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## Romantic Ornamentation

### Portamento in Romantic Opera

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Deborah Kauffman

Present day singing differs from that of the nineteenth century in a number of ways. One of the most apparent is in the use of portamento, the "carrying" of the tone from one note to another. In our own century portamento has been viewed with suspicion; as one author wrote in 1938, it is "capable of much expression when judiciously employed, but when it becomes a habit it is deplorable, because then it leads to scooping."<sup>1</sup> The attitude of more recent authors is difficult to ascertain, since portamento has all but disappeared as a topic for discussion in more recent texts on singing. Authors seem to prefer providing detailed technical and physiological descriptions of vocal production than offering discussions of style. But even a cursory listening of recordings from the turn of the century reveals an entirely different attitude toward portamento. Rather than viewing it with suspicion, singers from the end of the nineteenth century introduced portamento frequently, and with considerable care and delicacy. The Italian tenor Fernando de Lucia (1860-1925), for instance, combined a beautifully varied portamento with masterful dynamic control to spin out phrases of breathtaking beauty and touching affect. To the singers of Lucia's day, portamento seems to have been an indispensable part of their expressive vocabulary. By examining its

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<sup>1</sup>William James Henderson, *The Art of Singing* (1938).

presence in a representative sample of these early recordings, while considering discussions of portamento found in nineteenth-century singing treatises, we can begin to evaluate the recordings as a genuine reflection of this aspect of romantic performance practice.

Some of the most frequently recorded arias at the turn of the century come from the French romantic opera repertoire. Arias by such composers as Meyerbeer, Thomas, and Bizet were especially popular with singers and audiences alike, because their lyric melodies and generally simple orchestral accompaniments offered an uncomplicated emotional backdrop for the singer's art, a vehicle for pure vocalism. Recordings of two such arias from Ambroise Thomas's *Mignon*, "Connais-tu le pays" and "Adieu, Mignon," will serve as the focus for this study.<sup>2</sup> With these sound documents in mind, we will consider several important aspects of portamento: its role in vocal production, how it differs from legato singing, whether or not it includes an anticipation of the subsequent note, and its function within a phrase.

Authors of nineteenth-century singing treatises did not regard portamento as an ornament, but rather as a vital aspect of vocal production. For example, in treatises by Alexis de Garaudé<sup>3</sup> and Manuel Garcia,<sup>4</sup> discussions of portamento appear not in chapters on

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<sup>2</sup>For the aria "Connais-tu le pays," the singers are: Adelina Patti (Gramophone 03083, recorded in 1905), Florence Easton (Brunswick 15030, recorded ca. 1921-26), Geraldine Farrar (Victor 8024-B, recorded in 1915), Emmy Destinn (Victrola 91083, recorded in 1901), Guiseppina Huguet (Victor 35718-A, recorded in 1906), and Ernestine Schumann-Heink (Victor 88090, recorded in 1907). For "Adieu, Mignon," or rather, "Addio, Mignon" (since all of the tenors sang an Italian translation) the singers are: Fernando de Lucia (G & T 052111 [included on GEMM-252-6], recorded in 1906), Alessandro Bonci (Società italiana di fonotipia 39079, recorded 1905), Emilio Perea (Victor 63420-A, probably recorded in 1905), and Tito Schipa (Victor 6465-A, recorded in 1924).

<sup>3</sup>Alexis de Garaudé, *Méthode complète de chant* (Paris: Vaillant, [1826]). The publication date is not in the edition, but provided by the University of California, Berkeley catalog number.

<sup>4</sup>Manuel Garcia, *Traité complet de l'art du chant* (Paris: Troupenas, 1847).

ornamentation, but within sections devoted to vocalization.<sup>5</sup> Garaudé considers portamento (or, in French, *port de voix*) to be one of the two basic ways in which all notes must be joined.<sup>6</sup> The other is that of *notes coulé*, or *notes liés*; in other words, legato. In legato singing, according to Garaudé, one note is smoothly connected to the next, with each retaining its precise and distinct intonation; he likens the effect to legato produced on the piano.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, *port de voix* is "an anticipation of the following sound to which one glides lightly with a rapid inflection, passing through an indefinite number of intervals imperceptible to the ear."<sup>8</sup> For Garaudé, the anticipation of the subsequent note is essential to the *port de voix*; it is a defining characteristic, as his example of its execution makes clear.

