in the whole work resolves to G-Major, and the next thing that happens, after a brief chromatic transition, is in C-Major. So the aria could be perceived as one long meandering voyage right back to where it started.

**Event**

Manon reminisces about the good memories with Des Grieux, trying to see any way around leaving.

*Endpoint* - ‘I must leave, I don’t have a choice.’

#### 4.5. “Monica’s Waltz” from *The Medium*<sup>70</sup>

##### 4.5.1. Text

Bravo!  
And after the theatre, supper and dance  
Music!

Oom pah pah,  
Oom pah pah...

Up in the sky,  
Someone is playing a trombone and a guitar.  
Red is your tie,  
And in your velveteen coat, you hide a star.

Monica, Monica, dance the waltz.  
Follow me, moon and sun,  
Keep time with me, one two three one.

If you're not shy,  
Pin up my hair with your star and buckle my shoe.  
And when you fly,  
Please hold on tight to my waist,  
I'm flying with you,

Oh...  
Monica, Monica, dance the waltz.  
Follow me, moon and sun,  
Follow me, follow follow me!

What is the matter, Toby?  
What is it you want to tell me?  
Kneel down before me  
And now tell me

Monica, Monica, can't you see  
That my heart is bleeding, bleeding for you?

I loved you Monica all my life  
With all my breath, with all my blood,  
You haunt the mirror of my sleep, you are my night  
You are my light and the jailer of my day.

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70. Gian Carlo Menotti, *The Medium* (New York, G. Schirmer, 1967).

How dare you, scoundrel, talk to me like that!  
Don't you know who I am?  
I'm the queen of Aroundel!  
I shall have you put in chains!

You are my princess, you are my queen,  
And I'm only Toby, one of your slaves.  
And still I love you and always loved you  
With all my breath, with all my blood!

I love your laughter, I love your hair.  
I love your deep and nocturnal eyes.  
I love your soft hands, so white and winged,  
I love the slender branch of your throat!

Toby!  
Don't speak to me like that...  
You make my head swim.

Monica, Monica, fold me in your satin gown!  
Monica, Monica, give me your mouth!  
Monica, Monica, fall in my arms!

Why, Toby!  
You're not crying, are you?  
Toby, I want you to know that you have  
The most beautiful voice in the world.

#### 4.5.2. Context

With the help of her daughter, Monica, and their mute Gypsy servant boy Toby, the medium Madame Flora, also known as Baba, tricks grieving people into believing that they are making contact with their deceased loved ones. In the opera's opening sequence, the three conduct a seance with their clients, Mr. and Mrs. Gobineau, who lost their two-year-old son, and Mrs. Nolan, whose 16-year-old daughter recently died. The clients are deeply moved as Madame Flora's mystical demeanor, Monica's impersonation of their departed children, and Toby's manipulation of the lights and levitation of the table through an intricate rigging system, convince them that they are in the presence of their lost loved ones once again. In the height of

the ritual, Baba suddenly feels a hand on her throat. She abruptly ends the seance in terror. When the clients leave, Baba accuses Toby of placing his hand on her throat to frighten her, flying into a rage while Monica attempts to calm her down. As Baba comes to her senses, the voices of the children Monica was imitating can be heard coming from offstage. Baba accuses Toby again, and the act ends as she prays for their souls.

The second act opens with “Monica’s Waltz,” as Toby puts on a puppet show and the two teenagers play games of make-believe together. The game ends as Monica fantasizes that Toby is in love with her. At first Toby plays along with the fantasy, but at the end he begins to cry. As Monica comforts him, Baba can be heard drunkenly dragging herself up the stairs outside. She enters and begins to harass Toby, trying to make him admit that he is the one who touched her throat during the seance. In the height of the chaos, the doorbell rings and the clients from the previous day enter. Baba tries to return their money, telling them the seances were fake. She even shows them Monica’s impressions and Toby’s scenic tricks. The clients answer confidently that the voices Monica is making are not the ones that they heard. They exit, refusing to take back their money, saying that, whatever she may have thought, Madame Flora’s seance was real. When they have left, Baba turns to Toby and tells him to leave and never come back. Monica goes to her room as Baba sits in the dark alone, hearing voices. After a while, Baba falls asleep and Toby returns looking for Monica. He hides behind the puppet theater as Baba awakes. Baba sees the curtain moving, and aims a revolver at it, warning the intruder that if they do not identify themselves, she will shoot. The curtain moves again and Baba fires at it, killing Toby. Monica rushes into the room, and the opera ends as Baba holds Toby in her arms, gazing into his eyes, saying “Was it you?”

