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Analysis of the artistic characteristics and singing of the aria "Ritorna Vincitor "

Zhu Ya
The Music College of Guangxi Arts University, Guangxi, China
***Corresponding author,E-mail: 1825235086@qq.com**

Abstract:
Verdi's four-act opera "Aida" has achieved great success since its premiere in Cairo on December 24, 1871 and it remains a staple in major opera houses worldwide. The work poses significant demands on dramatic sopranos, specifically with its wide vocal range and intense dramatic conflicts. Analyzing its artistic characteristics and singing techniques helps vocal performers continuously improve their singing level and ability to portray characters, providing valuable references for vocal students. This paper uses "Ritorna vincitor" as an example, employing literature research, music analysis, and stage practice to introduce Verdi's compositional techniques and style, and to study the piece from multiple angles such as form, harmony, mode, rhythm, melody, language, and stage performance, finally combining research with stage practice.

Keywords:
Verdi; Aida; Ritorna vincitor; dramatic; singing techniques

1.Verdi's Opera "Aida"

1.1.Introduction to Verdi's Life

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) was the milestone composer of the Romantic period in the second half of the nineteenth century and a master of Italian opera.[1] Verdi was a clear-headed realist influenced by the nationalist movement, primarily drawing Italian folk music as the source of his compositions. He inherited the traditional writing style of Italian opera and incorporated experiences from various excellent foreign opera schools. Grounded in reality, he used music to describe objective things, advance dramatic plots, and express the inner spiritual power of characters and music. Verdi's works, influenced and assisted by his wife, the leading soprano of La Scala, Giuseppina (1851-1897), possess vocal characteristics that fully utilize the features of each vocal part. Not only in solo forms, such as arias, romances, narratives, and ballads, do his compositions showcase the strengths of the performers, but in ensembles and choruses, the melodies are simple and distinctive, with sincere and passionate emotions, easy to sing, and filled with patriotic fervor, becoming revolutionary songs for the Italian people's struggle for freedom and national unity.

1.2.Artistic Features of Verdi's Opera "Aida"

1.2.1.The use of "Leitmotiv "

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The Leitmotiv, also known as the leading theme, is a musical technique with symbolic meaning. It is used in large musical works such as operas, plays, ballets, or programmatic works to symbolize a specific character, event, scene, or emotion and is closely associated with the character or plot throughout. Whenever the specific character appears or the scene occurs, the leitmotif will be played. This technique was first used by the 19th-century Romantic German composer Wagner in his "Musikdrama."

Verdi was influenced by Wagner in this aspect and used it creatively. As a progressive Italian opera composer affected by the nationalist movement, Verdi retained the traditional features of Italian opera while making creative reforms, helping Italian opera escape the crisis in thought and creation. In the opera "Aida," first performed in Cairo in 1871, Verdi introduced the heroine Aida's leitmotif in the prelude, played by a solo violin with a soft ascending chromatic melody, followed by the string section adding harmony. This initial melody establishes Aida's character as gentle yet tenacious, kind yet pure. [2] The entire opera starts with Aida's leitmotif, symbolizing her central role throughout the opera. Whenever Aida appears on stage, this motif is played by different instruments, serving as a cue for the audience.

In the aria "Ritorna vincitor," Aida's leitmotif appears in measure 46, marking her inner turmoil. Verdi's creative use of the leitmotif in "Aida" helped Italian opera regain its glory in the second half of the 19th century. Despite its grand and luxurious set design, the music remains the most crucial part of "Aida." Verdi's flexible use of the leitmotif allowed audiences to follow the plot's development even with their eyes closed, revitalizing Italian opera.

1.2.2.The use of "Scene"

The overall musical structure of "Aida" breaks the boundaries of traditional musical forms while retaining the features of traditional Italian opera. [3]The opera consists of four acts and seven scenes. The structure of vocal forms such as ensembles, choruses, and solos becomes more free and open, blurring the lines between recitative and aria. This creates a more continuous and coherent musical structure, allowing the dramatic plot to develop without interruption by traditional recitative and aria divisions. For example, in Act 1, Scene 2, Radames' romance "Se quel guerrier io fossi!... Celeste Aida" is a monologue and opening aria for Radames. The composer does not use the traditional recitative-aria division but instead gives the romance a new structure, making the music more coherent and fluent, fully showcasing Radames' desire for victory and sincere love for Aida.

In the entire opera, the heroine Aida has solo scenes only in Act 1, Scene 6 ("Ritorna vincitor") and Act 3, Scene 2 (the romance "Oh, patria mia"). Compared to the traditional segmented form, the composer uses innovative vocal forms such as scene solos and romances. A scene solo is a concert aria divided into several sections for solo and orchestra, featuring the dramatic and transitional characteristics of an aria, with recitative-like and singing-like melodies interspersed. Romances, as lyrical songs, have broad, undulating melodies. Unlike traditional arias, romances are often simple in structure and melody, highlighting the protagonist's inner emotions and character traits.

Verdi studied the "total art" concept and the "endless melody" technique in Wagner's musikdramas but did not blindly imitate Wagner. He maintained his strengths in vocal melodies and explored various creative techniques. Verdi creatively reformed traditional opera forms, often breaking the segmented structures of

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recitatives, arias, choruses, and ensembles. He innovatively used the "scene" structure in his operas, creating dramatic and emotionally powerful works based on Italian opera traditions.

1.2.3."Bravura" Singing Style

"Bravura" Singing Style[4] With the rise of the nationalist movement in the 19th century, opera themes and content changed. Intense dramatic conflicts became the main creative thread, and composers like Verdi infused their works with patriotic elements advocating for national liberation, making the conflicts sharper. As opera house scales expanded and orchestras grew, orchestration techniques became richer, creating colorful and distinctive characters with grand symphonic sounds. This raised the technical demands on singers, requiring them to project their voices to the back rows of the opera house.

The explosive dramatic conflicts necessitated a powerful, vigorous, and passionate singing style, leading to the development of the "bravura" style[4]. In Verdi's operas, "bravura" singing is characterized by a powerful, heroic style, with specific techniques including heavy functionality, hard attacks, and heavy glissandos.

In "Ritorna vincitor," singers must adjust their timbre to be powerful, passionate, and loud, requiring significant physical strength ("heavy functionality"). Each note must be sung quickly, accurately, and forcefully ("hard attacks"). For example, in measure 83, the last note must transition to the first note of the next measure with a glissando, emphasizing this characteristic of Verdi's musical style ("heavy glissando").

