THE EVOLUTION OF THE *HELDENTENOR*:

SIEGMUND, GRIMES, SAMSON, AND OTELLO

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this manuscript is to set into context a recital which highlights the attributes of the *Heldentenor.* The recital was held on 11 March 2014 and was comprised of operatic excerpts from Wagner's *Die Walküre* (1870), Saints-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* (1877), Britten's *Peter Grimes* (1945), and Verdi's *Otello* (1887). All four of these operas have become mainstays in the repertoire of the *Heldentenor*. The program from the recital appears in the appendix at the end of this manuscript, and the program includes translations of the operatic excerpts and the text of spoken introductions that were read as part of the recital.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the *Heldentenor* voice classification has played an integral role in popular opera theater. The origin of the *Heldentenor* classification can be traced back to the abrupt change in the performance practice of the upper register of the tenor voice with the now famous performance of the full-throated, chest high Cs in Rossini's *Guillame Tell* sung by Gilbert-Louis Duprez (1806-1896) at the national opera in Paris in 1837.[1] As the technique involving the upper register of the tenor voice changed, the vocal and dramatic demands placed on the voice type increased. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the *Heldentenor* voice classification had emerged from the popular operatic compositions of Giuseppe Verdi, Richard Wagner, and several of their contemporaries. Since that time, this voice type has played a major role in opera theater. In fact, the creation of the *Heldentenor* marked a shift in vocal pedagogy and musical style for the tenor voice that has had wide ranging effects for generations of singers and composers. Even though the cultivation of the heavier *Heldentenor*

[1] Stephen F. Austin, "'Like the Squawk of a Capon' - the Tenor Do Di Petto," *Journal of Singing* 61, no. 3 (January/February 2005): 309.

often requires time, patience, and careful training, new artists possessing the rare dramatic vocal color and the ability to sing over large, powerful orchestras continued to emerge throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The purpose of this manuscript and accompanying recital is to define the *Heldentenor* in terms of its voice classification and dramatic musical style. A pedagogical discussion on the *Heldentenor* voice and an understanding of the distinctions between voice classification and the *Fach* system are central to this purpose. Also, the history and development of the heroic voice type are imperative in order to understand its evolution. Through commentaries, biographical material, reviews, and articles, this manuscript will explain the forces that led to the creation, establishment, and subsequent progression of one of the most specialized and rarest of voice types in the operatic repertory, the *Heldentenor*.

Students and teachers attempting to train in this difficult voice classification must understand the history of the repertoire and persons who have achieved success singing it. For this reason, an account of the important *Heldentenors* who have propelled the voice type forward will also be included in the discussion. This manuscript will provide a better understanding of both the historical and developing trends that contribute to the *Heldentenor* voice in order to provide new singers with better insight regarding the training and performance practice of the *Fach*.

DEDICATION

Whether you are an aspiring opera singer or a doctoral student seeking to finish years' worth of study and work, the fact remains that without the love and support of friends and family, the task can be too much for one to bear. For this reason, this manuscript and recital are dedicated to my parents who pushed me to complete my task and also to my wife Mabs, who is a constant inspiration and loving partner.

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Undoubtedly, my deepest thanks are reserved for Dr. Susan Fleming, the chair of my committee. Even before I began my degree study, she proved to be one of the most supportive and influential people in my musical life. Beyond her abilities as a fine teacher, she has been both a patient cheerleader and strong motivator. Without her mentoring and guidance, I would have failed long ago in my pursuit of this degree. I would like to thank Dr. Paul Houghtaling also for making me love dramatic opera again. Without his fantastic staging of *Pagliacci* and allowing me to sing the role of Canio, I would not have rekindled the passion for an art form that had meant so much to me in my early musical career. As I have become a better conductor, I have become a better singer, and for this growth I am eternally grateful to Dr. John Ratledge and the time I have spent studying with him. I also would like to thank the other members of my doctoral committee, Dr. Stephen Peles, Dr. Linda Cummins, Professor Amanda Penick, and Dr. Elizabeth Aversa, who have led me through this process. Your knowledge, guidance, and valuable time have been so very much appreciated.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: On the Importance of the *Heldentenor*

> "The *Heldentenor* is a specialist. He is chiefly a Wagner singer. His fate is Tannhäuser (*Tannhäuser),* Siegmund (*Die Wälkure),* Tristan (*Tristan und Isolde*), Siegfried (*Götterdämmerung*), and Parsifal (*Parsifal*). Given current expectations of vocal timbre and weight in the Wagnerian voice, his life is not easy."[2]

The preceding material, from Richard Miller's *Training Tenor Voices,* presents a description of the *Heldentenor*. The book has become instrumental both for teachers and singers in developing an understanding of the tenor voice and the challenges inherent in its training. Miller is correct; the *Heldentenor* is indeed a specialist. The roles he is asked to sing are among the most difficult in the repertoire, requiring immense stamina, a robust sound, and a dramatic presence on stage. The name itself, *Heldentenor*, from the German meaning "heroic tenor," commands a certain colossal image.

To be sure, few tenors rise into the heroic voice classification;[3] even so, less dramatic voices still are called upon to accept the challenges of the *Heldentenor* repertoire, much to their detriment. Historically speaking, these heavy roles were written for a specific kind of singer with key vocal, dramatic, and physical attributes. As such, this voice classification was created by the desire of composers who favored the larger, darker, more dramatic vocal sound. The *Helden*

[2] Richard Miller, *Training Tenor Voices* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 12.
[3] Pearl Yeadon McGinnis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide: Understanding the European Fach System*, ed. Marith McGinnis Willis (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 58.

voice and its attributes were necessary in order to negotiate the dramatic musical and stage demands required by Verdi, Wagner, and others. In response to these artistic demands, breakthroughs in vocal training enabled singers to develop a heavier tenor sound. Once tenor voices could make the proper sounds, composers began to create new kinds of dramatic roles for them to sing. The subsequent vocal pedagogy concerning the training of the *Heldentenor* voice classification had its influence on the evolution of the kinds of voices that would sing the repertoire. As a result, defining a pedagogical understanding of the *Heldentenor* is necessary for the purposes of this discussion.

CHAPTER 2

The Pedagogy of the *Heldentenor*: Voice Classification vs. *Fach*

Most professional opera singers and voice teachers appreciate the usefulness and protection afforded them by careful selection of operatic arias and operatic roles. Certainly, understanding both voice type classification and the German *Fach* system is of utmost importance for every aspiring singer who desires a long and healthy career. From the early stages of classical voice study, students, with their teachers' guidance, begin the process of settling into a voice category that both fits their vocal abilities and characteristics, and provides a guide for choosing appropriate repertoire. Over the span of a career, most professional singers will progress from one voice classification to another, most often from a lighter classification to a heavier, more dramatic classification.[4] This vocal evolution is the natural course for most voice types. The same is true for the development of a *Heldentenor*.

Indeed, an important distinction exists between the process of deciphering one's voice classification and understanding the repertoire appropriate for one's *Fach*. Voice classification more readily associates with a pedagogical understanding of the singer's voice with specific and measurable attributes such as range, *tessitura*, timbre, vocal weight, areas of *passaggi*, registration, and agility.[5] The *Fach* system, from the German meaning simply "category," is used more for the proper choice of repertoire and does not necessarily delve deeply into classifying a

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 7.

particular voice type. As Sandra Cotton states, "Despite the fact that *Fach* listings carry the titles of particular voice types, to consider *Fach* and voice classification synonymous would be to allow for the possibility that voice classification, like *Fach*, is dependent on market trends."[6] The repertoire associated with a particular *Fach* can change based on market forces, the size of a theater, the nationality of an opera house, and the ever-changing preferences of operatic audiences.

