

# The Twin Styles in 19th Century: Stereotyping Rossini and Beethoven

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**Abstract.** In the 19th century, Dahlhaus's "twin styles" compared Rossini and Beethoven as representatives of Italy and Germany. He believes that the Italian opera represented by Rossini is superficial, while the German opera represented by Beethoven is profound. Over time, this contrasting relationship gave rise to stereotypes and gradually evolved into a broader contrast between the cultures and arts of Italy and Germany. This article aims to address this issue by examining Rossini's representative opera "L'italiana in Algeri," focusing on the aria "Languir per una bella," and analyzing the recitative "Gott! Welch Dunkel hier!" and "In des Lebens Frühlingstagen" from Beethoven's opera "Fidelio." The analysis will explore three aspects of vocal performance, examining the differences in opera composition between Rossini and Beethoven from the perspective of the singer. Furthermore, it will discuss the contrasting perceptions of Rossini and Beethoven as reflected in the "twin styles" stereotype. Employing dialectical thinking, the article will compare the works of Rossini and Beethoven and offer unique insights from a vocalist.

**Keywords:** twin styles, Rossini, tenor, Beethoven.

## 1. Introduction

In the development of opera, people constantly compare Italian opera with German opera. Finally, it rises to compare the culture, music, artistic aesthetics, and other things beyond music in these two countries and regions. Regarding the emergence of these issues, Carl Dahlhaus proposed the famous "twin styles" theory in his book "19th Century Music" [1]. The concept is to compare Italy and Germany in terms of music and culture. In his view, Italy represents shallowness and frivolity. Germany represents depth and sophistication. Its purpose is to establish the first binary system for his narrative of music in the 19th century [1]. The representative figures are Italian composer Rossini and German composer Beethoven. The comparison between these two composers is expressed in "twin styles" as follows: Rossini's music is shallow, fast, and devoid of nutrients. Indeed, it can make the audience's emotions surge, just like Italian desserts, which are sweet and delicious but not healthy. Beethoven's music is profound and meaningful. The audience may not immediately reflect the first feeling of the music, but they can appreciate the hidden meaning behind it. It is profound and advanced. Just like German bread is difficult to chew and swallow, but it is a very healthy and satisfying food [2]. That is to say, the relationship between these two is one of extravagance but not simplicity, and simplicity, a relationship between frivolity and solidity. The opposition between Rossini and Beethoven was thus established. But in my opinion, this is a one-sided understanding.

This article will analyze the differences in composing between Rossini and Beethoven from the perspective of an interpreter, aiming to discuss the differing styles of Rossini and Beethoven that the author perceives within the stereotype of "twin styles." Through literature review, the author has hardly seen any Chinese literature on twin styles. English literature is mostly focused on philosophy and humanities. There is very little research on this topic, especially on the representative figures of "twin styles" from the perspective of music analysis and music interpretation. Wolfgang Welsch's "Why Hegel So Highly Praises Rossini, but Never Mentions Beethoven" has a great inspiration and guiding role for the author's research on this topic [3]. Welch deconstructed Rossini's greatness from a philosophical perspective, but there was almost no discussion about Beethoven [3]. There is still a gap in the analysis and research of Beethoven's opera music. Therefore, this article will focus on the following topics: Firstly, the sound. Secondly, an analysis of the singing performance of the aria

"Language per una bella", "Gott! Welch Dunkel here!", and "In des Lebens Frühlingstagen". Thirdly, a discussion on the opera works of Rossini and Beethoven.

## 2. Sound

In opera, besides using different theatrical movements and unique costumes to express character relationships, the most important thing is the sound. Sound is fundamental to music, and what we perceive is simply what we hear. "Sound is an element of music itself" [4]. Sound is intuitively transmitted through the air to the audience's ears. Although it disappears over time, it stays in the heart and people live in the emotions of the sound at that time. However, the individual's understanding of how sound conveys emotions is completely different, which is the embodiment of subjectivity. Hegel once said, "It is not determined by any fixed content, but is reflected in oneself in freedom" [5]. We can obtain the emotions that a singer wants to express to us through the timbre of the singer and the singing technique. However, when the sound is briefly retained in our memories, it does not express the same feelings as everyone. This is related to the audience's own mood, education, perceptual ability, and social background. So, everyone has their own opinion on whether this work is superficial or profound. Sound is an expression of emotions that awakens our thoughts and memories, and can also regulate our inner emotions and emotions. Everyone has different feelings and evaluations towards different voices and works. Different voices have different colors, so Rossini and Beethoven are completely different in choosing the type of tenor. Firstly, there are generally four categories of tenors in the classification: light tenor, lyrical tenor, hero tenor and dramatic tenor. The light tenor also known as "Rossini's tenor", reflects the high status of Rossini in the opera industry. Secondly, this type of tenor not only requires delicate and stable techniques, but most importantly, the talent to become a light tenor. Their tone is light and delicate, with a strong metallic feel. The high notes give people a relaxed and agile feeling, and they are good at handling various complex melodic patterns. So, Italians often say: "tenore rosiniola sonoparticolari o protoditipici". The translation is: "Rossini tenor is a specialty". In Beethoven's operas, the hero tenor is usually chosen, which is related to the "heroism" in Beethoven's works. In many of Beethoven's works, we can find many heroic ideological characteristics in it. This includes military style marches and some heroic choruses. It is also very evident in this opera that hero images are established in the aria, and many of the duets and choruses also reflect the relationships between characters and the conflicts in the drama.