2.Artistic Characteristics of Aida's Aria "Ritorna vincitor"

2.1.Analysis of the Formal Structure of the Work

"Ritorna vincitor" is a scene solo in Act 1, Scene 6 of the opera "Aida." Based on the analysis of the entire piece and the characteristic of scene solos not being divided into distinct sections, the entire piece consists of five different but logically connected segments (including the coda). As a complete work, its formal structure is unconventional, comprising multiple independent sections, which can be referred to as a multi-part form or multi-sectional form.

In terms of tonal layout and selection, unlike the traditional tonal layouts of "tonic-dominant," tonic-subdominant, and "tonal return," this piece starts in A major and ends in the parallel system of B-flat major. It frequently employs techniques such as alternating between major and minor modes, chromatic progression, and modulation to enrich the tonality and harmony of the work.

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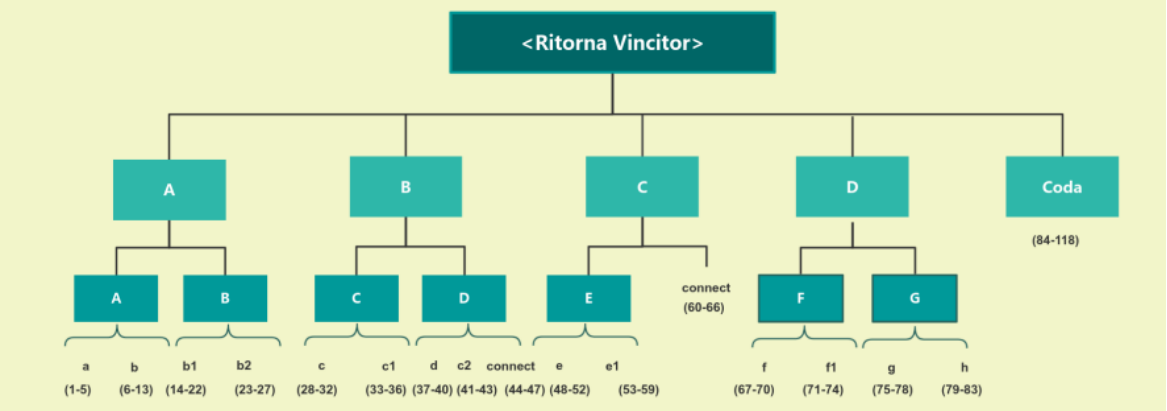


Figure2-1 The musical-structure diagram of "Ritorna Vincitor"

Section A

• Section A is composed of segments A (measures 1-13) and B (measures 14-22).

• Segment A consists of contrasting phrases a and b.

• Segment B consists of b1 and b2, which are based on different head motifs and form a parallel relationship, making the structure a contrasting single binary form.

• The tonic chord of A major in the first measure establishes the key.

• Phrase a involves the accompaniment voice converging on the dominant chord, responding to the main vocal part and transitioning to E major as a common chord towards the dominant direction.

• Phrase B frequently uses VI and VII chords, modulating to G-sharp minor through the introduction of the G-sharp note. Phrases b1 and b2 are not strict imitations of phrase b but are developed based on its interval relationships and motifs.

• Phrase b1 uses chromatic progression to obscure the tonality, transitioning to B major and then to phrase b2.

• Phrase b2 alternates between B major and G-sharp minor, ending on the VII chord of B major. The use of tremolo motifs and harmonics in contrasting parts enriches the harmonic and sound effects.

• This segment ends on an unstable pitch, preparing for the introduction of the next segment.

Section B

• Section B consists of contrasting segments C (measures 28-36) and D (measures 37-47).

• The equal rhythm and undulating melodic lines enhance the lyricism of the song.

• This section is primarily in E minor, composed of four phrases (c, c1, d, and c2) with an open-ended conclusion, ending on the dominant chord of E minor. The accompaniment does not end, using modulation and chromatic progression to transition to the next part.

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Section C

• Section C is written in an insert form, with the tempo changing to Andante and the expression marked as cantabile.

• It consists of segments e and e1, and a connecting part. The dotted and triplet rhythms in the connecting part are derived from Sections A and B, maintaining a close musical logic.

• The main key of this segment is D minor, alternating with the parallel F major.

• Segment e1 ends on the dominant seventh chord of D minor, transitioning chromatically to the connecting part in B-flat major, and then to the main key of the next segment, B-flat major.

Section D

• Section D consists of segments F and G, forming a contrasting single binary structure.

• The accompaniment changes to a highly lyrical and smooth triplet motif, harmonizing with the main vocal part.

• Phrases f and f1 are parallel phrases, with the notes in each part almost identical, except for the lyrics and dynamics.

• Sixteenth notes begin on weak beats, using unconventional meter and equal note values that can be traced back to phrase e.

• Phrases g and h are closely related to phrase f, with g derived from the latter half of phrase f, and h being a variant of phrase f.

• The open-ended conclusion on the dominant seventh chord leads into the coda, which completes the true resolution.

Coda

• In the coda (measures 84-118), the musical material summarizes the previous four segments, with repeated appearances of dotted notes, triplets, equal notes, and tremolo motifs, echoing the earlier sections.

• The harmony repeatedly obstructs the resolution on the I, V, and VI chords, finally concluding with a tonic chord.

The entire piece consists of multiple small segments, lacking a clear formal structural pattern. Its structural relationships are rich and diverse, relatively free. However, the composer has provided clear answers on the score, with double bars and tempo changes marking the explicit segmentation. The main motifs and rhythms sown in Sections A and B develop and transform in subsequent sections, demonstrating numerous connections to the earlier parts. Despite being an independent multi-sectional form, the segments are tightly linked in musical logic[5].

Although the piece does not adhere to traditional aesthetics by writing a recapitulation section, the close

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logical connections of the musical material and its summarization in the coda comply to some extent with the aesthetics of recapitulation.

2.2. Analysis of Melody and Accompaniment

The accompaniment of this operatic work is richly colored, vividly expressive, and clearly defines the characters' personalities, serving as a powerful support to the melody. The accompaniment and melody together express various emotions, enhancing the strength of the melody while complementing each other harmoniously without overshadowing it.

The work inherits the traditional writing habits of Italian opera, consistently prioritizing vocals. The composer's unique personal style is evident in the melodic creation. Influenced by patriotism and realism, and rooted in his national folk music, Verdi uses sophisticated writing techniques to compose classic melodies that express the true inner emotions of different characters in various situations. His melodies are the main means of expressing characters' personalities and revealing their inner activities. "Ritorna vincitor" mainly showcases the intense psychological struggle and rapidly changing painful emotions of the Ethiopian princess Aida, who is torn between her nation and her love, her father and her lover, in a foreign land. This creates a strong dramatic tension and vividly presents Aida's character to the audience.