For instance, in the United States, the voice classification of *tenore lirico* normally would be cast in the role of Tamino from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (1791) and would be well within his *Fach*. However, German houses prefer a fuller, bigger sound for the role and therefore tend to cast a *tenore lirico spinto* and at times a young dramatic often referred to as *Jügendlicher Heldentenor*, meaning "youthful dramatic tenor." As he ages, a *Jügendlicher Heldentenor* will be cast in roles reserved specifically for the *Heldentenor Fach* because the scarceness of true *Heldentenors* creates the necessity. In this case, the singer is said to be singing "out of *Fach*," and continuing to do so tends to shorten the overall life of one's career. In *Training Tenor Voices*, Miller describes this problem as the "*spinto* complex."[7] Simply put, this complex refers to the frequent request by conductors for a tenor to sing roles that are heavier than the singer's vocal capacity. Miller states, "With increasing frequency, conductors encourage lyric tenors to sing *spinto* roles, and *spinto* tenors to sing *robusto* roles, assignments that are too heavy for them. The vocal-tragedy landscape is littered with tenors whose careers have been terminated early by taking on the roles of Lohengrin or Otello when they should have stayed with Rodolfo."[8] Therefore, an appreciation of the difference between voice classification and *Fach* is

[6] Sandra Cotton, "Fach vs. Voice Type: A Call for Critical Discussion," *Journal of Singing*, 3rd ser., 69 (November/December 2012): 153.
[7] Miller, *Training Tenor Voices*, 126.
[8] Ibid.

important. Regarding the development of the *Heldentenor*, voice classification, rather than the market forces that drive the *Fach* system, requires examination.

In terms of the attributes of the *Heldentenor*, easily discernible distinctions separate the voice category from the more lyric tenor classifications. As such, the terms *dramatic tenor* and *Heldentenor* can prove two very different classifications depending on the nationality of the singer and the progression from which the singer has developed. For instance, a *dramatic tenor* may have developed with age from the Italian classification t*enore lirico spinto*, associated mostly with Italian *verismo* and Verdi repertoire. In the late nineteenth century, the *verismo* movement in Italy marked a divergence from the *bel canto* tradition that had been the hallmark of the Italian style. The composers of the *verismo* style chose librettos that represented a more realistic view of everyday life and was often centered on the lives of the lower class. The *verismo* operas were written in a more dramatic musical style than their *bel canto* predecessors. Therefore, the music written for the characters of these operas tends to be less *legato* than the *bel canto* style and requires a more dramatic singer to accurately portray the intention of the composer. While the repertoire of the *Heldentenor* is certainly different from that of the *dramatic tenor*, it is still possible for a *dramatic tenor* to sing many of the *Heldentenor* roles. This is the most common evolution for a lighter tenor voice to ascend into the *Heldentenor* voice classification. However, many high baritones and even *Heldenbaritons* can carry the robust sound of their chest voices into the upper register and sing much of the *Heldentenor* repertoire. The two singers may sing the same repertoire, but because of the direction from which they developed into a *Heldentenor*, their respective sounds will be very different. So too will their approaches to the roles differ. Miller discusses this delineation between the two types of progression into the *Heldentenor* classification:

> Some "heroic" tenors emerge, in vocal maturity, from the baritone *Fach*. These singers tend to continue registration practices more appropriate to the baritone than to the tenor category. With some frequency, the *passaggi* of this *Fach* are identical to those of the *tenore robust* (C4-F4), but some current *Heldentenors* have *passaggi* points as low as those of the *Heldenbariton* (heroic baritione)–near Bb3 and Eb3–and they manage upper pitches of the voice by pushing up "chest voice" function far beyond healthful practice.[9]

Because of the aforementioned disparity in which a *Heldentenor* may develop, significant differences exist regarding the key attributes constituting the classification. The range of a *Heldentenor* is commonly between C3 and C5. However, many *Heldentenors* possess several notes below C3, and some who began as baritones early in their study will have a consistent low range to G2. Likewise, most *Heldentenors* that possess the coveted "high C," or C5, have most often developed from the lighter tenor classifications. With respect to *tessitura*, the *Heldentenor* classification tends to lie much lower than that of the lighter tenor classifications. Very little separation exists between the *Heldentenor tessitura* and that of the baritone, especially the Verdi baritone. For this reason, the proper registration for the *Heldentenor* consists of a tenor voice with a baritone-like quality in the middle and lower registers of the voice that can project those registers over a large orchestra. However, being able to project in the lower and middle registers alone does not make one truly a *Heldentenor*. The rich, baritone color in the middle and lower registers is necessary for a true *Heldentenor*. Much to their detriment, many lighter tenors may sing repertoire found in the *Heldentenor Fach* simply because they possess voices loud enough to project over a large orchestra. Likewise, many budding *Heldentenors* are mistakenly labeled as high baritones due to the rich color in the voice.[10]

For many reasons, most singers find that singing the repertoire of the *Heldentenor Fach* for a large portion of their career puts increased wear on the vocal instrument and at times can

[9] Ibid., 13.
[10] Ibid., 138.

shorten the career of even the most accomplished singers. However, exceptions exist for this claim. Lauritz Melchior (1890-1973), the reigning *Heldentenor* of the first half of twentieth century, enjoyed a successful fifty year career comprised of mostly Wagnerian tenor roles and Verdi's *Otello*. Like other *Heldentenors* before him, Melchior began his professional stage career as a lyric baritone. He sang Silvio in *Pagliacci* (1892) at the Royal Opera in his hometown of Copenhagen in 1913.[11] He sang baritone repertoire in a professional theater for five years, during which time he began the training necessary to navigate the difficult repertoire of the *Heldentenor Fach*. To Melchior, this progression seemed natural. He even stated that "it was almost mandatory for a real Heldentenor to have been a baritone first. He considered it to be a logical sequence."[12] In the twenty-first century, one would be hard pressed to find an example of a successful true *Heldentenor* enjoying such a natural progression.

[11] Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "Melchior, Lauritz," in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Williams. Macy (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 315.
[12] Marc A. Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 165.

CHAPTER 3

The Lineage of the *Heldentenor*

> "Returning to France, he was engaged at the Opéra, where he made his début in *Guillame Tell* (1837), achieving immediate and overwhelming success with Paris audiences. His 'chest' C, in spite of the disappointment of Gioachino Rossini, who compared it to 'the squawk of a capon with its throat cut', aroused wild enthusiasm and affected the taste of the public, who would listen to *Guillame Tell* only when Duprez was singing."[13]

The preceding excerpt from *The Grove Book of Opera Singers* is taken from an entry discussing the operatic career of tenor Gilbert-Louis Duprez. It best describes the turning point in the performance practice for the leading tenor voice in opera. Duprez began his study as an accomplished *tenore di grazia*, a tenor with a light, agile voice capable of singing the *bel canto* tenor roles of Mozart, Bellini, and Rossini.[14] This entry states, "Duprez was already outstanding as a student for the breadth and incisiveness of his phrasing, though his voice was not large. Gradually he became the first great *tenore di forza*…"[15] This development was not by happenstance. Duprez "knew that his usual technique would not be satisfactory in this large piece with a big orchestra."[16] Trained in the older singing tradition, Duprez felt his instrument

[13] Sandra Corti, "Duprez, Gilbert-(Louis)" in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Williams. Macy (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 136.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

insufficient for the dramatic and vocal demands necessary for the role of Arnoldo in Rossini's *Guillame Tell* (1829).

Prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, the accepted practice for the high register for a tenor was linked to *falsetto di testa*, meaning reinforced falsetto voice. The sound of a reinforced falsetto tone in the tenor's high register carries much less vocal weight and volume than that of the full chest voice. The timbre is also much brighter and somewhat nasal in comparison to the chest voice.[17] If a tenor is committed to singing the high register utilizing *falsetto di testa,* then his subsequent lower registers also would contain less chest sound and could be intentionally subdued. One could argue then that prior to Duprez, the accepted tenor sound was much less powerful than today's most lyric of tenors.

During this performance of Rossini's *Guillame Tell,* "the change came like a lightning bolt" for tenors and the expectations that audiences and composers alike placed on these singers.[18] Duprez was singing the role of Arnoldo which, although a secondary role, still contained challenging passages for even the most accomplished tenor. Arnoldo's fourth act aria "Asile héréditaire" twice ascends to a sustained high C in the stretta section following the aria. The tenor is expected to carry this high C above a fortissimo orchestra and fortissimo chorus, thereby making the task that much more demanding.[19]

Duprez felt the old tradition of a *falsetto di testa* high C insufficient for the dramatic demands of the moment. For this reason, he set out to train his voice to carry the chest sound into the upper registers. The bigger and more virile high note "caused quite a reaction by those in attendance, many of whom were thrilled while others were outraged by what they considered to

[17] Austin, "'Like the Squawk of a Capon' - the Tenor Do Di Petto," 309.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Sandra Corti, "Duprez, Gilbert-(Louis)," 136.

be an uncultured and ghastly scream."[20] The popularity of Duprez's *do di petto,* meaning chest voice high C, began a dispute among opera enthusiasts and composers alike.

Arguably, Duprez changed the course of the technique of the tenor voice, especially regarding singing in the upper registers. Other notable tenors during and prior to this time attempted to carry the chest voice from the middle register through the *passaggio* and into the high tenor voice. Most notably, Domenico Donzelli (1790-1873) had some success in singing beyond the *passaggio* with a chest voice sound. He "was active during the period Duprez was in Italy re-training himself from lyric tenor to heroic tenor, and doubtless Duprez studied his technique closely."[21] However, Duprez and his chest high C brought the *tenore di forza* into the mainstream of operatic performance.

After 1837, Duprez succeeded Adolphe Nourrit (1802-1839) as the leading tenor of the Paris Opéra. Nourrit lost his position due in no small part to the transitioning operatic standard for the tenor voice initiated in this same house by Duprez. Although Nourrit had been trained in the *tenor di grazia* tradition, he feared the end of his career lest he learn this new technique.[22] Henry Chorley describes Nourrit's plight when he writes, "Possibly less in his less gloomy moments, he believed that his day was not yet over; that he had still energy to recompose himself anew; that he would, in short, have a chest voice in place of his nasal and brilliant *falsetto di testa* and learn that honeyed and long-drawn *cantabile* which his countrymen were beginning to praise as an indispensable treasure."[23] Nourrit enjoyed only mild success at times and endured much difficulty in mastering the new technique. After years of frustration and several physical

[20] Austin, "'Like the Squawk of a Capon" - the Tenor Do Di Petto," 309.
[21] Ibid., 311.
[22] Ibid., 310.
[23] Henry Fothergill Chorley, *Music and Manners in France and Germany* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1984), 138-9.

ailments, he jumped from his hotel room, committing suicide the morning following a disappointing evening concert.[24]

Although Nourrit enjoyed little success with this new technique, he was praised throughout his career for his stagecraft and his ability to portray dramatic characters. Surely the vocal approach to these roles had begun to evolve, but as Henry Pleasants affirms in his book, *Great Singers*, Nourrit had become known for creating some of the most intensely dramatic characters to date:

> Other tenors may have created more roles, although it is doubtful. No other has created a comparable number of roles so substantial and so enduring. Indeed, until Verdi and Wagner came along, it could be said that Nourrit, virtually singlehanded, had made a repertoire for the dramatic tenor. And singers of so recent memory as Caruso and Martinelli could thank Nourrit for Éléazar, in which each of them found one of his most congenial roles.[25]

Duprez, his thrilling *do di petto*, and his subsequent singing career all marked a pivotal time in the technique of the tenor and on the types of roles written for the emerging dramatic sound the tenor voices now had acquired. As stated previously, Adoplhe Nourrit was known for his creation of dramatic characters on the operatic stage even if he did not possess the chest voice sound later associated with the very roles written for him. Once this new technique became widespread throughout the operatic world, composers began to take full advantage of the dramatic vocal ability modern tenors were able to provide.

[24] Austin, "'Like the Squawk of a Capon'" - the Tenor Do Di Petto," 311.
[25] Henry Pleasants, *The Great Singers; from the Dawn of Opera to Our Own Time* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 167.

CHAPTER 4

The New Voice Type

In the second half of the nineteenth century, German and Italian composers began to write repertoire specifically for these heavier weighted tenor voices. Until this time, the driving force in operatic composition was focused upon the ability of specific singers, especially the castrati. Certainly, in the era of the castrati and the phenomena of the "trunk aria," a composer's treatment of the orchestration, libretto, and structure of the opera itself all were in the service of the singer. The practice of replacing an existing aria in a given opera with an aria of the singer's choosing was known as the "trunk aria." The "trunk aria" was frequently not found in the opera that was being performed and was chosen most often to showcase the singer's florid vocal ability. John Potter describes the impact this new technique had on compositional preferences in the mid-nineteenth century when he writes, "The lower larynx singing and powerful chested high notes made their voices less agile but gave them a wider range of tone colour–far more like the voice we know today. The mid-century composers such as Verdi were not interested in how florid their tenors could be, but how intensely dramatic, putting their vocal resources in the service of the music and not the other way around."[26] Now that the tenor's dramatic stage ability was matched with a sufficient dramatic vocal ability, composers were given the opportunity not only to increase the size of the orchestra, but also to increase the dramatic demands of this new romantic tenor. The darker timbre and more commanding presence of this chest tone also

[26] John Potter, *Tenor: History of a Voice* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 59.

rendered the tenor voice capable of portraying characters previously relegated to other voice types. Potter explains that the disappearance of the castrati combined with the emerging romantic tenor "clarified the roles that tenors could play."[27] As this new vocal color solidified the tenor's place in the accepted character paradigm, other voice types began to settle into the types of characters that would become the norm for well into the next century. Basses and baritones experienced this effect as composers such as "Bellini had already realized that basses would not make good romantic leads, and Verdi exploited the baritone for mature characters that a hundred years before might have been opera seria tenors."[28] Potter summarizes, "That left tenors to be lovers…"[29]

Verdi continued to write romantic leading male roles for the tenors trained in this new technique that had become widely known as the Italian school of singing. The roles that he created for the romantic tenor are classified in the *spinto Fach* and *tenore lirico Fach*. Indeed, the title role of *Otello*, written for Francesco Tamagno (1850-1905) who previously had created the title role of *Don Carlos* and also Adorno in *Simon Boccanegra*, is the only role created by Verdi that can be classified purely as *Heldentenor*.[30] Although Tamagno might not be classified as a *Heldentenor* by today's standards, he "possessed the most powerful tenor voice of his day– sheer sound, with ringing high notes."[31] This vocal strength ultimately won him the debut of the role despite Verdi's misgivings regarding his inability to produce the required softer, more expressive parts of the duet ending the first act and the death scene that closes the opera.[32] As the Grove Book of Opera Singers states, "His greatest triumph came on 5 February 1887, when he

[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] McGinnis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide*, 35.
[31] James A. Hepokoski, *Giuseppe Verdi, Otello* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 97.
[32] Ibid.

created Verdi's Othello…Tamagno's heroic voice, with its brazen, trumpet-like top notes, was heard to best advantage in Verdi roles, especially Othello, which displayed the magnificent strength and security of its upper register."[33] Accordingly, Tamagno experienced immediate success with his portrayal of the Moor.