Ex. 1. Garaudé, 30.



Garcia's discussion of *port de voix* concurs with Garaudé's at a fundamental level, but further refines the concept. Garcia considers *port de voix* one of the five ways in which a singer can move between notes in a passage: the notes can be "carried" (*porter*), "connected" (*lier*),

<sup>5</sup>In Garaudé, portamento is presented in Part 1, ch. 4, while ornaments are presented in ch. 5. In Garcia, portamento is presented in Part 1, ch. 9 while ornaments appear in Part 2, ch. 3.

<sup>6</sup>That portamento and *port de voix* are one and the same is seen in the parallel translation in the treatise; *port de voix* is consistently translated as portamento. While Garcia's treatise does not have a parallel translation of the entire text, most musical terms are also given their Italian counterpart, so in the section heading on page 29, *port de voix* is paired with *portamento di voce*.

<sup>7</sup>"Les sons coulés, pour le chant, doivent à peu près faire l'effet qu'ils produiraient sur le piano, lorsqu'on les lie d'après les règles connues." Garaudé, 29-30.

<sup>8</sup>"C'est une anticipation du son suivant, sur lequel on glisse légèrement la voix avec une inflexion rapide, qui passe par un nombre indéfini d'intervalles inappréciables à l'oreille." Garaudé, 30.

"marked" (*marquer*), "pointed" (*piquer*), or "breathed out" (*aspirer*).<sup>9</sup> Like Garaudé, Garcia's definition of legato (*lier*) stresses the precise intonation of the individual notes: "To connect the notes is to pass from one to another in a distinct, sudden, spontaneous way, with the voice neither stopping nor dragging over each intermediary note."<sup>10</sup> Instead of likening vocal legato to the effect on the piano, Garcia cites the organ or wind instruments as models.<sup>11</sup> *Port de voix* differs from mere legato by the presence of intermediary pitches: "To carry the voice is to go from one note to another by passing through all the possible intermediary notes."<sup>12</sup> However, Garcia parts with Garaudé by implying that the *port de voix* can be made without anticipating the second note of the interval. Indeed, Garcia's initial exercises for *port de voix* show no anticipatory note.

Ex. 2. Garcia, Part 1, 32.

*PORT DE VOIX.*

N° 6.

CANTO.

PIANO.

The anticipatory note finally appears in an example in Part 2 of the treatise, *The Art of Phrasing*, within a section on the distribution of the words under the music. Garcia recommends the *port de voix* as an aid to changing syllables on very high notes; the singer can change syllables more easily by approaching the high note first with an ascending *port de voix*, instead of attacking both the note and the syllable at the same

<sup>9</sup>Garcia, Part 1, 29.

<sup>10</sup>"Lier les sons, c'est passer d'un son à un autre d'une manière nette, subite, spontanée, sans que la voix s'interrompe ou se traine sur aucun son intermédiaire." Garcia, Part 1, 30.

<sup>11</sup>Garcia, Part 1, 30.

<sup>12</sup>"Porter la voix, c'est la conduire d'un son à un autre en passant par tous les sons intermédiaires possibles," Garcia, 29. I am certain that *porter la voix* and *port de voix* are equivalent, since the above quoted sentence follows directly after the section heading "*Port de voix*" and is followed directly by a sentence beginning "*Le port de voix . . .*"

time.<sup>13</sup> This implies an anticipation of the high note, as shown by a sixteenth note in his example.

Ex. 3. Garcia, Part 2, 13.



In Part 2 of his treatise, Garcia shows the anticipation notated by a grace note in an illustration of breathing between notes connected by a *port de voix*.

Ex. 4. Garcia, Part 2, 20.

The image shows a musical score for Rossini's Gazza ladra Cavatina. The title 'ROSSINI Gazza ladra Cavatina.' is on the left. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are 'quan-ti con-ten-ti si al-fin go-drò tut-to sor-ri-de-re'. The score shows a series of notes with a slur over them, indicating a portamento. There are three staves of music shown, with the lyrics 'quan-ti con-ten-ti si al-fin go-drò tut-to sor-ri-de-re' appearing below the notes. An annotation 'Allegretto.' is above the first staff, and 'respira.' is above the third staff.