The accompaniment of "Ritorna vincitor" primarily consists of chordal and arpeggiated structures, mostly using mid-voice textures rather than contrapuntal textures as the dominant feature, emphasizing the consolidation of the work's tone. This enhances the orchestra's role in the opera, making the accompaniment more colorful and creating a vivid and three-dimensional auditory effect. It drives the plot forward and vividly portrays the characters' inner worlds while still highlighting the vocal melody.

In Section A, Aida mutters to herself and expresses her excited and conflicted emotions after shouting "Return victorious" with the enemy troops. The melody often uses rapid ascending eighth notes to display Aida's excitement. From measure 7, the frequent use of repeated notes and stepwise motion, as well as repeated notes with descending motion, simulates a sighing tone, reflecting Aida's complex emotions as she continually ponders while muttering to herself.

Starting in E minor, Section B contrasts sharply with Section A. The melody follows arch-shaped lines and repeats twice, reflecting Aida's anxious and restless emotions and her self-reflection and remorse. Two consecutive octave leaps elevate the emotional intensity, expressing hatred for the enemy nation and loathing for the enemies. In measure 45, a long note lasting seven beats acts as a warning, reminding Aida to face reality and expressing her near-breaking inner state. This is followed by a relatively stable, stepwise descending sigh-like melody in the middle register, portraying her helpless and painful feelings of self-blame and remorse.

In Section C, the leading motif of Aida reappears, with a melodious and sorrowful melody. The accompaniment and vocal melodies echo each other, expressing Aida's inner sadness and helplessness. From measure 60, the high notes with descending triplet melodies resemble sighs, conveying infinite sorrow and lamenting Aida's fate.

Section D shifts to Allegro, with the melody primarily moving in repeated notes and some leaps, exhibiting

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a certain degree of recapitulation, reflecting Aida's emotional agitation. The melody progresses in a winding manner, showing Aida gradually accepting reality, her mood slowly calming, but still feeling painful and helpless in the face of irreconcilable conflicts.

In the coda, the use of half notes and triplets in succession creates long, continuous, and moving melodic lines. This expresses Aida's pain, sadness, and helplessness as she faces numerous irreconcilable conflicts, seeking solace from the gods for her troubled soul.

The entire piece uses chromatic melodies to express Aida's conflicted and uneasy psyche, constantly oscillating between anxiety, sorrow, struggle, and pain. Unlike conventional arias, the continuous melodic changes intricately portray Aida's rapidly changing inner world

3. The Aria "Ritorna Vincitor" in Aida: Vocal Techniques and Stage Practice

The opera "Aida" is set against the backdrop of the war between ancient Egypt and Ethiopia, intertwining the love story of the Ethiopian princess Aida, who becomes a slave, and the Egyptian princess Amneris, both of whom fall in love with the warrior Radamès. The intense dramatic conflict of national hatred and personal sorrow demands that the singer's voice possesses powerful explosiveness and emotional impact. Specifically, during the performance, emotional outbursts require the use of marcato phrases, each of which must be crisp, robust, and forceful without any dragging. The portrayal of inner pain and torment in pp phrases also requires the singer to have excellent breath control and technical support to ensure that every note throughout the piece has a stable and solid breath foundation, clear and precise diction, accurate rhythm, and a seamless integration of inner emotion with external actions to create a believable image of Aida.

3.1.Breath Control

Modern acoustic science theory posits that breathing plays a dynamic role in vocal production, with breath generated by respiration serving as the energy source for singing. If the singer's use of breath is not accurate, it will affect the emotional expression of the song's melody and result in less vivid character portrayal, thereby impacting the overall effectiveness of the performance.

In the performance of the aria "Ritorna Vincitor," the author believes that during inhalation, the singer should breathe through both the mouth and nose simultaneously, allowing the diaphragm to naturally descend, and the upper abdomen and waist to expand. While ensuring the speed of inhalation, sufficient breath support must also be guaranteed[4]. During exhalation, the chest cavity should remain open, maintaining the expansion of the ribs, upper abdomen, and waist. Using the lower abdomen as the breath support point, the breath pressure should be controlled and released slowly and evenly.

This aria is extensive, and the challenges of breath control are evident in the melody that ascends from the mid-low range, the sustained notes, the descending melody with high initial notes, the long phrases, the passages requiring rapid breathing, and the soft passages.

The aria begins in the mid-low range and progresses with ascending steps or leaps as Aida's emotions in-

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tensify. For example, in the beginning of section A of "Ritorna Vincitor" (measures 1-27), particularly in measures 1-2, as shown in The figure 3-1:
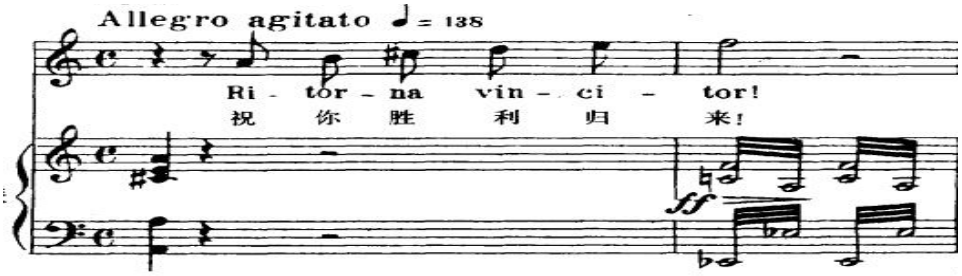


Figure3-1 The measures1-2

At this moment, Aida is deeply engulfed in intense emotions of national hatred and personal sorrow. The tempo is set to an "allegro agitato" at 138 beats per minute, reflecting Aida's shock and regret over her words blessing the enemy. During this time, the singer should use the one-and-a-half-beat rest to quickly inhale, lowering the diaphragm and increasing breath pressure to ensure the volume conveys Aida's agitated state of mind[6]. In measures 1-2, the scale ascends from the note A in the first octave of the middle range, with the volume pushing to its strongest on the last ascending note and sustaining for two beats.

