

REVIEW OF WRITINGS ON FALSETTO FROM
SELECTED BOOKS ON THE VOICE

by 6791

SHARON LOU PENNER

B. S., Kansas State University, 1966

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

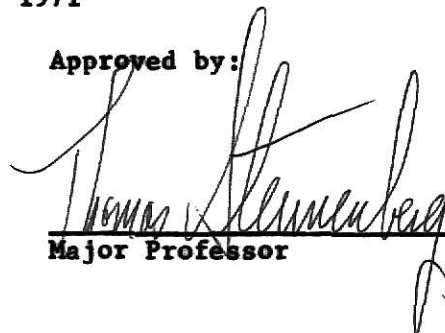
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Music

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

Approved by:



Thomas Almenberg

Major Professor

LD
2668
R4
1971
P43
C.2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	5
ACOUSTICS OF MUSIC	5
THE GENTLE ART OF SINGING	6
THE SCIENCE OF VOICE	9
MAKE SINGING A JOY	10
CLASS-METHOD OF VOICE CULTURE	11
THE LIVING VOICE	13
EMERGENT VOICE	16
SECRETS OF SINGING	18
THE ART OF SINGING AND VOICE TECHNIQUE	20
SINGING: THE PHYSICAL NATURE OF THE VOCAL ORGAN	21
EXPRESSIVE SINGING	23
SINGING, THE MECHANISM AND THE TECHNIC	26
SUMMARY	29
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	31
BIBLIOGRAPHY	32

INTRODUCTION

There is certainly no lack of printed material on the subject of falsetto, but it is inaccessible to teachers because it is extremely fragmentary and rather diffusely distributed throughout a variety of books, periodicals, scientific papers, and reports of experiments that have never been correlated. Also, lack of standardization in vocal terminology and many writings in the past based on conjecture, have resulted in a confused plethora of theories regarding the falsetto, its production, and its usefulness.

The Harvard Dictionary describes "falsetto" as "an artificial method of singing used by male singers, particularly tenors, to obtain notes above the ordinary range of their voice. A well-trained falsetto voice, though lacking the powerful volume and the dramatic expressiveness of a tenor, has its own charm of a veiled and undynamic transparency; it stands in the relationship to the normal tenor voice as the recorder to the flute, the viol to the violin".¹

The description in Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, states that, "falsetto is a particular form of sound production at the larynx, sometimes adopted by male singers, and in the majority of cases, employed only when it is desired to reach a note above the ordinary range of the individual voice. In most instances, the tones of this mechanism are high-pitched, of feeble volume, of short duration, and poor quality".²

¹Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 255.

²V. E. Negus, "Falsetto," Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians (1954), III, pp. 13-14.

Victor Fields, in his book, Training the Singing Voice, quotes Evelyn Hagara as saying, "the transition from chest register to head register encompasses two or three tones where the registers appear to overlap. The ancients called these transitional notes the falsetto".³ Fields also quotes V. E. Negus as saying, "the falsetto is a particular form of sound production at the larynx which employs a different mechanism for notes above the ordinary range of the individual male voice".⁴ Bernice Hall, as quoted by Fields, defines falsetto as, "tone without speech reinforcement, tone without low resonance or speaking voice color".⁵

In early music, however, falsetto singing was highly esteemed. It was probably first applied to singers in liturgical music in the Roman Church, which did not permit the use of women. In the Sixteenth century, the polyphonic a cappella style had reached such complexity that it was difficult for boys to master it during the relatively short period before their voices changed. Tenors took over the highest parts, which they could only do in an unnatural way, by singing falsetto. Later, these tenori falsetti were replaced by Italian castrati. (Even as early as 1562, a castrato called Hydronimus Rossinus was a member of the Papal Orchestra.)⁶

³Evelyn Hagara, Vocal Secrets of the Ancients, p. 54, cited by Victor Alexander Fields, Training the Singing Voice (New York: King's Crown Press, 1966), p. 151.

⁴V. E. Negus, The Mechanism of the Larynx, p. 419, cited by Victor Alexander Fields, Training the Singing Voice (New York: King's Crown Press, 1966), p. 152.

⁵Bernice Hall, How the Head Tone Grows, p. 486, cited by Victor Alexander Fields, Training the Singing Voice (New York: King's Crown Press, 1966), p. 152.

⁶Viktor Fuchs, The Art of Singing and Voice Technique (New York: London House and Maxwell, 1964), p. 95.

Opera composers repeatedly use falsetto for special effects. Verdi asks for it when Falstaff imitates Mrs. Ford (Falstaff, Act I), and writes it so high that no baritone could reach it in a normal voice:



Puccini uses the same trick in Boheme, Act IV, where the baritone, Marcello, jokingly imitates a woman's singing and dancing:



Doctor Bartolo imitates Rosina in Barbieri di Siviglia by singing falsetto. Wagner uses "Fistelstimme" instead of falsetto to describe the comical effect he wants from Mime in Ring des Nibelungen.⁷

More recently, many vocal authorities include the study of falsetto as an integral part of vocal pedagogy. The purpose of this report is to provide a core of organized information which is available in Farrell Library at Kansas State University. This report includes only those books on singing that offer pertinent information on the subject of falsetto. The vocal music instructor will therefore find this report useful as a means of comparing his own teaching methods with the prevalent methodologies in the profession; as a source of useful information on certain unfamiliar aspects of falsetto; and

⁷ Ibid., p. 96.

as a direction finder in selecting suitable sources of research when investigation is needed.