For Garcia the anticipation seems to be an option rather than a requirement. This is confirmed by his notation in the five annotated arias included at the end of his treatise. For each aria, Garcia has included an extra staff, on which he shows how the vocal part is actually executed. He reserves the slur for indicating portamento, contrary to the common editorial practice in vocal music, in which the slur connects all notes to be sung to a single syllable.<sup>14</sup> In the annotated arias, *ports de voix* appear both with and without anticipations of the subsequent notes;

<sup>13</sup>Garcia, Part 2, 12-13.

<sup>14</sup>Garcia, Part 1, 30.

## Ex. 5. Garcia, Part 2, 80 and 90.

*piano.*

da una vecchia mia pa-rente      buo-na don-na es-sai pie-

da una vecchia mia pa-rente      buo-na don-na es-sai pie-

*voix caressante.*  
*schmeichelnde Stimme.*  
*p*      *p*

che nes-sun ci sen-ti-ra scenderemo scende-

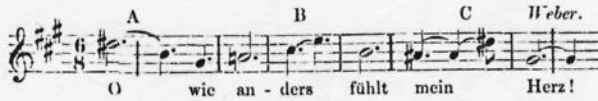
che nes-sun ci sen-ti-ra scende-re-mo scen-do-

the majority, however, have no anticipation.

This is the most substantial difference between Garcia and Garaudé; for Garaudé the anticipatory note appears to be mandatory. Garaudé's viewpoint may reflect a second school of thought in the nineteenth century; Ferdinand Sieber, in his *Vollständiges Lehrbuch der Gesangkunst*, criticizes the Bolognese school of singing (represented by Bernacchi) for using the anticipation as the defining characteristic of portamento.<sup>15</sup> He argues that such a narrow definition would rule out the use of portamento as an expressive device for intervals sung to the same syllable, where the insertion of an anticipation would produce a glottal stop.

<sup>15</sup>Ferdinand Sieber, *Vollständiges Lehrbuch der Gesangkunst zum Gebrauche für Lehrer und Schüler des Sologesanges* (Magdeburg: Heinrichshofen'sche Musikalienhandlung, 1858), 108-109.

## Ex. 6. Sieber, 109.



Listening to the recordings of our sample arias, it is immediately apparent that singers not only performed portamenti both with and without anticipations, they also sang any number of subtle gradations between the two extremes. Fernando de Lucia demonstrates a number of these gradations in the first 11 measures of his impressive 1906 recording of "Addio, Mignon." He sings no anticipation in his portamento in measure 8, when gliding from C to A on the word "anni."

## Ex. 7. Thomas, "Addio, Mignon," m. 8.

Nè verd' an - ni

By contrast, his clearest anticipation is in measure 6, where he carries the syllable "la-" in the word "lagrimar" from F to E, producing an emotional "sob" (or *sanglot*) on the last part of the vowel before singing the next syllable on E.

**Adelina Patti** (National Portrait Gallery, London)



**Emmy Destinn as Mignon** (Stuart Liff Collection, Tunbridge Wells)



**Fernando de Lucia as Turiddù** (Stuart Liff Collection, Tunbridge Wells)



## Ex. 8. Thomas, "Addio, Mignon," m. 6-7.

Non la - gri - mar!

This musical score shows measures 6 and 7 of Thomas's "Addio, Mignon." The music is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The vocal line (treble clef) features a portamento from D4 to A4 over the first measure, followed by a half note A4 in the second measure. The piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs) consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a half-note bass line in the left hand, with some chordal textures.

In measure 4, Lucia sings three A's instead of two, giving the impression of an anticipation; however, he does not carry the same syllable from D to A, but changes from "- di-" to "-o-" in "Addio."

## Ex. 9. Thomas, "Addio, Mignon," m. 3-4.

Ad - di - o, Mig - non fa

This musical score shows measures 3 and 4 of Thomas's "Addio, Mignon." The music is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The vocal line (treble clef) has a portamento from D4 to A4 over the first measure, followed by a half note A4 in the second measure. The piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs) consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a half-note bass line in the left hand, with some chordal textures.

In this instance, because of the peculiarities of Italian text setting, the inserted note bears the text, robbing it of the character of the typical anticipation. In the first eleven measures of this recording, both of Lucia's most delicate and subtle examples of *port de voix* ascend rather than descend; they are in measure 6 (the first two syllables of "Non

lagrimar" ["don't cry"]) and measures 10 to 11 (the first two syllables of "dolore" ["sadness"]).