Reaching the peak of her emotional agitation, the singer must use breath to drive the volume of the sound. Given the relatively fast ascending scale and the middle range, the throat muscles are prone to excessive tension, causing the sound to be trapped in the throat. To avoid this, it is essential to maintain a stable, grounded breath support, with the diaphragm consistently in a naturally descended state.
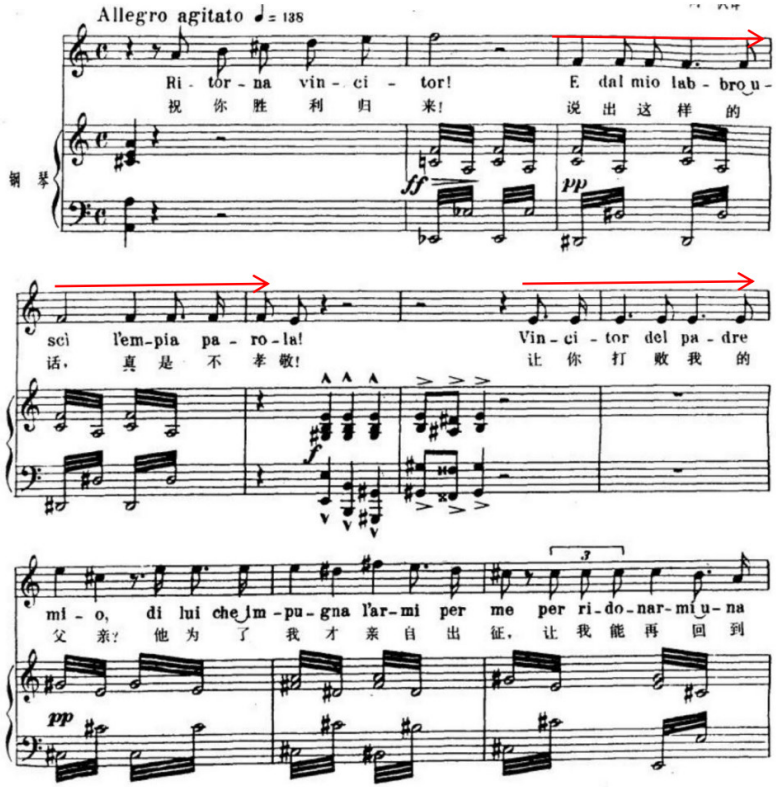


Figure3-2 The measures1-10

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When the melody shifts to sustained notes, breath control requirements change accordingly. In measures 3-5 of The figure 3-2, the singer performs on the note F amid a pp tremolo in the accompaniment, descending by a half step to E at the end. During performance, breath pressure should increase on the strong beats to emphasize them and create a sense of tension, thereby conveying Aida's intense self-reproach.

Following this, a semi-cadence is formed by five strong, emphatic chords reinforcing the tonality. Amid continuous tremolo accompaniment, Aida sings measures 6-13, reflecting on her father's decision to go to war to rescue her. Here, breath must consistently descend, with the diaphragm and abdominal muscles providing solid support. The larynx should be controlled to prevent rising, and breath should be evenly distributed across the notes. On the high octave "mio," the singer should perform a soft articulation, which is particularly challenging. This requires thorough preparation: for low octave notes, the breath support point must be very deep and stable, while for high octave notes, the support point should be as deep as possible. The sound must be produced decisively with ample breath pressure, then quickly adjusted to a softer volume for a stable transition to the high notes. Before "una reggia," a quick breath is needed, and similarly, before the triplets preceded by an eighth rest, a quick breath should be taken. Inhale through both the mouth and nose, quickly lower the diaphragm, and ensure sufficient breath intake. As the melody ascends chromatically, breath should be controlled to sustain it steadily and released slowly to avoid running out of breath, expressing Aida's excited longing to return to her homeland and the palace. Therefore, as the melody ascends, breath volume should also gradually increase.

In measures 14-27, as shown in The figure 3-3, the melody progresses step by step. During the performance, breath should be ample, with continuous, stable support from the lower back and abdomen, ensuring a deep and steady breath support. For the sustained strong note on high F# and the large descending octave leap to F#, rapid inhalation is necessary. The breath support point must quickly deepen, then the chest cavity and ribs should open during the one-and-a-half beat rest, and the diaphragm should descend. In measure 25, within the ascending melody from the low range, attention must be paid to the breath pause between the two eighth rests without inhaling. In measure 26, a brief rapid breath is taken during the eighth rest. Frequent breaths during such short rests can prevent the diaphragm and abdomen from descending in time, leading to insufficient breath for the final long phrase, resulting in a less resonant tone and failing to convey Aida's emotional pain adequately.

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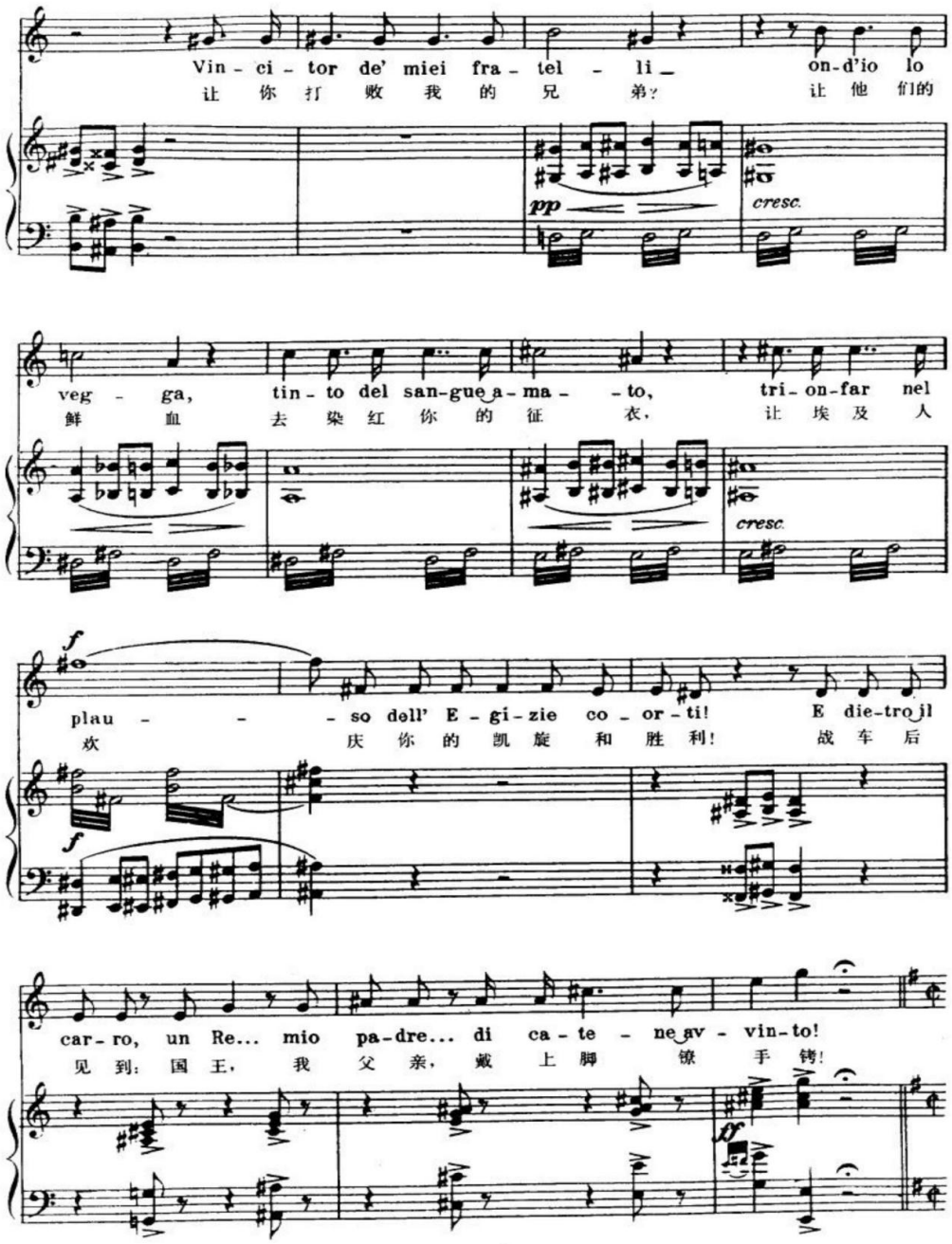