Tamagno's success in the role set the mark for tenors who would succeed him in this most difficult of endeavors. The role of Otello "was one of the most taxing tenor parts ever written and was created specifically for the unique talents and the vocal *persona* of Tamagno." [34] Otello remains as one of the most difficult roles in the repertoire for its requirements of immense vocal endurance, intense physicality, and dramatic complexity. These aspects set *Otello* apart from all of the other roles created for tenors by Verdi. Although perhaps not his intention, Verdi's treatment of the role and its vocal and physical demands place it squarely in the domain of the *Heldentenor*, and the singers who experienced success singing the roles of Wagner would experience success portraying his *Otello*.

Certainly Verdi, Wagner, and the composers of the *verismo* movement in Italy helped redefine the role of the tenor into the late nineteenth century. However, this trend was not limited to Italy and Germany. Camille Saint-Saëns' dramatic French masterpiece, *Samson et Dalila*, is set apart from the other operas of French composers of the nineteenth century. Samson is the only French role appropriate for the *Heldentenor* voice, due in large part to the Germanic influence on the composer. After much turmoil associated with the production of the opera in France, the work ultimately premiered in Weimar in 1877, and it was sung in German.[35] In fact, the role of Samson "can be delivered quite well by artists who are not specialists in French

[33] Elizabeth Forbes, "Tamagno, Francesco" in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Williams. Macy (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 484.
[34] Potter, *Tenor: History of a Voice*, 61.
[35] Stephen Blier, "The Secret of Samson's Strength," *Opera News*, February 28, 1998, 9.

music."[36] Samson fit well into the mold of a *Heldentenor*. Samson had to have an imposing, strong physique with the brazen vocal delivery that was the hallmark of a heroic tenor such as Francesco Tamagno. Tamagno later would premiere the role at the Metropolitan Opera in New York to wide acclaim.[37]

Nevertheless, Wagner ultimately advanced the art form. Potter writes, "Despite their attempts to revitalize singing, the Italian composers, steeped in old tradition, did not try to re-invent it; that project fell to Wagner."[38] Wagner sought to create a new art form, the *Gesamtkuntswerk,* meaning "complete art form." He desired a complete unification of music, drama, and art, placing no higher importance on any one element. Subsequently, "Wagner's attitude to singers was complicated by the conflicting demands of sound traditional technique and the artistic considerations of the *Gesamtkuntswerk*, in which the singing was only one element."[39] Wagner did not concern himself with the finer points of the *bel canto* style of singing that was central to the Italian operatic art form. His treatment of the vocal line was not challenging in terms of range. A *Heldentenor* very rarely was asked to reach the same heights commonplace for the lighter Italian voices. Though, Wagner's music placed the tenor in an uncompromising *tessitura* with prolonged periods in the *passaggio*. Wagner "does not write excessively high for the tenor as that would compromise the relationship between musical declamation and the reality of speech; but for the same reason he expected tenors to be able sustain long periods in the least comfortable parts of the voice, the so-called *passaggio* between the chest and head registers. The task is made doubly difficult by the dense orchestration the

[36] Ibid., 10.
[37] Ibid., 11.
[38] Potter, *Tenor: History of a Voice*, 62.
[39] Ibid., 66.

composer favoured."[40] This approach to the tenor voice was in an attempt to serve the drama rather than the singer.

Wagner had a new vision for the singer and his place in the complete art form. He required a tenor to have both "unity of faultless technique and flawless acting."[41] He continued to write for these heavier-voiced tenors, and although they possessed voices that could fulfill the demands of Wagner's early compositions, ultimately, it took some time for the *Heldentenor* archetype to emerge. Albert Niemann (1831-1917) was "perhaps the first true *Heldentenor*, with a real understanding of *Sprechgesang,* the declamatory delivery Wagner expected."[42] Niemann began his musical career as a *comprimario* singer, but began training as a heroic tenor studying with the famed Duprez.[43] Wagner's tenor must possess a commanding physique and voice of size and endurance, but he also must understand the artistic expression demanded by the composer. Niemann embodied the characteristics Wagner sought in his heroic tenor. Accordingly, Potter writes, "Of immense physical stature, Niemann was unrivalled as Siegmund and Tristan during his lifetime. His powerful, heroic tenor voice could express, according to a contemporary, not only 'love and hate, sorrow and joy, pain and delight, but also anger, despair, scorn, derision and contempt.'"[44] He made the New York premiere of Tristan and the Paris premiere of Tannhäuser. Furthermore, "[h]e also created the role of Siegmund in the 1870 premiere of *Die Walküre* at Munich and also sang it during the first complete *Ring* cycle at Bayreuth (1876) and in the first cycle given in London, at Her Majesty's Theater (1882)."[45] Niemann would find success in the majority of Wagner's *Heldentenor* roles.

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 65.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Elizabeth Forbes, "Niemann, Albert," in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Williams. Macy (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 347.
[44] Ibid., 347.
[45] Ibid.

The leading tenor roles of the *Ring* cycle, Siegmund and Siegfried, would prove two of the most important roles in the *Heldentenor* repertoire, but for different reasons. Siegfried is arguably one of the most vocally demanding roles in the *Fach,* both for the unusual appearance of a high C and for its prolonged stout singing, even well above the staff. In many ways, Siegfried could be considered a pinnacle role for the *Heldentenor*.

In a very different way, Siegmund has become the most important role for many young aspiring *Heldentenors.* The more lyric role of Siegmund has served as a gateway into the *Heldentenor* repertoire for young heroic tenors. Indeed, the Act I aria "Winterstürme" can be perceived more accurately as a Schubert Lied rather than the dramatic *Sprechgesang* of Wagner's style. Also, the *tessitura* of the role is much lower than that of the Italian and French repertoire which most tenors are comfortable singing. The *tessitura* is even lower than most of the roles written by Wagner.[46] This lyrical nature combined with the lower tessitura makes the role very desirable for budding *Heldentenors* searching for a vocally safe entrance into the repertoire. Even to the present, Siegmund continues to serve as a proving ground for young *Heldentenors* who desire to make a career in the *Fach*.

