

# The Musical Subconscious: from Mozart to Rossini, Metamorphosis of a Coloratura, a Compendium of Musical and Psychological Appreciation

## El subconsciente musical: de Mozart a Rossini, metamorfosis de una coloratura, un compendio de apreciación musical y psicológica

**Francisco Aranda Espinosa:** University of the State of Hidalgo, Mexico.  
[francisco\\_aranda@uaeh.edu.mx](mailto:francisco_aranda@uaeh.edu.mx)

**Date of Reception:** 28/05/2024

**Acceptance Date:** 24/07/2024

**Publication Date:** 15/08/2024

### How to cite the article

Aranda Espinosa, F. (2024). The Musical Subconscious: from Mozart to Rossini, Metamorphosis of a Coloratura, a Compendium of Musical and Psychological Appreciation. [El subconsciente musical: de Mozart a Rossini, metamorfosis de una coloratura, un compendio de apreciación musical y psicológica]. *European Public & Social Innovation Review*, 9, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.31637/epsir-2024-515>

### Abstract:

**Introduction:** This presentation delves into the profound relationship between coloratura, as a musical ornamentation, and the concept of Musical Subconscious, particularly focusing on the works of W. A. Mozart and G. Rossini. **Methodology:** Through the interdisciplinary lenses of philosophy and psychology, we aim to uncover the connections that exist within the human mind when exposed to intricate musical compositions. **Results:** Our objectives are to elucidate the role of memory, emotion, and creativity in shaping the musical experience, to analyze the distinct manifestations of the concept of musical subconscious in Mozart's and Rossini's compositions, and to explore the implications of psychology and philosophical-musical aesthetics of reception on our understanding of coloratura's impact. **Conclusion:** It is summarized that in this psychic symphony, the genius of Mozart and Rossini resonates like an echo that transcends not only space and time, but also the logos itself.

**Keywords:** coloratura; ornamentation; opera; musical subconscious; aesthetics; auditory psychology; classical music; rococo.

**Resumen:**

**Introducción:** Esta presentación ahonda en la profunda relación entre la coloratura, como ornamentación musical, y el concepto de Subconsciente Musical, centrándose especialmente en las obras de Mozart y Rossini. **Metodología:** A través de las lentes interdisciplinarias de la filosofía y la psicología, pretendemos descubrir las conexiones que existen dentro de la mente humana cuando se expone a intrincadas composiciones musicales. **Resultados:** Nuestros objetivos son dilucidar el papel de la memoria, la emoción y la creatividad en la configuración de la experiencia musical, analizar las distintas manifestaciones del concepto de subconsciente musical en las composiciones de Mozart y Rossini, y explorar las implicaciones de la psicología y la estética filosófico-musical de la recepción en nuestra comprensión del impacto de la coloratura. **Conclusión:** Se resume que en esta sinfonía psíquica, el genio de Mozart y Rossini resuena como un eco que trasciende no sólo el espacio y el tiempo, sino también el logos mismo.

**Palabras clave:** coloratura; ornamentación; ópera; subconsciente musical; estética; psicología auditiva; clasicismo; rococó.

## 1. Introduction:

### 1.1. Regarding Coloratura as a Thread of the Musical Subconscious

Coloratura is a virtuoso ornament of the human voice, an exquisite expression in the cosmos of music. As a technical device, it is a motif that embroiders the melody with arabesques of vocal agility, leading the listener into a realm of emotions as unexplored as they are subjective. From a conjectural point of view, the coloratura represents a kind of *brooding* of freedom and imagination in the musical action, an authentic manifestation of sonority, which is evidenced in the ability of the musical entity to go beyond the primary limits of monodic or homophonic music, creating trills, turns, mordents, *appoggiaturas*, and all kinds of musical ornaments that in some way compromise the stability of the passage in question: its musical gravity, sliding down dizzying scales with an agility that seems to outface the physical laws of sound.

The etymological origin of the term *coloratura* can be traced back to the Latin *colorare*, which means to color. It is important to note, however, that in the music of composers such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Gioachino Rossini, coloratura does not literally refer to the act of coloring with the human voice. Rather, it refers to a vocal technique that involves *melismas* and elaborate agile melodic passages that enhance the beauty and vocal articulation of the performance: it is a play of light and shadow on the voice that adds artistic sparkle and nuance to the phenomenon.

On the musical side, coloratura is a drift that enriches the interweaving of sound, adding layers of embellishment, immaterially situated between simplicity and complexity, both projections of vocal beauty. Coloratura has been used to *decorate* the simple melody, giving emotion to each of the notes embodied in the original score. More than mere technical - and aesthetic - varnishing, these coloraturas communicate indirectly with what could be called the *musical subconscious*, present in every subject, which addresses the most subtle and individual emotions, drawing soundscapes that captivate the spectator of this phenomenon. The concept we are introducing here is closely related to the innate human ability to process and respond to music in a way that goes beyond conscious perception.