Figure3-3 The measures14-27

In section B (measures 28-47), Aida beseeches the gods to allow her to return to her homeland and family. However, alongside her yearning to return home, her emotions grow increasingly agitated, hoping the gods will help her father and brothers defeat their enemies. The accelerating tempo reflects Aida's heightened and uncontrollable emotions, leading her to once again curse the enemy. Cursing the enemy also means cursing her beloved to death, plunging Aida into a choice between the lives of her father and her lover.As shown in The figure 3-4:

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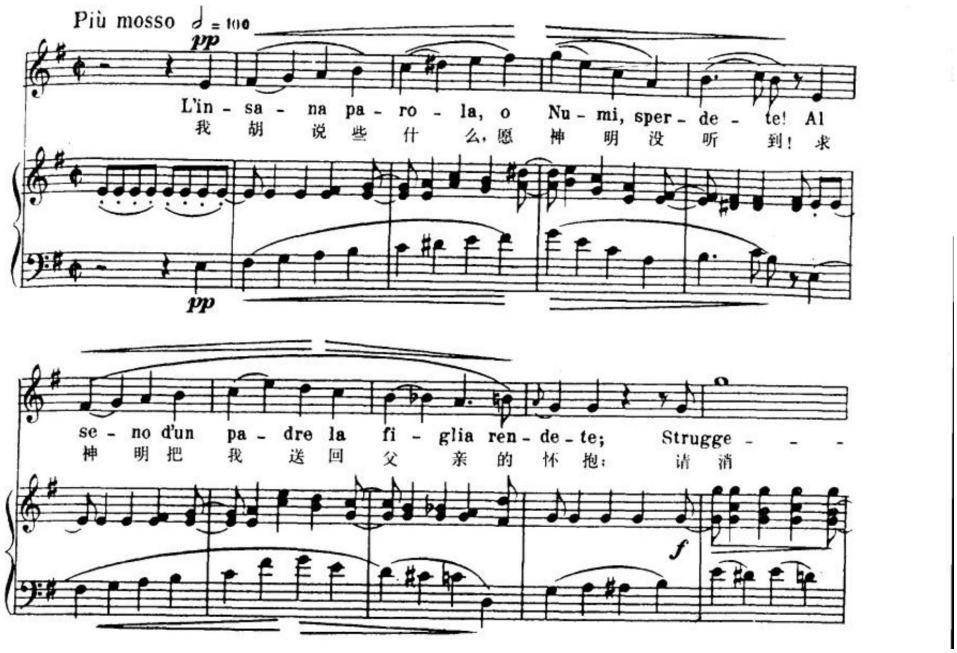


Figure3-4 The measures 28-37

The music becomes more melodic, forming a stark contrast with the short phrases and intense emotional fluctuations of section A. The overall sense of singing is more pronounced. When performing these relatively smoother long phrases, ensure sufficient breath intake and maintain the expanded state achieved during inhalation throughout the performance. Keep the chest cavity open and, after stabilizing the posture, use the ribs, lower abdomen, and lower back to fix the breath support point. Breath should expand from within and actively descend to provide resistance. Use breath as evenly as possible to ensure that the rhythmic accents in each measure align with the breath, achieving a seamless sound.
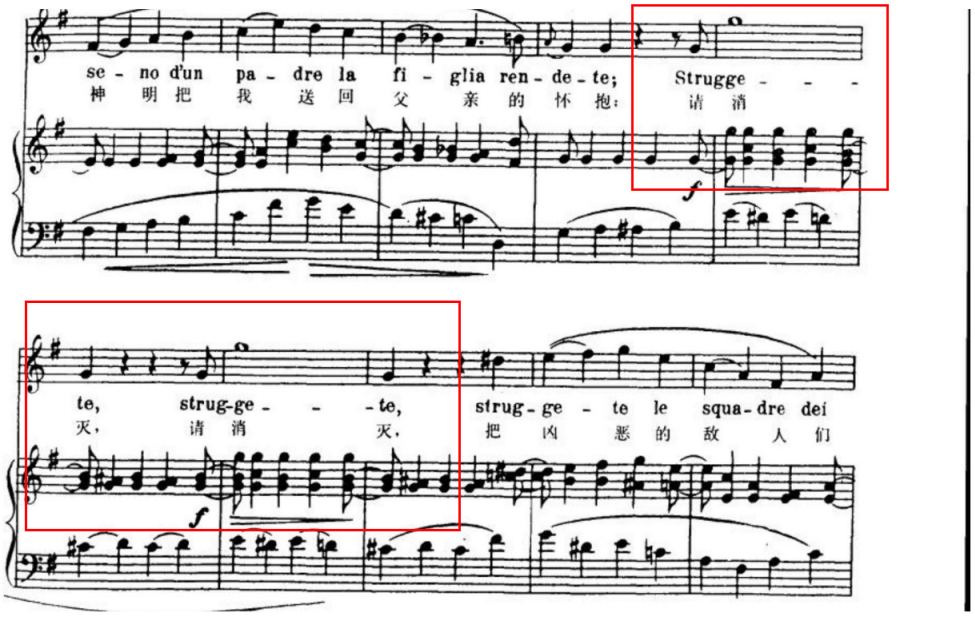


Figure3-5 The measures 37-40

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In The figure 3-5, measures 37-40, the melody begins on a middle G and ascends an octave, holding the high note for four beats before returning to the G. These octave leaps demand a high level of technical skill from the performer. The singer must maintain a deep, steady breath support with a relaxed lower abdomen, ensuring continuity of breath. Additionally, as these phrases are quite emotionally intense and require a strong volume, the singer must adjust breath pressure to achieve sufficient intensity to deliver seamless and dramatic music. This reflects Aida's peak emotional state, filled with agitation and a fervent desire to defeat the enemy for her country and father.