As Wagner found tenors that possessed this necessary combination of true artistry and vocal power, the *Heldentenor* voice type became solidified in the operatic world. The vocalism and style of this new singer was different than that of the virtuosic style of the Italian school preceding it. As Potter states, "Wagner's concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* had no place for the old virtuosic vocalism, or singers adding improvised decoration to the meticulously wrought lines. Instead, they were offered an intellectual window into the composer's world as interpreters of the work at a far deeper level than the merely vocal. It is from this time onwards that singers can call

[46] Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*, 166.

themselves artists."[47] The vocal demands and the necessity of vocal power emanated not from a desire for a powerful sound in itself, but from an understanding of the proper place of the singer in the hierarchy of the complete art form. The singer is but one more instrument in the orchestral scheme. Therefore, he must be able to carry himself in this much larger orchestral model. These artistic requirements meant that for Wagner's music, a tenor trained in the old tradition would not suffice. Accordingly, Wagner created a new voice type that "constituted a daring and revolutionary event in the history of operatic composition."[48] These roles required "a kind of singer with a vocal apparatus ill-suited to much of the Italian and French repertoire."[49]

The development of Wagner's new artistic model for the *Heldentenor* voice featured a risk, especially related to scarcity. The training institutions for tenor voices for much of the time period, even following the revelation of the chest voice high register, were ill-equipped to produce the kind of powerful singing-artist Wagner required. Certainly, while audiences may have appreciated this art, it still represented "a professional gamble, for by inscribing this vision of a different singer into the scores of his music dramas, Wagner turned his back on the vocal practices found in the operatic institutions of Europe upon which, as a composer, he was dependent."[50] Although Wagner might have had difficulty finding an adequate supply of singers to fill his demands, by the turn of the century, singing-artists possessing that rare ability to project over large orchestras while negotiating the difficult tessitura began to emerge.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Jean de Reszke (1850-1925) was one of the first *Heldentenors* to enjoy a successful international career in both Wagnerian repertoire and some of the more lyric Italian and French roles that would come to be included in the *Fach*. He was

[47] Potter, *Tenor: History of a Voice*, 68.
[48] Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*, 164.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 166.

praised for his distinct artistry, and although he preserved much of his lighter repertoire late into his career, his "Heldentenor performances were sensational successes, uniting his unfailing musicianship with a charismatic stage presence and dramatic intensity not seen since Schnorr."[51] Ludwig Schnorr (1836-1865) was one of Wagner's most preferred *Heldentenor* collaborators early in his composing. In Schnorr, "Wagner had finally met a singer whose ideas about music were as poetic and philosophical as his own, and who was perfectly tuned to the composer's aesthetic."[52] Jean de Reske was the successor to this art form, and "like Wagner's protégé, the Polish tenor saw the master's work as something almost sacred."[53]

[51] Potter, *Tenor: History of a Voice*, 66.
[52] Ibid., 64.
[53] Ibid., 71.

CHAPTER 5

The European Heroics of the Early Twentieth Century

By the turn of the twentieth century, Wagner's new vision for a music drama and the kinds of singers that would fill these roles had taken hold. As new artists specializing in the *Heldentenor Fach* emerged, a trend began to develop in their ascent into the repertoire. Still true for some singers today, the *Heldentenors* of the early twentieth century began their singing careers in lighter, more lyric dramatic repertoire. Some retained the ability to sing even the most lyric of Mozart roles reserved for a very different voice classification. As has become custom in Wagner's day, many *Heldentenors* of this time began their careers as baritones.[54]

Leo Slezak (1873-1946) was one of the finest examples of this type of *Heldentenor*. Beginning his career in the twilight of the nineteenth century, he was a contemporary of the great Italian tenor Enrico Caruso (1873-1921). Where Caruso would be hailed as one of the greatest interpreters of the famous lyric and dramatic repertoire of the Italian composers, Slezak was considered the heir of Jean de Reszke.[55] In fact, soon after he began his career specializing in the Wagnerian heroic tenor roles in Vienna under the tutelage of Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), Slezak left in 1907 to spend time studying with de Reszke. Potter writes, "It was de Reszke who taught him to spin out the high mezza voce which became his trademark."[56] This newfound ability for

[54] Ibid., 153.
[55] Ibid., 154.
[56] Ibid., 155.

nuance served him well as Verdi's *Otello* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1909, "where he was hailed as a more lyrical Tamagno (who had originally created the role)."[57]

The successor to Slezak and arguably the most successful, wealthiest, and most widely popular *Heldentenors* of the twentieth century was Scandinavian-born Lauritz Melchior. A specialist in all of Wagner's heroic tenor roles, he trained in much of the same way as Slezak, having studied with Victor Biegel, an accompanist of de Reszke who was well versed in de Reszke's style of singing.[58] Melchior found success in all of the major opera houses in both Europe and the United States singing "at Covent Garden every year from 1926 to 1939, and after a shaky start at the Met went on to become one of the most successful tenors in the history of the company, singing all of the heavier Wagner roles and becoming as iconic in New York as the Met itself."[59] Melchior possessed all of the attributes that have come to be associated with the *Heldentenor* voice classification. He was a man of substantial build and was barrel-chested. These physical characteristics could have contributed to the view that his stage acting was, to some extent, rigid and lacking a certain amount of warmth. That said, his vocal construction became the model by which all other *Heldentenor* voices are judged. His voice was "always associated with an unusually dark, deep, and heavy sound."[60] Even late into his career, "a certain baritonal warmth remained a welcome characteristic, but there was no corresponding constriction in his top notes; Siegfried's lusty high C always rang thrillingly."[61] Despite the difficulty and the unruly demands placed on the singers who choose to make a career of the Wagnerian heroes, Melchior sustained a clear and healthy voice well into his 60s. Even late in his career, Melchior still exemplified all the "key attributes of a great Heldentenor: a thrilling, slightly baritonal sound

[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., 156.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*, 164.
[61] Shaw-Taylor, "Melchior, Lauritz," 315.

that was even over at least two octaves, a beguiling mezza voce, immaculate diction, and above all stamina: his immense physical frame ensured an ability to sound fresh at the end of the most demanding roles as he did at the start."[62] These characteristics have become the standard of the *Heldentenor*.

Other notable tenors accomplished much success singing the heroes of Wagner during the first half of the twentieth century. Born in Sweden, Set Svanholm (1904-1964) was another Scandinavian who, like Melchior, made his debut as a lyric baritone, but soon discovered he had the potential for a career as a *Heldentenor*. Like many other *Heldentenors*, he found some success branching out into other repertoire, namely that of Benjamin Britten (1913-1976). He was the first Swedish Peter Grimes, a role that has become a mainstay of the *Heldentenor* repertoire.[63] Three of the greatest German *Heldentenors* to emerge after World War II were René Kollo (b. 1937), Siegfried Jerusalem (b. 1940), and Peter Hofmann (1944-2010). Kollo "was a pop singer, Siegfried Jerusalem a bassoonist, and Peter Hofmann a paratrooper before they felt called to the Fach."[64] Much like many of their predecessors, all three began their musical lives in a profession other than that of a *Heldentenor*.

[62] Potter, *Tenor: History of a Voice*, 157.
[63] Ibid., 158.
[64] Ibid., 161.