## 3. Performative Analysis of Three Arias

"L'italiana in Algeri" is a three-act comedy opera and one of Rossini's many famous comedic operas. It is a patriotic opera that draws inspiration from daily life. The most famous and widely circulated aria among them is "Languir per una bella", an aria sung by Lindoro with deep affection for his lover Isabella after being arrested and enslaved. This aria fully embodies Rossini's style. However, it is very difficult to sing this aria well. He needs very delicate skills and excellent control to face many of Rossini's continuous rising or falling floral singing techniques. Under the condition of maintaining a certain speed, it is necessary to perform "gradual strengthening" processing, and in large intervals, it is necessary to maintain stable pitch accuracy and singing position. For this complex technique, I have summarized four points below. Firstly, maintain breathing. Breathing is the first element of singing besides pitch accuracy. Without the support of breathing, we cannot complete high and low notes, nor can we maintain "legato". Here, we notice that there are many changes in strength in the work, with the symbol of "gradually strengthening" appearing multiple times. When we sing a musical phrase, it is not a sudden strong or weak feeling. It is a gradual feeling, gradually strengthening, using our breath to slowly push the sound to gradually "strengthen" in the singing track. At the same time, our diaphragm needs to maintain active supportive movement. Turn breathing into the fulcrum of sound (As shown in Fig. 1). This is the famous "Rossini gradually strengthening".

96  
tro - va la cal - ma pen - san - do al suo be - ne, che  
121  
ser - - - ba si ser - ba in a - mor, Che sem - pre co -

*a tempo*

20

Detailed description: This figure shows a musical score for a vocal piece. It consists of two systems of music. The first system starts at measure 96 and ends at measure 121. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: 'tro - va la cal - ma pen - san - do al suo be - ne, che'. The second system starts at measure 121 and continues. The vocal line has a long, sustained note with a fermata, followed by a melodic phrase. The lyrics are: 'ser - - - ba si ser - ba in a - mor, Che sem - pre co -'. The tempo marking 'a tempo' is placed above the vocal line. A rehearsal mark '20' is placed below the piano accompaniment.

Figure 1. The "Rossini gradually strengthening" [6]

Secondly, techniques for transitioning between sound changing zones. The switching area of a tenor is generally around # F. We can see that there are many notes on the spectrum that are in the switching zone, and they quickly alternate up and down. (As shown in Figure 2) The music is already in the transition zone. When transitioning to the sound changing zone, we need to achieve a seamless transition without any faults in the middle. This is very difficult for vocal techniques. We must accurately control the size of the atmosphere when dealing with transition sound zones. Breath cannot be too large or too small, accuracy depends on each person's functional ability, and muscle memory is formed through personal experience. When there is a strong breath, our voice cannot move quickly in the transition sound area. If the breath is small, it will cause a broken sound, which is called "Rompere" in Italian. Therefore, if the transition sound area is not resolved, it will be very difficult to sing this work. This technique is also a difficult point for tenors to solve, requiring training year after year, day after day.

LINDORO  
21  
Lan - guir per u - na bel - la, e star lon - tan lon - tan da  
25  
quel - la, è il più cru - del tor - men - to, che pro - var  
28  
pos - sa un cor.

*p*

Detailed description: This figure shows a musical score for Lindoro's 'Transitions in switching zone' section. It consists of three systems of music. The first system starts at measure 21 and ends at measure 24. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: 'Lan - guir per u - na bel - la, e star lon - tan lon - tan da'. The second system starts at measure 25 and ends at measure 27. The vocal line has a melodic phrase with a fermata. The lyrics are: 'quel - la, è il più cru - del tor - men - to, che pro - var'. The third system starts at measure 28 and ends at measure 31. The vocal line has a melodic phrase with a fermata. The lyrics are: 'pos - sa un cor.'. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes. A dynamic marking 'p' (piano) is placed below the piano accompaniment in the first system.