### 4.5.3. Guideposts

As in the case of Ilia's aria, this aria begins the act, so the libretto does not provide the interpreter of the role with a moment before. However, the last scene of the previous act was very dark. It will help the singer to understand how Monica got from her mother's manic episode over the presence of ghosts to play acting and puppet shows with her close friend. The moment before for this scene should also explain why Toby and Monica find themselves alone and how they decided to start playing their fanciful games. The audience has already seen both Toby and Monica act roles in a fantasy world in the context of Madame Flora's seance. These two teenagers live in a world of fantasy, both for their livelihood and as a coping strategy against the bleak reality of their lives with Madame Flora. A plausible moment before might be that Madame Flora went out to drink away her sorrows, since she returns drunk after this aria, and Toby and Monica seized the opportunity to use their considerable talents for fantasy to entertain one another.

The place for this aria is Madame Flora's parlor, the same place where we have seen Toby and Monica use their skills to stage a fake brush with the supernatural for Madame Flora's clients. The air of the supernatural and uncanny hangs in the air. This is a room where fantasy reigns supreme. Here, nothing could be more natural than the series of games that Toby and Monica play together. The games are more important today than ever before, because it comes on the heels of a very disturbing week as Madame Flora, who was already unstable, falls into a much worse state of paranoia and abuse. This game offers the only brief moment of normal childhood available to these two characters.

The relationship between Monica and Toby is defined by the fact that they have been friends for a very long time. They are now both on the cusp of adolescence, and are beginning to

develop romantic feelings for each other as well. In this scene, Monica is fighting to cheer Toby after her mother has harassed and threatened him because of her paranoia. To this end, she entertains him with elaborate game playing and role playing through various fantastic imaginary situations. The competition is to see who can come up with the best fantasy to act out, and communication is essential to the fun of these games.

Monica’s opposite is the thought that the games could fail to lighten the mood at any moment, sending them back into their former state of distress. This heightens the stakes of the game, making it imperative that she successfully create an atmosphere of fun with Toby. Monica’s sense of humor can be found in her delight at the inconsistency of people, as illustrated in the capriciousness of the characters she plays in her fantasies with Toby. There is also a degree of mystery and secret in her process of invention. Only she knows why she makes the characters and the rules of the game the way that she does.

Table 4.5 tracks the large musical sections of the aria and suggests one possible event and discovery for each section.

Table 4.5. Monica’s Events and Discoveries		
(Before the music)	<b>Moment Before</b>	Baba went out to the liquor store. Toby looks like he has an idea for a fun game.
<i>Discovery</i> - ‘Oh! It’s a puppet show! What fun!’		
<b>Introduction / Recitative #1</b>	<b>Music</b>	Rhythmically free and conversational.
“Bravo! And after the theater...” (mm. 1-7)	<b>Event</b>	The end of Toby’s puppet show and Monica’s suggestion of the next game.

(Table cont’d.)

*Discovery* - 'Let's go to a fancy ball!'

<b>A</b>	<b>Music</b>	Waltz rhythm ( $\frac{3}{4}$ time).
"Umpapa...Up in the sky..." (mm. 8-26)		
	<b>Event</b>	Monica and Toby fantasize about dancing together at a fancy party.

*Discovery* - 'Toby wants to play a different game.'

<b>Recitative #2</b>	<b>Music</b>	Free rhythmically. Almost no accompaniment while Monica sings.
"What is the matter, Toby?..." (mm. 27-34)		
	<b>Event</b>	Monica establishes a new game for Toby.

*Discovery* - 'Let's pretend I'm the queen and he is a slave who is in love with me.'

<b>B</b>	<b>Music</b>	Still waltz rhythm, but slightly slower and more lyrical.
"Monica, Monica, can't you see..." (mm. 35-41)		
	<b>Event</b>	Monica acts out a passionate love scene between herself and Toby.

*Discovery* - 'I wouldn't just give in!'

<b>C</b>	<b>Music</b>	The metrical accents of the music are at odds with the text stresses, adding to the instability of this moment musically.
"How dare you, scoundrel..." (mm. 42-44)		
	<b>Event</b>	Monica resists Toby's advances in the game.

*Discovery* - 'But he would probably persist...'

(Table cont'd.)

**B'**

**Music** Most chromatically saturated part of the aria.

“You are my princess,  
you are my queen...”  
(mm. 45-54)

**Event** Monica gets carried away. Toby realizes he wishes this was not a game.

*Discovery* - ‘Toby is upset all of a sudden.’

**Recitative #3**

**Music** Brings back material from the A section.

“Why, Toby! You’re not  
crying, are you?...”  
(mm. 60-68)

Ends with an open-ended cadence.