Ex. 10. Thomas, "Addio, Mignon," m. 10-11.

The musical score is for measures 10 and 11 of the aria "Addio, Mignon" by Thomas. It is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score includes three staves: a vocal line (treble clef), a piano accompaniment (treble clef), and a bass line (bass clef). The vocal line has the lyrics "pas - sa il do lo re" written below it. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and single notes. The bass line consists of single notes.

The notes blend so well together, and the "l" and "n" consonants are so liquid, that it is difficult to tell when he changes syllables and when he arrives on the upper note. The effect is of a smooth, unbroken glide between the notes. Overall, it seems that Lucia uses the anticipatory note in most, but not all, of his *ports de voix*. He varies its length, often touching upon the anticipation very lightly and quickly, making it difficult to pin down, but at other times dwelling on it. He performs the *port de voix* not as a stock gesture, but as a flexible device, suited to musical expression.

Another superb recording of this aria is by Emilio Perea (1889-?). His use of portamento is very similar to Lucia's; he sings portamento both with and without anticipations, and with many gradations in between. In the middle section of "Addio, Mignon," most of the portamenti seem to be without anticipations. Perea's clearest anticipations occur on two of the most emotional words in the section: in the ascending portamento on the second syllable of "lasciarti" ("to leave you") in measure 34, and in the descending portamento on the second syllable of "afflita" ("tormented") in the next measure.

## Ex. 11. Thomas, "Addio, Mignon," m. 34-35.

A strong anticipation strenghtens the *port de voix* by making it more definite, but an understated anticipation can also heighten the expression of emotional words, as in Lucia's singing of "dolore" and "non lagrimar" discussed above.

On the four recordings of this aria in my sample, the artists often use portamento in the same places: there is perfect unanimity at the expressive word "addio" in measure 65 and at every occurrence of the word "lagrimar" (measures 6, 20, 41, 66).<sup>16</sup> The other unanimous occurrences seem to be unrelated to the text: in measure 18, the large interval sung to a single syllable seems more crucial than the word "vegliar" ("watch over"); and in measure 63, the A, the highest note of the piece and its climax, overshadows the text "saprò" ("I will").

For these singers, portamento is more than a manner of execution; it is an expressive device, often introduced in the service of the text. This connection to text becomes even more apparent in recordings of "Connais-tu le pays" from *Mignon*. Three different languages are represented in the recordings in my sample: French, German, and Italian. While some unity of execution points to purely musical reasons for the placement of portamento, a number of interesting divergences clearly show a relationship to language:

<sup>16</sup>All of the recordings cut measures 43 through 59, but I have retained them in my counting of the measures.

## Ex. 12. Thomas, "Connais-tu le pays," m. 6-7.

Le ——— pa - ys des fruits d'or  
 In ——— dun - keln Laub  
 Il ——— bel suol ù de' rai

Florence Easton (1882-1955) and Geraldine Farrar (1882-1967), both singing in French, place the portamento on the word "pays,"<sup>17</sup> while Emmy Destinn (1878-1930) and Ernestine Schumann-Heink (1861-1936), singing in German, use portamento to carry the vowel of the first syllable "dunkel." Further, Giuseppina Huguet (1871-1951), singing in Italian, places her portamento on the high note of the phrase. In measure 11, the singers of French (Easton, Farrar, and Adelina Patti [1843-1919]) all place a portamento between "plus" and "douce"; the softness of the portamento and the consonant "d" (the "s" in "plus" is silent) heighten the sweetness of "douce." The German singers use portamento at a different point, on the first syllable of "sanfter," again reflecting the adjective.

<sup>17</sup>In the French versions portamento tends to appear on words that have diphthongs; in words like "pays" and "abeilles," the two vowels are connected with portamento.

## Ex. 13. Thomas, "Connais-tu le pays," m. 10-11.

*pp*  
 Où ——— la brise est plus douce  
 Ein ——— sanft — ter Wind

Places where the singers agree on portamento point to musical considerations as the motivating force. Two musical circumstances in particular account for much of the unanimity among the performers. The most easily identifiable of these is the presence of an interval of a fourth or larger. While the use of portamento can be a technical aid to bridging the interval, it can also be purely expressive, as in the falling fifth in measure 32 sung to the word "mourir," and the diminished seventh in measure 34, on the word "vivre." The other common musical motivation for portamento, as mentioned above, is to emphasize the high point of a phrase. Quite often these two circumstances overlap in that the high note of the phrase can be either approached or left by a large interval.