In measure 45, the composer has arranged for a sustained high B-flat for seven beats, illustrating Aida's sudden awakening from her previously agitated state and her plunge back into deep sorrow. Measures 45-48 of section B and measures 60-63 of section C, as shown in The figure 3-6 and The figure 3-7:
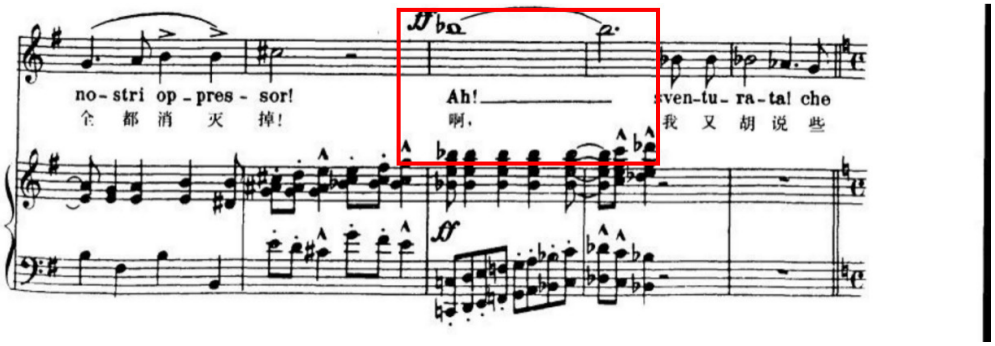


Figure3-6 The measures 45-48
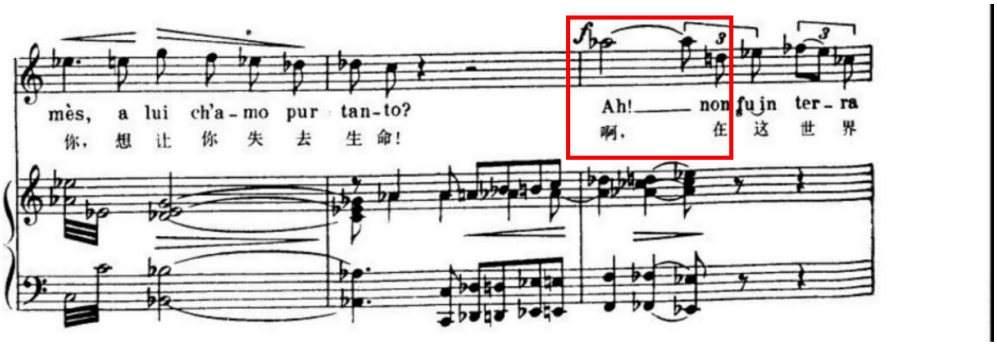


Figure3-7 The measures 60-63

In the transition of section C, measures 60-63, the exclamation on the high A-flat continues, with the triplets illustrating Aida's torment between patriotism and love. The melody undulates downwards from the high A-flat to the mid-low range. When performing across these registers, the singer must quickly adjust the breath support point, following the descending melody to maintain breath continuity while ensuring the sound's clarity and the stability of the rhythmic accents, anchoring them in the breath.

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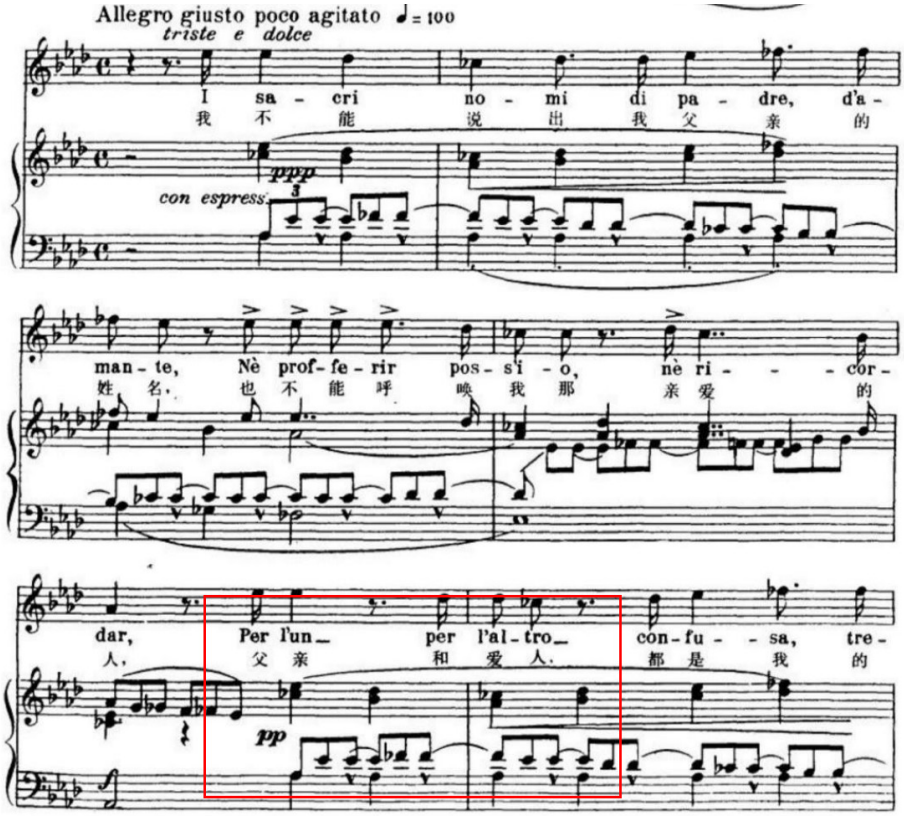


Figure3-8 The measures 67-72

In section D (measures 67-83), as shown in The figure 3-8, the tempo changes to Allegro, with elongated melodic lines and an increased pace, using changes in speed and intensity to convey intense dramatic conflict. Therefore, each phrase requires quick breaths; only by inhaling deeply, quickly, and effectively can the singer ensure full emotional expression.

In measures 71-73, a breath pause is needed between the two phrases, creating a sobbing effect with a break in the voice but not in the breath, which can better express Aida's inner torment at this moment.

Another challenge is singing pianissimo, primarily concentrated in the coda of section E (measures 84-118), as shown in The figure 3-8. This part depicts Aida's desperate cries and pleas to the gods to relieve her inner suffering. She remains in extreme pain until the end, unable to find relief.

In measures 84-87, try to avoid taking breaths to achieve continuity. Adjust the breath pressure and area of contact with the vocal cords during singing, using focused and controlled breath without requiring a large volume. This ensures the clarity and distinctness of each note, effectively conveying Aida's helplessness and sorrow. Measures 88-89 feature a melody in the middle register with the use of triplets, highlighting the fluidity of the melody. During performance, pay attention to maintaining smooth and continuous breath flow.