Figure 2. Transitions in switching zone [6]

Thirdly, lead the voice with consciousness. Although this viewpoint is rarely mentioned, the author believes that this technique is an important prerequisite for the complete interpretation of this work (As shown in Figure 3). While maintaining "cresc.", smoothly sing six consecutive triplets and immediately touch the high notes of the fourth degree upwards. In fact, I think this position is also one of the difficulties. The difficulty lies in the fact that when the regular span of a musical phrase is not very large, the sound and psychology will remain in a stable state. Suddenly touching a high note with a large span at this moment and suddenly changing position is very unreliable. One is the ability to identify faults with sound areas. Secondly, there may be a problem of low pitch. Thirdly, there will be broken sounds. So, the key to solving this problem is to make predictions in advance in our consciousness. When singing the previous bar, you should think about the height of the treble, and quickly mime in your heart to adjust to the technical state of the treble in advance and then send it directly. Avoid a feeling of sliding from bottom to top.



**Figure 3.** The degrees of upwards [6]

Fourthly, the technology of coloratura. This work has a lot of coloratura, and it requires very fast speed to maintain pitch and transition zones to express it. The breath remains in a sinking state, and the diaphragm muscles maintain good elasticity to expand. This is the best way to support sound. After inhaling, keeping the throat open and preventing the breath from rising and sinking is a good way to relax the throat (relatively relaxed), which can prevent attention from focusing on the throat, and the continuous energy supply to the legs and waist and abdomen can provide support during the singing process. Only by evenly distributing power to the oral and pharyngeal walls can elastic high notes be formed. For example (as shown in Figure 4), we can see a relatively long continuous tone, which reflects the theory we have just explained: the sinking and holding of breath, the continuous control of the strength of breath in the waist and abdomen, and the singing of flowing, short, and powerful floral tunes. This longer sixteenth note can be said to be the most difficult part of the entire aria. In the case of flexible breathing allocation, attention should also be paid to the issue of intonation, and singing notes with spans quickly accompanied by high C notes. This is not only a huge challenge for tenors, but even sopranos may not be able to easily accomplish it. And all the coloratura difficulties will be repeated twice. The earliest reason for doing this was to avoid the audience not being able to hear the lyrics clearly, so it was repeated. Afterwards, the audience became enthusiastic about the actors repeating the performance of coloratura, and even hoped to have a few more improvised performances of coloratura, which is also why the audience is eager to watch the same work multiple times. Collatura is also considered a major characteristic of Rossini. When singing, one should focus on the vowel "a" of "stan" and maintain the mouth shape and sensation of "a" to elongate and stabilize the position of our voice. To reduce the mental burden and focus on the distribution of breath during singing. Provide a rapid and powerful aura while maintaining a stable position. The above fully demonstrates that Rossini continuously optimizes more excellent tenor singers with his own works, so that his singing skills are no longer stagnant.

86  
co - stan - te Si ser - ba in a -  
p  
cresc.  
89  
a piacere  
mor. 10  
Con -  
104  
sem - pre in a-mor Si ser - ba co - stan - - -  
108  
- - - - - te Si

Figure 4. Coloratura [6]

"Gott! Welch Dunkel hier" and "In des Lebens Frühlingstagen" are the only tenor's recitative and aria performed in Beethoven's lifetime opera "Fidelio". "Fidelio" is a respected work about love and life, as well as feminist human rights protection. Because the most widely circulated overture in this opera is played with instrumental music. Instead of an aria sung by the character in human voice. So, there are many different evaluations of this opera, and everyone has their own opinions. As for the most widely circulated one, the overture seems to be able to easily understand: is Beethoven's music superior to his opera? With the development of opera, many people believe that this opera has its shortcomings. Many critics even say, "This is an annoying opera" [7]. This opera has only been performed in Germany and has never been performed in the United States like "Carmen.". Perhaps this opera did not fully cater to the market, or perhaps Beethoven was not so good at opera. In the following text, the author will analyze the narrative and aria from the perspective of vocal singing.