CHAPTER 6

The Emergence of the North American *Heldentenor*

For the latter half of the twentieth century, most of the internationally acclaimed *Heldentenors* have emerged from North America. While the big-voiced tenors of this time had to travel to Germany for adequate training in the art of the Wagnerian sound, gradually the United States has become proficient in the training of the *Heldentenor* voice. American *Heldentenors* Jess Thomas (1927-1993) and James King (1925-2005) first trained in Germany before they enjoyed any real success in the United States in the Wagnerian repertoire. Accordingly, "Thomas was the first American to be accepted in Europe as being on a par with native German Heldens, and his success probably made it easier for North American tenors to achieve recognition in Europe."[65] Like many before him, James King began his singing life as a baritone, having sung baritone roles in productions at Louisiana State University where he graduated in 1949. Years later, while teaching voice at the University of Kansas City, he trained as a *Heldentenor*. After making key debuts in many of the large opera houses of the world, James King "moved to the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich for the rest of his career and from there maintained an international profile that included La Scala, Covent Garden and many return visits to the Met."[66]

One of the most important *Heldentenors* of North America was the Canadian born Jon Vickers (b. 1926). He received his training at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. One of the first *Heldentenors* to avoid studying for a long period in Germany before he took on the

[65] Ibid., 165.
[66] Ibid., 166.

Wagnerian repertoire, he made his highly successful Bayreuth debut at the age of thirty-two in the role of Siegmund.[67] Vickers possessed an unusually large, bright, wide open sound unlike any voice that preceded him, and he also possessed a stout physique. The combination of his uniquely powerful voice, his commanding stature, and his intelligent dramatic presence made him quite suitable for the *Heldentenor* repertoire and also for some roles that at the time were not associated with the *Heldentenor Fach*. The most notable of these roles, Peter Grimes, became most closely associated with the career of Jon Vickers.

Benjamin Britten composed the role of Peter Grimes for his life-long partner Peter Pears (1910-1986), who possessed a voice that was very different from the voice of Jon Vickers. By the standards of the twenty-first century, the two voices would be defined in two very different voice classifications. Where Vickers fit squarely in the *Heldentenor* classification, Pears' voice was best described as an "English Tenor." Pears possessed an unusual tenor voice whose *tessitura* was most comfortable in the *zona di passaggio*, between C#4 and F#4. For most tenor voices, this is a rather difficult area to sustain for substantial amounts of time. Pears did not have much comfort with the highest points of the tenor range, nor was he able to project some of the lowest. Still, he did have an aptitude for negotiating this difficult area of the *passaggio*, and because of this ability, all the roles created for him by Britten highlighted this unique quality. The role of Grimes was no different. That said, unlike some of the characters created for Pears, the role of Peter Grimes required an immense dramatic nature combined with a person of stentorian presence who also had the ability to sing a well-supported *mezza voce*. These circumstances made the role ideal for *Heldentenors*, Jon Vickers especially.[68]

[67] Harold Rosenthal and Alan Blyth, "Vickers, Jon(athan Stewart)," in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Williams. Macy (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 520.
[68] Jeannie Williams, *Jon Vickers: A Hero's Life* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999), 143-144.

Although other *Heldentenors* sang the role before Vickers, none before had enjoyed the kind of success Vickers did with Grimes. In fact, "Vickers is now even more identified with it than its creator, Peter Pears, although Pear's shadow hung over Vickers for many years in England."[69] Vickers' triumph with a role seemingly outside his *Fach* did not go unnoticed by the singer. Vickers, lacking nothing in self-confidence, stated many times that he did not try to classify himself or his singing into a specific *Fach*, nor did he try to redefine the nature of the voice classification. Vickers stated simply, "I made my career on the basis of refusing to be classified. I have fought tooth and claw. I find it amusing when people say, 'Oh, Siegmund is absolutely for you.' Then they turn around and say, 'Peter Grimes is just built for you.' This is nonsense. Siegmund is the other end of the spectrum from Grimes. So when people say these parts were built for me, it is not true. I have made myself conquer these parts."[70] He simply declared that he would not allow the music, or the public, or the business structures of the operatic world to determine the type of singing or the roles that he would attempt.

While the operatic world may have considered Vickers the reigning heroic tenor of his generation, he would refuse the title not because he thought himself unworthy or incapable of the demands of the *Heldentenor Fach*, but because he knew that by keeping his repertoire varied, he would preserve his instrument. To that end, Vickers stated, "Italian caresses the voice while the German exploits it."[71] He believed that by keeping the Italian repertoire in his voice along with the German, he would preserve his voice.

The clear successor to Vickers, Ben Heppner (b. 1956) also does not regard himself as a pure *Heldentenor*. He also hails from Canada and sings a varied repertoire including German and Italian as well as some French and English operatic repertoire. Similar to Vickers, he is

[69] Ibid., 142.
[70] Ibid., 142-143.
[71] Potter, *Tenor: History of a Voice*, 167.

considered the reigning *Heldentenor* of his generation, whether or not he agrees. Born in British Columbia, Ben Heppner has experienced wide success with the *Heldentenor* repertoire throughout the world. He has become well known for his interpretation of Tristan, especially at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.[72] Yet, he possesses vocal qualities typically not found in the traditional singers of the *Heldentenor* classification. He has stated before that he considers himself a "lyric-dramatic" and not a pure *Heldentenor*.[73] Still, Heppner has won acclaim for his portrayals of Otello, Peter Grimes, Walther in Wagner's *Meistersinger*, Lohengrin, and the aforementioned Tristan.[74] While considered the reigning Wagnerian tenor of the last decades of the twentieth century into the beginning of the twenty-first century, Heppner has reached the twilight of his singing days.

[72] Elizabeth Forbes, "Heppner, Ben," in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Williams. Macy (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 222.
[73] Sarah Bryan Miller, "Lyric Tenor Ben Heppner Handles Romantic German Repertoire Well," *Post-Dispatch* (St. Louis), January 1, 1999, Five Star ed., Everyday Magazine sec.
[74] Forbes, "Heppner, Ben," 222.
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CHAPTER 7

The Evolution Continues

In the first fourteen years of the twenty-first century, a clear successor to Ben Heppner has not yet emerged. Unquestionably, singers have taken on the repertoire of the *Heldentenor Fach*. The operas of the *Fach* remain quite popular and therefore must be produced in order for supply to meet demand. That said, because of the lack of pure *Heldentenors*, a trend has begun to surface in the operatic sphere with the potential for negative effects for both the singer and the art form alike. As has been discussed in an earlier chapter concerning the pedagogy of the voice classification, the *Heldentenor* has a specific timbre, registration, comfortable *tessitura*, a unique *zona di passaggi*, and most often a large physique. These characteristics are quantifiable, measurable qualities recognized as the historical definition of the *Heldentenor* voice classification. However, one does not have to be measured to the standards of the voice classification in order to sing the repertoire found in the *Fach*. This gap exists between voice classification, a pedagogical subject, and *Fach*, simply a category of operatic roles that can be influenced by market trends.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, a shortage of true Heldentenor singers, let alone a heroic voice with the fame and acclaim of Melchior, Vickers, or even Heppner, exists.[75] Instead, the *Heldentenor* roles are being filled by tenors much more lyric than the *Fach* normally demands. Not to mention that the paths by which these tenors have attained such roles are very

[75] Potter, *Tenor: History of a Voice*, 167.

different than those of their heavier voiced predecessors. In his 2009 book *Tenor: History of a Voice*, Potter discusses the issue of the scarcity of *Heldentenors* when he writes, "Not only are fewer tenors making the transition to more dramatic roles as they mature, but often those who possess the potential to assume heldenhood do not want to risk losing more comfortable dramatic repertoire."[76] Such a risk could be one cause of the shortage of true heroic tenors. Certainly, the dramatic and vocal demands found in the repertoire can shorten singing careers if not handled properly. Still, such an understanding does not account for the success that previous *Heldentenors* have experienced throughout a lifetime of singing the repertoire.