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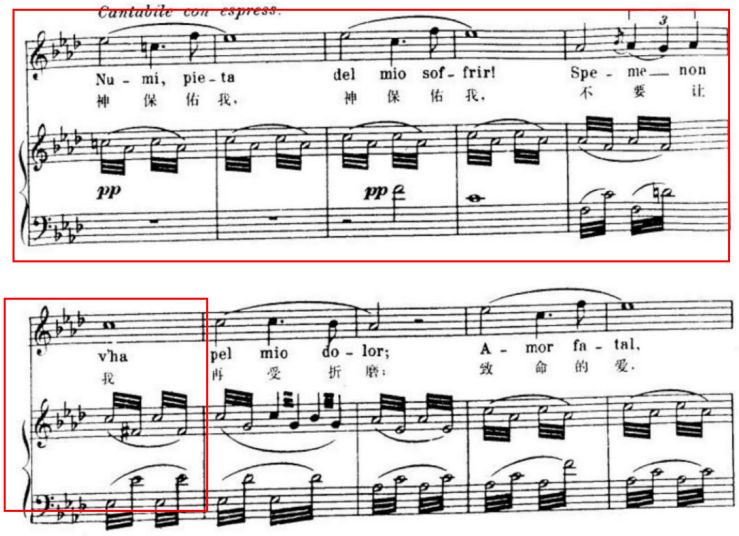


Figure3-9 The measures 84-93
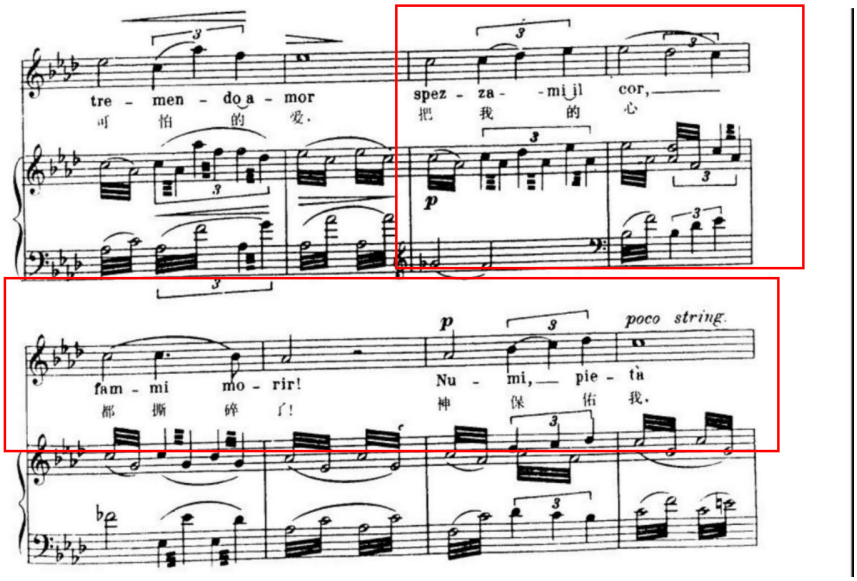


Figure3-10 The measures 109-110
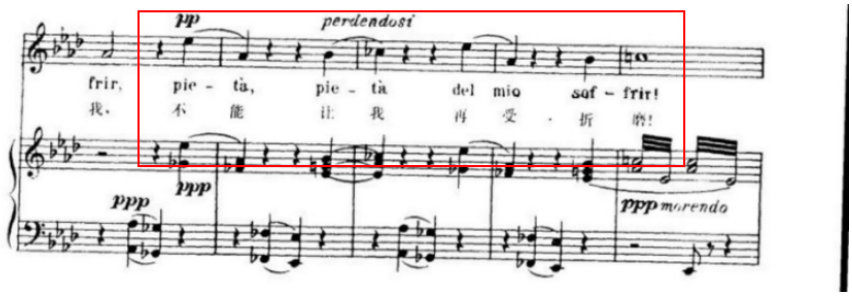


Figure3-11 The measures109-104

As shown in The figuree 3-10, measures 109-110 feature a progression in melody, increasing speed, and dynamic change from soft to forte, culminating in Bb2, followed immediately by a sighing triplet descent.

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This reflects Aida's inner turmoil, helplessness, and despair. Therefore, the entire phrase should be sung with a softer dynamic, especially the high notes, which demands greater breath control from the performer. To achieve a perfect interpretation here, the breath support must be as deep and stable as possible, ensuring that the breath is evenly, slowly, and steadily supported through each note. The soft high note requires the breath support to adjust instantaneously to twice or even deeper than the original support, enabling a delicate depiction of Aida's mental state at this moment. The last five measures should be sung softly. Soft singing requires controlling the thickness of the breath column hitting the vocal cords, the contact area, and the pressure within the breath column, engaging abdominal and even upper gluteal muscles to use the soft voice technique continuously, creating a sense of a long, distant tail sound, expressing Aida's sorrow and misery.

3.2.Accurate Diction

Verdi skillfully combines musical melody with the phonetic patterns and intonations of the Italian language, creating a high degree of unity between lyrics and music in his opera "Aida." The Italian language, with its clear phonetic rules and only five vowels (i, e, a, o, u), is very conducive to vocal performance. Each vowel must be sung smoothly and roundly, avoiding overly flat or narrow sounds, as well as excessive tension. Before learning "Ritorna vincitor," practice reading the lyrics slowly and accurately, clearly pronouncing each word, and finding the sentence's natural rhythm[7].

In the song's first phrase, "Ritorna vincitor!" pay attention to the initial and final tongue trills of "r." The tongue tip should slightly curl back behind the upper teeth ridge, with the tongue surface relaxed and the tongue tip vibrating with the airflow while the vocal cords vibrate, focusing the articulation near the upper teeth ridge. Ensure each syllable is clearly presented, and do not forget the final "r" despite the fast tempo.

There are many words with double consonants in the song, such as "labbro,""reggia,""vegga,""fratelli,"and "struggete." Double consonants have a relatively longer duration, greater oral tension, and more noticeable mouth shape changes than single consonants. It is crucial not to neglect double consonants when maintaining vowel sounds. The contrast between double and single consonants creates the rhythm and cadence of the Italian language. However, while singing double consonants, avoid disrupting the music's continuity for the sake of articulation, especially in measure 37 with "struggete"'s octave leap. Ensure the music flows smoothly without being interrupted by the double consonant. When pausing, maintain continuous breath to achieve the effect of "voice breaks but breath does not."

In addition to double consonants, special attention is needed for diphthongs. A diphthong is a syllable composed of two vowels, such as "plauso,""dietro," "mio," and "squadre." Identify the dominant vowel in pronunciation and singing, which is the stressed vowel. Diphthongs with a strong vowel (a, o, e) and a weak vowel (i, u) have the strong vowel as the stressed one. When composed of two weak vowels (i, u), the vowel "u" is generally stressed. During singing, ensure both vowels are clearly pronounced, emphasizing the strong vowel without excessively weakening the weak vowel or quickly skipping over it, avoiding mispronunciation.