Because of the distance - physical and sensory - that this *space* represents between consciousness and the subconscious, the terrain of the musical subconscious constitutes a *logos*, that is, an articulation that transcends (without having to rely on) the limitations of verbal language. Although throughout history science has attempted to unravel the mysteries of this musical subconscious and to shed light on how music directly affects emotions, thoughts and actions in ways that often elude conscious perception, we will not allude here to Musicosophy or music therapy, much less to that which might be associated with the pseudoscience of best-selling self-improvement books; we will simply speculate around the notion presented above and how coloratura - in its modality of musical adornment - directly affects this neurological and meta-sensory aspect.

The root of this musical subconscious lies in the way the brain processes auditory and musical information. From an early age, human beings begin to internalize melodic patterns, rhythms, and other musical arrangements without the need for formal education, if any. This process of musical absorption occurs intuitively and forms a kind of subconscious database that influences musical preferences, emotional responses, and perceptions throughout an individual's life. Musical memory, both episodic and procedural, the latter only the product of constant study, plays a fundamental role in the formation of the musical subconscious (Patel, 2007). Music heard at different times in life is stored in the individual's memory, creating emotional links and associations that can influence the subconscious interpretation of new pieces of music, usually sung or hummed. This ability to remember and recognize musical patterns contributes to the pleasure of listening to familiar music and to the power of music to give rise to specific memories and emotions (Sacks, 2007).

The influence of the musical subconscious undoubtedly appears alongside musical creativity. Many composers have expressed that their musical ideas often proceed from a deeper, more intuitive place that withstands conscious, let alone intellectual, logic. Musical improvisation, on the other hand, allows the musical subconscious to express itself freely, resulting in moments of spontaneous inspiration and unfettered creativity. This possibility of improvisation would not only be a mere musical exercise but becomes a means of expression that allows the undercurrents of musical thought and subconsciousness to flow spontaneously. The musical psyche operates in a state of total openness, where creativity unfolds organically, without the limitations imposed by a rigidly pre-structured model of any sort of musical composition. During this process, the performer's mind turns out to be a channel through which the musical subconscious is authentically revealed.

From a psychoanalytic point of view, music has the power to affect moods and emotions *unconsciously*. Following this idea, we can understand music as a medium capable of penetrating the deepest sheets of the unconscious, triggering emotional responses that, although rooted in personal experience, transcend individuality. However, we should not ignore the opinion of Roger Scruton, who believes that when one speaks of music as an expression of states of mind, one might think that this refers rather to the states of mind attributed to the composer, in which case the judgment becomes susceptible to being refuted by the facts of the composer's life, certainties that would normally be considered irrelevant to the understanding of the music (Scruton, 1987).

## 2. Methodology

Qualitative research has allowed us to develop a search strategy supported by reflective research that emerges from conceptual and/or epistemological references, from which the categories that are associated with the phases of heuristic development are defined. That is,

from its conception, in the search for strategies, methods and criteria that allow us to unravel the unknowns, through divergent or lateral thinking and one's own experience, to specify the viability of the research.

The operational part corresponds to the dynamics of monitoring and observation, and its respective application. For the development, a documentary review guide was implemented which allows locating the steps and actions used and parameterized in the present study.

- . Information source search protocol
- . Review criteria: exclusion and inclusion
- . Data extraction strategy.
- . The flow of review protocols for information sources.

### 3. Results and discussion

In the face of Scruton's objection, a crucial caution arises: the author lifts the possibility that, in speaking of music as a (subconscious) formulation of states of mind, we may fall into the susceptibilities of the life events of the composer, aspects that are commonly thought to be irrelevant to a full understanding of the art of sound. Is the musical work a direct manifestation of the emotions experienced by the composer at different times, or is there an intrinsic autonomy in music that transcends the personal circumstances of the artist? This dilemma urges us to further explore the nature of artistic expression and its connection to the human being.