In both performances, the singers give special attention to the aria's climactic phrase by connecting almost all of its notes by means of portamento. In "Addio, Mignon," this occurs in measures 48 to 50 ("Addio, non lagrimar!"), and in "Connais-tu le pays," in measures 30 to 32 ("Aimer, aimer et mourir!"). Garcia calls this series of notes connected by *ports de voix*, *vocalisation portée*, literally, "carried singing." Garcia stresses that this is an "exceptional manner of execution [his

italics]."<sup>18</sup> That our two singers reserve it for the expressive climax of the piece confirms its exceptional status.

The presence of portamento has a definite connection to genre; certain types of pieces are more appropriate to the practice than others. Garaudé mentions *port de voix* by name only in connection with the *cantabile* genre.<sup>19</sup> According to Garaudé, the *Cantabile* aria has a slow, majestic, and simple character; it requires attention to breathing, a well-disposed voice, sustained singing, crescendo and diminuendo of the notes, and suppleness and expression in the use of *ports de voix*. He applies these same precepts to *larghetto*, *adagio*, and *andante* arias. While Garaudé does not mention *port de voix* by name in connection with other genres, neither does he specifically rule out its presence in them; presumably it would be less frequent in styles other than *cantabile*. Garcia's indications are similar: he links portamento directly with what he calls *canto spianato*, apparently his term for *cantabile*.<sup>20</sup> He also identifies it with what he calls *canto di maniera*, a genre that, from his description, seems close to *cantabile*, but is characterized more by grace and delicacy than by nuances of passion. Even more specifically, a *canto di maniera* aria dominated by *ports de voix* is called *canto di portamento*.<sup>21</sup> Although they do not state it specifically, both authors imply that portamento is more appropriate to slow than to faster tempos; portamento is linked with the essential characteristics of slow genres, but left unmentioned in the descriptions of faster genres. This is borne out in the recordings I have listened to; while portamento is not absent from more lively pieces, it is far more prevalent in slow, expressive arias.

Other than providing general discussions of appropriate genres, these singing treatises give few definite guidelines for the technique of applying portamento. As Garcia points out, the circumstances where portamento would be deemed suitable are difficult to specify and cannot be determined by general rules.<sup>22</sup> In his only remark regarding where it might occur, Garcia portrays portamento as an expressive device connected with the text: "One could say, however, that the *port de voix* would be well placed in passionate speech every time the voice would be

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<sup>18</sup>Garcia, Part 1, 30.

<sup>19</sup>Garaudé, 121.

<sup>20</sup>Garcia, Part 2, 66-68.

<sup>21</sup>Garcia, Part 2, 68-69.

<sup>22</sup>Garcia, Part 2, 28.

drawn out under the impression of an energetic or tender sentiment. Suppress the *port de voix* in Mozart's phrase [from Don Giovanni]: "È sposo in me," and the tender expression would disappear."<sup>23</sup> What Garcia has left unsaid may be inferred from the annotated arias included in his treatise. He places portamento in the same kinds of contexts as the singers on our sample of recordings: on expressive words, over large intervals, and at the high points of phrases.

Related to portamento is the practice, heard on early recordings of singing (and violin playing), of attacking a note low and "scooping" up to its notated pitch; this is often singled out as "sloppy" and "tasteless" by modern listeners. It seems our authors were also unhappy with the practice. Garaudé instructs singers to attack notes precisely, without any "preparatory trail of notes" ("*aucune trainée préparatoire*").<sup>24</sup> Garcia warns against attacking notes by a lower *port de voix*, a fault that he says is dominant in France.<sup>25</sup> He returns to the topic later: "Some singers, whether through negligence or lack of taste, are not content to over-use *ports de voix*, they commit the fault of adapting them to all notes in the form of a lower trail, placing the second [i.e., the next] syllable in anticipation on [the beginning of] this trail . . ."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>"On peut dire cependant que le port de voix sera bien placé toutes le fois que, dans le langage passionné, la voix se traînerait sous l'impression d'un sentiment énergique ou tendre. Supprimez le port de voix dans la phrase de Mozart: "È sposo in me," et l'expression tendre disparaîtra." Garcia, Part 2, 28.