**Event** Monica comforts Toby.

*Endpoint* - Monica and Toby discover that they have romantic feelings for each other.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Findings

None of the analytical insights applied to the arias in the previous section are meant to contribute to a definitive dramatic interpretation of the works. Instead, the most important results of this study are the questions that were examined, the way in which they were posed, and their sequence. The particular dramatic choices that have been suggested serve only to illustrate the kind of result that this procedure can yield based on the individual singer's preferences. When preparing an aria dramatically, it is difficult to know at what point the piece is ready for performance. The procedure followed in studying the selected arias establishes a solid baseline for dramatic preparation. One can always prepare more, but once all twelve of Shurtleff's guideposts have been addressed according to this approach, a dependable framework has been formed that one can choose to build upon or use as it is.

In this approach, the moment before, place, and importance set the stage for the aria to begin by setting up the basic premises of the scene, including its reason for inclusion in the opera. Relationship, conflict, communication and competition, and game playing and role playing provide the essential components of the scene, establishing the basic elements of who is present, what the character wants, and how the characters communicate and interact. Opposites, humor, and mystery and secret add nuance to the scene by considering ideas that may not be directly articulated in the opera's libretto. The opposite gives the character not only something to fight for, but something equally strong to fight against. Humor and mystery and secret simultaneously reveal the character's personality and acknowledge that some of it will remain unknown to anyone but the character herself. With all of this in mind, the character's moment-to-moment life can be scaffolded by finding the large sections of the work's musical form, and

identifying the events that correspond to them and the discoveries that produce the shifts between them.

Once a baseline level of preparation has been achieved through these steps, the guideposts can continue to guide further research. For example, a guidepost may elicit a question that leads the performer to read the original source material or research the practices and customs from the historical period in order to find an answer. This kind of work can help to add to the reality of the world of the opera, without neglecting the immediate demands of performing the piece. In the same way, this approach can provide a way to gauge what level of musical analysis is helpful in preparing an aria. There may be compelling answers to the questions generated by the guideposts embedded within the harmonic, melodic, and formal structure of the music. The guideposts could also be used in the voice studio to address issues of vocal technique and phrasing, as the meaning behind the piece affects the way it will be sung. While vocal instruction must alternate between purely technical issues and matters of musical interpretation, it can be helpful to incorporate textual meaning into approaches to technique as early as possible, so that the two elements can be more easily integrated later on.

## **5.2. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

This exploration of Shurtleff's guideposts has limited itself to only these five specific arias for soprano. Further study might apply these ideas to a wider range of repertoire, including arias for other voice types, or even exploration of whole operas from this perspective. Art song might also be approached through this lens with certain modifications, for example to accommodate the conventions of poetry that stands alone as opposed to drama. Another study might explore operas written before *Idomeneo* and after *The Medium*. There are many famous works and arias to which this framework could be applied. The approach demonstrated in this

study could also be examined in more detail with relation to the existing frameworks for actors or used to influence the formation of another method of dramatic preparation entirely.

One important restriction of the present study is that it has sought to suggest a procedure by which today's opera singers can develop their personal interpretations to character in historical operatic works. It therefore has not addressed issues of historical performance practice. Music historical research might attempt to evaluate the intentions of the composer and librettist with regard to characterization through the use of primary sources. A study conducted in the field of theater history might shed light on this topic through exploration of acting techniques in contemporary use with each opera. Likewise, more detailed music-theoretical research could be conducted through a more extensive analysis of an operatic work or works through the lens of dramatic technique as elucidated by Shurtleff's guideposts.

Another interesting line of research might be one aimed at understanding how these ideas relate to the techniques in common use in professional opera companies. Questions could be devised based on this or related acting systems for use in interviews with established operatic artists in a qualitative study designed to find key concepts that emerge across the experience of various industry professionals. This could yield insight into the effectiveness of the strategies advocated in this study and might suggest revisions to refine the process with respect to what works for professional singers in practice. A similar type of qualitative study could analyze interview responses from directors or teachers of operatic acting to determine this method's correlations with the techniques already in use.

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## Vita

Jamey Wright, born in Tampa, Florida is currently a student in the D.M.A. Vocal Performance program at Louisiana State University, studying with soprano Sandra Moon and minoring in Music History. She received a Bachelor of Music degree in 2016 from the University of Florida, where she studied with baritone Tony Offerle, and performed the role of Mimì in *La bohème*. In 2018, she graduated from the University of Arizona with a Master of Music degree, having studied with soprano Elizabeth Futral and tenor Hugo Vera, and performed as Lucia in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. Jamey has performed and covered various opera roles in her career at LSU, including, Mariola in the collegiate premiere of Jake Heggie's *Two Remain*, Constance in Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*. Jamey is interested in interdisciplinary research involving the art of classical vocal performance, including contributions from theater, dance, voice science, education, and psychology.