3.3.Rhythm Control

Rhythm is the pillar of music. Singers must accurately grasp rhythmic patterns to complete the piece successfully and convey its style, enhancing its lyrical or dramatic nature. The aria "Ritorna vincitor" is long and

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primarily composed of dotted rhythms, triplets, and regular rhythms.

In the declamatory A section, regular rhythms predominate but are written with an off-beat starting note, adding movement to seemingly simple rhythmic patterns. In measures 1 to 2, Aida cries out from the heart, regretting her blessing for the enemy's victory while hoping for her lover Radames' safe return. Her emotions intertwine with deep remorse. The singing should not rigidly adhere to the notated beats. After grasping the basic rhythmic movement and strong-weak patterns, place the emphasis on long strong beats, such as on the F note. If the singing lacks a sense of urgency, the music will become dull and lose its initial dramatic impact. To convey Aida's unease, weak rhythms are extensively used throughout the piece. Constantly pay attention to the rhythmic stress patterns, enhancing the music's drive.

The same regular rhythmic pattern with descending scales is also common in the piece, a sighing motif typical of 19th-century Romantic music, seen in measures 5, 11, 13, 24, and 48. This mimics Aida's sighs and cries. Sing these notes swiftly and powerfully, avoiding dragging the tempo to highlight the sighing effect.

The piece frequently uses triplets to add dynamism, as seen from measures 60-61. Continuous descending triplets make the music cohesive and tight, conveying Aida's despair and pain during her difficult choices. Strictly adhere to the triplet timing, capturing the logical stress to avoid dragging, maintaining the forward momentum of the music to better express the character's emotions.

In the piece's coda from measure 94, the combination of half notes and quarter note triplets creates a winding, continuous feeling. Maintain the triplets' dynamism while combining them with the half notes, avoiding stiffness or rushing, and preventing dragging. Strictly control the timing of each note to perfectly depict Aida's helpless and painful state as she hopes for divine intervention.

Rest rhythms in the piece are often overlooked but are essential in music. In measure 71, expressing Aida's panic, anxiety, and pain, Verdi arranged consecutive short rests within a short time. The music should not stall during these rests but slightly pause, achieving a "voice breaks but breath does not" effect, similar to a comma in speech.

3.4.Stage Performance Application

Analyzing the background of "Ritorna vincitor" and its historical context reveals that Aida, as a princess and a servant of an enemy country, is deeply entangled in the life-and-death choices between her father and lover, her homeland, and the enemy nation. Her heart is constantly in turmoil, filled with anxiety, fear, helplessness, sorrow, and deep pain.

Throughout the piece, Aida briefly expresses sweet feelings of hope for freedom and love, particularly in section A when imagining returning to her homeland without hiding her identity and in section C when recalling Radames' passionate love. These moments of sweetness and hope are fleeting, dreamlike, and quickly shattered by reality. These few moments of beauty support Aida, who remains resilient despite her struggles and torment.

Vocal performance is an art form that combines auditory and visual elements on stage. Performers can better convey the emotions in the piece through body language, facial expressions, eyes, gestures, and oth-

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er stage techniques, eliciting emotional resonance from the audience. For instance, when expressing Aida's excitement, the performer can widen their eyes, raise their eyelids, gaze into the distance, and slightly lean forward to create the impression of being fully focused on the likely war situation ahead. When Aida faces unsolvable conflicts, the performer can furrow their brows, look up to the heavens, seemingly pleading for divine mercy, expressing Aida's sorrow and pain. In the finale, when praying to the gods, gazing into the distance can convey sincere feelings of helplessness, sadness, and a longing for relief. Gestures can be categorized into indicative, emotional, and symbolic gestures to interpret the plot, making the vocal performance more vivid and understandable for the audience. For example, placing one hand on the chest when singing "mio" (my) or"per me" (for me) covering the head or chest with a hand when singing "sventurata! Che dissi"(What am I saying) or holding fists forward as if bound when singing "di catene avvinto"(bound in chains). Different gestures depict different plot points, using dynamic and artistically beautiful movements to help the audience understand the story and feel the drama.

Performers should thoroughly study the stipulated situations in the aria, such as time, place, and character, and design their performance accordingly. The stage is a large platform, and if the singer does not fully utilize stage movements to communicate with the audience, the audience may not understand what is happening at that moment. Therefore, during musical tempo and dynamic changes, performers can use the musical interludes to reveal Aida's inner thoughts and emotions through stage positioning changes. Ensure coordination between musical rhythm and movements to achieve dynamic unity. For example, in section D, when Aida struggles painfully with the choice between her father and lover, the performer can pace back and forth to showcase her inner turmoil. In the transition to the finale, Aida prays for her soul's salvation, which can be depicted by kneeling in prayer during the interlude, creating a rich stage image. The performance should also emphasize natural and graceful postures, providing a better visual experience for the audience.

Vocal performance showcases the singer's comprehensive musical abilities and qualities, requiring excellent vocal techniques, good artistic cultivation, and elegant stage presence. Thoroughly understanding the piece, analyzing the character, and transforming the role and emotions felt in the music into vivid and accurate stage images are essential to convey beauty and emotions to the audience effectively.

4.Conclusion

The opera "Aida" stands as a pinnacle of Italian opera during the Romantic period of the 19th century. This grandiose work features rich and emotionally compelling melodies, filled with dramatic intensity. Its harmonies delicately and accurately depict the psychological states of its characters. Upholding the traditions of Italian opera, it enhances orchestral functionality to theatrical and symphonic levels while maintaining the dominance of vocal parts in opera. Innovatively structured with a smooth, natural flow akin to through-composed style, it reveals the coherent development of dramatic conflicts. The opera vividly portrays the anguish and struggle of Aida amidst the sharp conflicts between her father and lover, homeland and love, set against the backdrop of war between ancient Egypt and Ethiopia.

Through an exploration of the classic aria "Ritorna vincitor" from Aida, analyzing its structural form, melody, accompaniment, and drawing from personal singing experiences, this study examines breath control,

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rhythmic precision, accurate diction, and key aspects of stage performance. It investigates Verdi's use of dominant motives, the application of "scene," and the embodiment of "brilliant singing" within the opera, highlighting Verdi's groundbreaking efforts in reforming Italian opera and his contributions to its development. This study aims to deeply understand and appreciate Verdi's operatic singing style and techniques from the Romantic period, enhancing musical cultivation, and striving tirelessly for a precise, vivid, and lively portrayal of musical characters.

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