<sup>24</sup>Garaudé, 38.

<sup>25</sup>Garcia, Part 1, 30.

<sup>26</sup>"Quelques chanteurs, soit par négligence, soit par défaut de goût, ne se contentent pas de multiplier les ports de voix; ils commettent la faute de les adapter à toutes les notes sous forme de trainée inférieure, en plaçant . . . sur cette trainée, la deuxième syllabe prise par anticipation." Garcia, Part 2, 28. A correct portamento would be executed on the previous syllable.

## Ex. 14. Garcia, Part 2, 28.

MEYERBEER  
Robert le Diable  
Aria.

Isabelle.

grà - ce grà - ce pour toi mè - me pour toi mè - ma

To Garcia, singing the second syllable too early (by placing it on the first note of the *port de voix* instead of the second) is as distasteful as adding a lower *port de voix* to all notes. "The *port de voix* is executed by conducting the voice with the syllable to be left, and not, as is done too often in France, with the following syllable taken up in anticipation. One should make the note that corresponds to the second syllable audible for an instant in advance; but the syllable is articulated only at the moment when its indicated note begins."<sup>27</sup>

Ex. 15. Garcia, Part 2, 28.<sup>28</sup>

CIMAROSA  
Sacrificio d'Abraham  
Aria.

Sara.

deh par - - la - te et non deh par - la - - te

Note that in the first example the syllable "la" (of "parlate") should be placed beneath the C in the second measure, in order to illustrate correct portamento.

Garcia's example shows the premature change of syllable in both ascending and descending portamenti; however, on these recordings the practice seems to be limited to those ascending. A specific example of this practice can be heard in Adelina Patti's recording of "Connais-tu le

<sup>27</sup>"Le port de voix s'exécute en conduisant la voix avec la syllabe que l'on va abandonner, et non pas, comme on le fait trop souvent en France, avec la syllabe suivante prise par anticipation. On doit même faire entendre un instant d'avance la note qui répond à la deuxième syllabe; mais on n'articule cette syllabe qu'au moment où commence la valeur indiquée de la note." Garcia, Part 2, 28.

<sup>28</sup>Note that in the first example, the syllable "-la-" of "parlate" should be placed beneath the C in the second measure in order to illustrate correct portamento.

pays;" between measures 32 and 33 she sings the word "là" on the lower note and carries it to the higher note.

**Ex. 16.** Thomas, "Connais-tu le pays," m. 32-33.

rir C'est là que je vou-drais

*mf*

Because of this, the higher note and the word "là" ("It is there") both receive an extra expressive accent. In Fernando de Lucia's recording of "Addio, Mignon" he changes syllables early to good effect; in measure 10 he carries the G to the B in the next measure by singing the second syllable of "dolore" slightly early. He repeats this practice between measures 12 and 13 by carrying the penultimate syllable of "consolerà" from the A-sharp to the C-sharp.

**Ex. 17.** Thomas, "Addio, Mignon," m. 12-13.

*cresc.*

Dio ti con-so-le-rà!

In all of these cases this practice is used in the service of beautiful singing, as a *heightening of expression*. Both this practice and that of attacking a pitch from below are heard on early recordings, but they are perhaps not as pervasive as modern listeners may expect, nor are they as crude as Garcia's examples. In the truly great recordings (like Lucia's and Perea's of "Addio, Mignon"), "scooping" up to notes is almost non-existent, and when done, it is confined to a very small interval. I can only assume that Garaudé and Garcia were reacting to a much more pervasive and much less subtle practice than we hear on early recordings.

While writers of singing treatises in the nineteenth century describe the practice of portamento in varying detail, even the most thorough treatment only reveals a small portion of the picture presented by recorded performances. In every aspect, the practice heard on recordings is far more subtle and varied than that described in treatises. As performed by great singers of the past, portamento is not a single manner of execution, but represents a continuum of practice, depending upon the level of audibility of the intervening notes, the presence or absence of an anticipation, and the relative length of the anticipatory note. It is not surprising that the writers of the treatises do not explain in detail where and how portamento is applied, since, while it generally highlights important elements of the text and music, it is left to the singer to apply as he or she sees fit, according to his or her training and experience. While portamento survives in performance today, it is no longer as vital an element of vocal production and expression. We are fortunate to have recordings that provide at least a reflection of the nineteenth-century use of this important aspect of expressive and beautiful singing.