The male protagonist in the opera, Florestan, is loyal to his morality and God, and after experiencing various hardships, complains about the unfairness of fate in prison. Being strong enough to face everything while firmly holding onto his beliefs, this recitation and aria have established a heroic image for him. The overall singing went through three variations, namely the three psychological changes of the male protagonist. From the initial cry for injustice to the powerless inner confession, until the rhythm begins to change and becomes active, emotional excitement reaches its peak. From this perspective, Beethoven's emotional performance in music is still very accurate, allowing people to immediately feel the emotional changes of the male protagonist. When singing this work, I will elaborate on four key points and difficulties in vocal techniques to discuss my understanding of this work: first, Breathing is certainly the most important and second most important aspect in singing, but due to the above mentioned, I would like to talk about other more important

aspects. As shown in Fig. 5, we can clearly see that the first tone at the beginning is very high, starting with G. This pair of tenors with slightly less control may not be very complete in terms of completion, and "vocalization" is very important in singing works. It is related to the beginning of a whole phrase, and if the breath rises, it will cause the sound to become increasingly tense as the singing progresses. So, a good start is very important. In most works, the "starting tone" is not too high, which allows the singer to adapt to the phrase from the low tone. However, the high tone reflected in this work as the starting tone requires us to open the cavity in advance while waiting for the prelude, maintain the sinking of the breath, and be mentally prepared to silently sing the first note with accuracy and boldness. Being bold here is extremely important, of course, it is to sing boldly on the premise of being well prepared with technical skills. Being cautious and ambiguous may lead to low or broken notes.



Figure 5. The starting tone [8]

Secondly, pay attention to the expression mark (As shown in Fig. 6). We can observe that this work still has Beethoven's consistent writing style, especially for the expression mark. So, while singing, we first need to maintain the correct rhythm and breathing, and pay attention to the prompts given by the expression mark while maintaining the "legato". Give us a tip. Follow the original author's thoughts and wishes to sing this song as if it were a "one size fits all" in China, to better express the emotional changes of the characters in the play.

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The musical score consists of five systems, each with a vocal line (marked 'F.' for Female) and a piano accompaniment. The systems are marked with different tempo and expression instructions:

- System 1:** Tempo: *Più moto* (then *Poco Andante*). Lyrics: "nichts, nichts le - bet au-ßer mir, o schwe-re Prü-fung! ob." Expression marks: *cresc.*, *f*, *p*.
- System 2:** Tempo: *Poco Allegro*. Lyrics: "Doch ge-recht ist Got-tes Wil-le!" Expression marks: *cresc.*, *f*, *p dolce*, *str.*
- System 3:** Tempo: *Adagio*. Lyrics: "Ich murre nicht, das Maß der Lei- - - den steht bei" Expression marks: *cresc.*, *f*, *p*.
- System 4:** Tempo: *Adagio cantabile*. Lyrics: "dir! In des Le-bens Früh-lings" Expression marks: *kl. Fg. Hr.*, *p dolce*, *p str.*
- System 5:** Lyrics: "ta-gen ist das Glück von mir ge-flohn, Wahr-heit wagt ich kühn zu sa-gen, und die" Expression marks: *kl.*, *Fg. Hr.*

Figure 6. Expression marks in Beethoven's work [8]

Thirdly, pay attention to the conversion of registers. As shown in Figure 7, it is the most challenging point in this work. In fact, this technique is somewhat like the transitional sound transition zone we mentioned when analyzing Rossini's operas above. We noticed that in the melodies of these two annotated phrases, they follow an upward trend and finally reach the high note B flat, followed by "cresc." and "dim.". We need to start adjusting the vocal range before singing the treble, so that the range remains consistent. Of course, we need to do "cream" It will be relatively simple, simply sing silently with the right pitch, open the cavity, breathe, and speak directly with the sound. But when doing "dim.", it is relatively more complex. It is necessary to open the chamber while singing silently, and gently use your breath to match the sound. The accurate intensity varies from person to person. Breathing intensity should not be too high. When practicing, first try to use the minimum amount of breathing to make a sound, so that our vocal cords are in a semi vibrating state. Therefore, before singing, practice adjusting the song to form a certain muscle memory in the pharyngeal wall function before trying to sing.

121

Figure 7. The conversion of registers [8]

Fourthly, pay attention to the standardization of lyrics. The first emphasis in classical songs is on "legato". The second focus is on the standardization of lyrics. In German, there is a lot of "ch" "T" Au "R". These words are often overlooked by Chinese students, and it is relatively easy to come up with a single word. However, in consecutive lyrics, many of them are often overlooked, such as "ch". Pay attention to pronouncing "t" at the end of the word. When reading "Au", most people may not notice that their mouth is lazy and casual. In fact, they should open their mouth slightly to do a "bite" action, which may not be very deliberate, but needs to be completed according to the action process. "R". It is well known that some words require tongue flicking, but in German, some words require tongue flicking (uvula). When vowels overlap in German, we need to pronounce long sounds, such as when there is one or no auxiliary sound after a vowel, the vowel is pronounced short. For example, when a vowel is followed by "h", "h" is not pronounced. If this vowel is pronounced as a long sound, and there are two or more consonant letters after the vowel, then the vowel should be pronounced as a short sound. So, distinguish the correct pronunciation of these words according to the needs of the work.