Perhaps the structures that have trained these voices in the past somehow have changed. As has been stated previously, most *Heldentenors* began their singing careers as baritones and were afforded the time and careful training necessary to develop to the higher, heavier voice. In a related New York Times article, the writer suggests that the current training structure, the Young Artist Program circuit, prefers lighter, more lyric voices over the larger voices simply because the lyric voices are more useful to the organizations.[77] The Young Artist Programs are owned and run by opera companies frequently expecting their young artists to fill minor roles and covers at a much cheaper price rather than actually serving the artists in their training. This arrangement would account for their scarce use of heavier voices, as they are ill-suited for these minor roles and take much more time and care to train than the company is willing to invest. As the writer asserts, "One clear measure of the problem is the system's inability to deal with large voices and talents…It seems to favor lighter, flexible voices that can perform a wide range of material accurately, rather than the powerful, thrilling, concert-hall-filling voices on which live

[76] Ibid.
[77] Anne Midgette, "The End of the Great Big American Voice," *The New York Times*, November 13, 2005, Making Artists sec.

opera ultimately relies for its survival."[78] She goes on to say that "the vaunted apprentice programs tend to look for singers they can actually use in smaller roles, rather than simply train."[79]

Furthermore, market forces have strained the very definition of the *Helden* voices. Larger voices tend to be encapsulated in larger bodies. Past *Heldentenors* all had grand physiques. However, the current trend has pushed for a preference for "light, agile voices in young, attractive bodies."[80]As it has been stated and was defined in the previously cited article, "They may be pretty to listen to–and certainly to look at–but they are not ultimately as interesting as bigger, more mature voices. Nor do they have the same staying power. Plenty of young American singers have sprung onto the scene only to fizzle within a few years."[81] With the popularity of high definition broadcasts and the age of DVD operas in demand, the preference for a different body type likely has had an effect on the casting of these roles.

Although a shortage of true *Heldentenors* exists, the demand for the operas that require true *Heldentenors* remains quite strong. Therefore, the roles must be cast with the tenors on hand, *Helden* or otherwise, who will agree to sing the roles. The current trend sees many successful lyric tenors who have reached the twilight of their careers committing themselves to only a few of the heavier Verdi and Wagner roles, as they know this commitment comes with a price. The February 2014 issue of *Opera News* features a review of the Lyric Opera of Chicago's staging of Wagner's *Parsifal*. A perfect example of the current trend is found in this review of the tenor Paul Grove's debut of the title role:

[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

> As with his predecessor in this piece at the Civic Opera House–the much missed Gösta Winbergh, who took on Parsifal when Lyric Opera last mounted the work, in 2002 – Groves has made the transition from Mozart and the lyric tenor repertory to heavier assignments. Groves does not wield an overpowering heldentenor, which may be a liability to some listeners, but he is an intelligent artist who skillfully dispatched the 'pure fool' with his own natural voice and to fine effect.[82]

Numerous examples of this same occurrence exist, too numerous for the purpose of this manuscript. However, the *Heldentenor* is continuing to evolve. Whether that evolution is detrimental to the singer and the listener alike is still to be determined. Certainly even fifty years ago, these lyric voice types would be considered inappropriate for the roles they are asked to sing, especially in an opera house as big and of the caliber as the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

[82] Mark Thomas Ketterson, "In Review from around the World," *Opera News*, February 2014, 40.

CONCLUSION

As with other voice types, the *Heldentenor* voice was created from a combination of artistic expression and pedagogical possibility. Distinct forces have guided the birth and maturation of the *Heldentenor* voice classification. Composers' desires, coupled with the demands of audiences and comprisarios alike, all have contributed to the current knowledge regarding the heroic voice. If not for Duprez and his thrilling *do di petto*, the trajectory of the evolution of the tenor voice would be vastly different. If the tenor had not gained this new found vocal ability, it is unknown if the composers who favored the dramatic aspect of the voice would have created the same stentorian characters. Similarly, it is unknown whether the *Heldentenor* would have risen to such high esteem in the operatic world had these roles not gained such overwhelming public popularity. If the structures that enabled the training of these *Helden* superstars endured to the present, perhaps a larger stock of singers might exist to fill the demands of the operatic public. While it is difficult to determine how the *Heldentenor* is evolving, one claim is certain. The *Heldentenor* is evolving, or to state more accurately, the voice types asked to satisfy the public's hunger for the repertoire are evolving.

For this reason, voice teachers, singers, directors, and impresarios alike, must appreciate the difference between voice classification and *Fach*. Current tenors such as Paul Groves may be singing repertoire found within the *Heldentenor Fach*, but an educated listener would not classify him as a member of the *Heldentenor* voice classification. Certainly these dramatic operas of Verdi and Wagner, Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila*, and Britten's *Peter Grimes* are

widely popular and will continue to fill the performing seasons of the great opera houses of the world. However, the question of appropriate casting of these roles remains. In the past, the *Heldentenor* voices were of such esteem that those singers possessing the potential for the vocal gift were given the proper maturation period in which to develop into the *Fach*, so as to be able to fulfill the composer's original intentions in a healthy manner. At the present, the expediency of the current operatic market and the deficiencies inherent in the vocal training organizations will have an effect on the singers who decide to take on the challenges demanded by this repertoire. If more lyric voices are asked to fill the void left by the scarcity of true *Heldentenor* voices, these lighter voices are more likely to pay a price for singing "out of *Fach*." John Potter states this most clearly in his book, "Historically, voices have appeared and disappeared in response to demand, and the future of the Heldentenor will be no different in this respect."[83] That said, continued evolution is inevitable, whether pleasing to the listener and healthy for the singer or not.

[83] Potter, *Tenor: History of a Voice*, 168.

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APPENDIX

DMA Recital
Tuesday, March 11th, 2014
Recital Hall
5:30PM

James Seay, Tenor
Ten Yeen Chong, Piano
Opera Ensemble, Daniel deShazo, Conductor
Sandy Draper, Sarah Justus, Kate Gates, and Catherine Hoop, Soprano
Mabs Seay, Amy Lea Todhunter, and Lindsay Turner, Alto
Jeron Burney, John David Ryan, Alex Woods, and Avery Berry, Tenor
Jonathan Ledger, Matthew Eubanks, Paul Looney, and Bryant Bush, Bass

Ein Schwert verhiess mir der Vater from *Die Walküre* — Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Winterstürme from *Die Walküre* — Richard Wagner

Act III, First Tableau: *Vois Ma Misère* from *Samson et Dalila* — Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Act II, Aria and Duet: *Mon Coeur…Mais! Non!* from *Samson et Dalila* — Camille Saint-Saëns
James Seay (Samson) and Mabs Seay (Dalila)

INTERMISSION

Go There! from *Peter Grimes* — Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Grimes! Grimes! from *Peter Grimes* — Benjamin Britten

Niun mi tema from *Otello* — Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in Voice Performance

Program of the 2013-2014 Season

TRANSLATIONS

Ein Schwert verhiess mir der Vater from *Die Walküre* Richard Wagner

My father promised me a weapon. I'd find it in greatest need. Unarmed I fall in my enemy's house. Now I stay here to seal his revenge. A woman's here, lovely and fine. Bewitching fears consume my heart. She to whom I'm drawn by desire, she who's magic pierces my soul, is chained here to the man who mocks my helplessness! Wälse! Wälse! Where is your sword, the mighty sword I would wield in battle? Is it supposed to take shape and burst from my trembling heart? What glitters in the shadows there? What's that radiance in the ash tree's boughs? I'm blinded by the shimmering flash laughing there in the dark. How the lovely sight affects my heart! Or did the radiant woman's two eyes leave their gleam hanging there on the branch as she walked out of the room? Nocturnal darkness covered my eyes, but her shimmering gaze shone down on me; then I had daylight and warmth. Blessed sunlight lit up my eyes. Its joyous radiance shone all around, until it sank out of sight. Now once again I see, this diminishing light; and the ancient ash tree's trunk reflects its golden rays. The light's extinguished, the color's gone. Nocturnal darkness covers my eyelids; yet in my bosom's depth there still burns a hot lightless fire.