#### 4. Discussion on the Opera Works of Rossini and Beethoven

Rossini is a composer who pays more attention to the fun of melody in opera creation. He encourages performers and singers to fully play in music without requiring too much ceremonial feeling. This has to some extent promoted the development of vocal technology and further promoted the progress of coloratura. The emergence of Rossini's aria changed Mozart and Handel's past. Their style of regulation and restraint towards opera. As Hegel said, "Rossini brought creativity to singing and added the freedom to composition." [5]. Among talented singers, they begin to not want to be constrained by their understanding of characters and expression of emotions. True artists should compose music for their works while singing, giving a single feeling a soul and enriching simplicity. But the premise is that the composer leaves some space for you in advance, so Rossini did it that way. His works give people a sense of freedom and publicity, allowing them to empathize with them immediately. And it always gives people a kind of "free melody that can cross all peaks" [5]. The direct expression of Rossini is also closely related to people's perception of him as a "food musician". He said, "The stomach is the conductor of our great symphony of desire, and the passion for creation does not come from the brain, but from the internal organs." [9]. From this point, we can see that in his eyes, music expression is very direct, not abstract thinking in the brain. But it comes from the internal organs that the nervous system directly provides us with sensations. And the "viscera" here are also profound expressions. On the contrary, we notice that Beethoven's expression of music is also like a giant. In *Fidelio*, the accompaniment of the overture and vocal works is more outstanding than the vocal works themselves, which is clearly why Beethoven did not strike a good balance. In the dungeon scene in *Fidelio*, Florentin's hallucination of his wife Lehora. On the treble B flat, it is already necessary to elongate the note, and surprisingly, it needs to be done twice to gradually strengthen and weaken. "A certain writer's comment is really good. Which composer would make the protagonist perform like this as soon as they appear, and then must sing the entire scene at full throttle?" [10]. It also reflects that Beethoven did not consider the opera actors when writing his opera works, and all the melodies were only to express his emotions. Lack of rationality. As mentioned in the story of Bernstein's "*Fidelio*" in the second season of "Young People's Concert", "However, with the development of opera, everyone acknowledges that "*Fidelio*" has flaws, and some critics find it full of flaws. Some call it a failed work - the essence is annoying." [7]. The reason for this problem may be that Beethoven attempted to write opera for the first time, but due to his unfamiliarity with the genre of opera, some music writing was not appropriate. The drama of this opera is also somewhat unsatisfactory. Germans claim that Rossini's music is detestable, and his music is considered by German musicologists to be the biggest aesthetic debate in music history. This century long war: spiritual pursuit and emotional enjoyment, is reaching a critical juncture. However, cultural wars are always completely built on two poles of values, and this polarization of opposition can crumble after careful examination. Rossini's music did not offend the taste of ideal romanticists. The "annoying" gradually strengthening is just a foreshadowing of the end. Just like Beethoven's Third Symphony, it is a complete spiritual value that aims to express lofty ideals. What makes "gradually strengthening" so crude, while other characteristics are so sublime? The answer is, only the context. Only in the appropriate context can the interpretive discourse and dialectics of a composer's work be convincing due to its rationality. Opera is essentially the highest embodiment of singing art. The basic purpose of opera is to use smooth and pleasant music to please and move the audience, and make it popular. This national ideal is an important counterbalance to the different opera concepts of Germany and Italy.

#### 5. Conclusion

Rossini played a crucial role in the development of opera and singing techniques. His works have always held a position among the finest operas of the world. His mature and excellent composition techniques provide audiences with high-quality enjoyment. It is unmatched by other composers. However, he is not superficial, and Beethoven is not profound or advanced. Rossini is an absolute

winner in the creation and influence of opera. Beethoven has always been a giant in music, but in terms of composing operas, he has always been slightly inferior to Rossini. I would like to call *Fidelio* a failed masterpiece. And this failure is limited to the genre of opera, the music is still very excellent and exciting. In summary, I believe that it is untenable for the author to elevate Beethoven's position by deliberately belittling Rossini's abilities in the exposition of "Twin styles". The achievements and contributions of the two composers are reflected on different levels, and this subjective stereotype is an incorrect view.

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