Winterstürme from *Die Walküre* Richard Wagner

Winter storms give way to the joyful moon. In gentle moonlight springtime appears. On fragrant breezes, light and lovely, weaving wonders as he goes; through wood and meadow wafts his spirit, open wide his eyes rejoice. He sings his message out of the songbirds' throats. Soothing vapors leave his lips. Out of his warm blood the flowers take their refreshment. Seed and shoot rise up through his power. With tender weapons springtime conquers the world. Winter and storm yield to his mighty arms. And to his invincible blows the rigid walls also crumble that stubborn and strong barred our way to him. To his own sister he makes his way, for Love entices the spring. Inside our bosoms they were concealed; but now they are smiling in the light. Enamored, the brother courts his own sister. What held them separate now lies in ruins. Crying out the young pair is joined. United are Love and the Spring!

Act III, First Tableau: *Vois Ma Misère* from *Samson et Dalila* Camille Saint-Saëns

Samson

Look down on me, Lord! Have mercy on me! Behold my woe! Behold sin hath undone me! My erring feet have wandered from Thy path, and so I feel the burden of Thy wrath! To Thee, O God, this poor wrecked life I offer! I am no more than a scorn to the scoffer! My sightless eyes testify of my fall; upon my head hath been shed bitter gall!

Chorus

Samson, why thy vow to God hast thou broken? What doth it betoken?

Samson

Alas! Israel, loaded with chains, from God's holy face sternly banished every hope of return hath vanished, and only dull despair remains! May we regain all the light of Thy favor! Wilt Thou once more Thy protection accord? Forget wrath at our reproach, O Lord – Thou whose compassionate love watches ever!

Chorus

God meant thou shouldst take they command to lead us to our fatherland; Samson! Why thy vow hast thy broken? What doth it betoken?

Samson

Brothers, your complaint voiced in song reaches me as in gloom I languish. And my spirit is torn with anguish to think of all this shame and wrong! God! Take my life in expiation! Let me alone Thine anger bear; punishing me, Thine Israel spare! Restore Thy mercy to our nation!

Chorus

He for a woman sold his power! He to Delilah hath betrayed us! Thou who wert to us like a tower – Why hast thou slaves and hopeless made us?

Samson

Contrite, broken-hearted I lie, but I bless Thy hand in my sorrow! Comfort, Lord, let Thy people borrow, let them escape! Let them not die!

Act II, Aria and Duet: *Mon Coeur…Mais! Non!* from *Samson et Dalila* Camille Saint-Saëns

My heart opens to your voice like the flowers open to the kisses of the dawn! But, oh my beloved, to better dry my tears, let your voice speak again! Tell me that you are returning to Delilah forever! Repeat to my tenderness the promises of old times, those promises that I loved! Ah! Respond to my tenderness! Fill me with ecstasy! *Dalila! Dalila! I love you!* Like one sees the blades of wheat that wave in the light wind, so trembles my heart, ready to be consoled, by your voice that is so dear to me! The arrow is less rapid in bringing death, than is your lover to fly into your arms! Ah! Respond to my tenderness! Fill me with ecstasy! *Dalila! Dalila! I love you!*

Niun mi tema from *Otello* Giuseppe Verdi

No one need fear me or my sword. Behold the end of my journey. The glory of Othello is over. And you -- so pale -- so lifeless -- silent – and yet so beautiful. Poor creature -- born under a dark star. Cold, as your chaste life. Now you go to Heaven. Desdemona. Beloved. Ah! Dead, dead, dead. I have one more blade! Before I killed you, wife, I kissed you. Now, dying, in the darkness that surrounds me. . . A kiss. . . Once more. . . A kiss. . . One final kiss.

INTRODUCTIONS

Ein Schwert verhiess mir der Vater from *Die Walküre* Richard Wagner

Pursued by enemies during a storm, Siegmund stumbles exhausted into an unfamiliar house. Sieglinde finds him lying by the hearth, and the two feel an immediate attraction. They are interrupted by Sieglinde's husband, Hunding, who asks the stranger who he is. Calling himself "Woeful," Siegmund tells of a disaster-filled life, only to learn that Hunding is a kinsman of his enemies. Hunding tells his guest they will fight to the death in the morning. Alone, Siegmund calls on his father, Wälse, for the sword he once promised him.

Winterstürme from *Die Walküre* Richard Wagner

Sieglinde reappears, having given Hunding a sleeping potion. Sieglinde confesses her unhappiness to Siegmund. He embraces her and promises to free her from her forced marriage to Hunding. As moonlight floods the room, Siegmund compares their feelings to the marriage of love and spring

Act III, First Tableau: *Vois Ma Misère* from *Samson et Dalila* Camille Saint-Saëns

From a dungeon in Gaza with his hair shorn and power lost, Samson is praying for his people, who will suffer for his sin. He hears their voices, echoing the Hebrews' lament. Overcome with remorse, Samson offers his life in sacrifice, while the Hebrews are heard in the distance lamenting his fate.

Act II, Aria and Duet: *Mon Coeur…Mais! Non!* from *Samson et Dalila* Camille Saint-Saëns

In an attempt to close the trap which she has set for Samson, Dalila tells Samson seductively that she is completely his if he wants her. She begs him to respond to her caresses, hoping that he will finally let go of all other things and concentrate completely on her. His admission *Je t'aime!* seals his fate.

Go There! from *Peter Grimes* Benjamin Britten

The brutish fisherman, Peter Grimes has enlisted the help of his third young apprentice, after being accused in the mysterious death of the previous two boys who served on his ship. He orders his new apprentice, John, to get dressed into his fishing gear as they are about to set sail. As Grimes reflects on the death of his former apprentice, he imagines a different life with his love, Ellen, and away from the accusing townsfolk.

Grimes! Grimes! from *Peter Grimes* Benjamin Britten

After the accidental death of his new apprentice, John, the townspeople are searching for Peter Grimes to arrest him. As Grimes hides from his pursuers, it would seem that the death of his now third apprentice has driven him over the edge. Grimes, deranged and raving, listens to the villagers shouting his name in the distance.

Niun mi tema from *Otello* Giuseppe Verdi

Otello, the Moorish general, has just murdered his wife Desdemona. Iago, Otello's jealous Lieutenant, has tricked the general into believing that his wife was unfaithful. Upon realizing that he has just killed his innocent wife, Otello grabs a knife and stabs himself. In his last breaths, he grieves for his wife, reflects on his lost glory, and lies dead next to Desdemona.