Certain chords, melodies or rhythms can evoke automatic emotional responses without the conscious intervention of the listener. This phenomenon matches an involuntary *affective response*, suggesting that music is capable of influence our emotional state in ways that are sometimes outwit our conscious *control*. On the other hand, from a neuroscientific point of view, it has been concluded that the brain processes music in a holistic way, activating several areas beyond those directly related to hearing (Levitin, 2006). The connection between music experience and the release of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin reinforce the idea that music can affect our mood and well-being in a subconscious way:

The rewarding and reinforcing aspects of listening to music seem, then, to be mediated by increasing dopamine levels in the nucleus accumbens, and by the cerebellum's contribution to regulating emotion through its connections to the frontal lobe and the limbic system. Current neuropsychological theories associate positive mood and affect with increased dopamine levels, one of the reasons that many of the newer antidepressants act on the dopaminergic system. Music is clearly a means for improving people's moods. (Levitin, 2006, p. 191)

Neuropsychological theories align with this interrelation between heightened dopamine levels and positive emotions, a correspondence mirrored in the action of contemporary antidepressants targeting the dopaminergic system. Moreover, the cerebellum's involvement in regulating emotion, particularly through its links with the frontal lobe and limbic system, underscores the profound impact of music on emotional states. From a musicological and psychological outlook, understanding these neurobiological underpinnings strengthens our comprehension of how music serves as a powerful appliance for uplifting individuals' moods.

Coloratura is a technical feat that requires mastery of the voice: control of air and tonal flexibility, it demands precision, agility, and endurance from the vocal corpus of each soloist. The art of coloratura has evolved throughout the history of music, reaching its apogee in opera and vocal music - especially in the Baroque and Classical periods, and later in the early

Rossinian-Romantic-Rococo period - where the arias or the musical moments that contain them continue to a greater or lesser extent to dazzle and thrill audiences today, as they once did the European public.

In the works of Mozart and Rossini, coloratura has become a kind of meta-sensory bridge, a dialogue between the performer and the music performed: the space where the voice becomes an autonomous instrument capable of manifesting the full range of emotions of being (and life itself), a celebration of the creative capacities of beauty and a reminder of the human capacity to cut across the ordinary and achieve *the sublime* through art. The evolution - or metamorphosis - of the coloratura in opera is for us a testament to the inventiveness and transformative power of music, which, in philosophical terms, lifts the spirit into realms of *the unknown*, and wonder, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts and souls of those privileged to experience it.

Renowned vocal pedagogists like Nicola Vaccai have extensively discussed the physiological aspects of coloratura in terms of vocalization. In his vocal compendium, the author emphasizes the importance of breath control, vocal agility, and precise articulation in executing intricate runs and ornamentations. These technical aspects, which must be exploited in Italian opera, will not only show the singer's skill, but will also contribute to the overall expressiveness of the music:

Anyone who wishes to sing really well should begin by learning how to sing in Italian, not only because the Italian school of vocalization is acknowledge to be superior to all others, but also on account of the language itself, where the pure and sonorous tone of its many vowel sounds will assist the singer in acquiring a fine voice-production and a clear and distinct enunciation in any language he may have to sing, no matter what may be his nationality. (Vaccai, 2013, Preface)

In the Romantic period, after the figures of Mozart and Rossini analyzed here, the coloratura took on new dimensions. Composers like Bellini and Donizetti, building on the foundations laid by Mozart, Handel, and Monteverdi, used coloratura to explore intense emotional states. The writings of several music critics and theorists of the Romantic period underscores the idea of music as a means to induce profound emotion and connect with the spiritual and supernatural. This musical unfolding reflects the changing sensibilities of the time, as explored by musicologists like Carl Dahlhaus, who discuss the shift from tonality to atonality and the exploration of extended vocal techniques.

Today, contemporary composers like John Adams, Mark Adamo, Tan Dun and Unsuk Chin continue to explore coloratura in innovative ways, adapting it to the demands of modern and experimental music. Actually, music scholars contribute to discussions about the continued relevance of coloratura and its potential for societal and cultural commentary. Coloratura, as a spatial and technical resource of the voice, has a rich and diverse history; its progression across different periods and its psychological impact on performers and audiences accentuate the dynamic interplay between technical proficiency, emotional expression, and cultural context within the dominion of vocal music.

### ***3.1 Mozart: from Emotional Depth to Vocal Coloratura***

The compositions of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) gave birth to modern opera: an evolution that began with its Monteverdian-Renaissance roots and reached its full flowering at the beginning of the 18th century. This genre, which combines drama and music, has



progressed over the centuries, constantly transforming itself to reflect the nature of the society in which it was born, where tradition and innovation, narrative and musicality converge, creating an inseparable link between past and present. The genius of the Salzburg composer lies in his aptness to weave the plot with a score that overlaps mere musical accompaniment. In his works, the human voice is a meaningful instrument, weaving a web of emotions that elevates the listener's experience to a metaphysical level. Mozart incorporated innovative elements into his operas: his capacity to blend tradition with experimentation gave opera a freshness that would resonate through the centuries. Mozart's traditional arias and numbers, overflowing with melodic beauty and structural quality, become constant reflectors of the human condition, especially when sung by a female coloratura voice...

There are a number of reasons for this. First, coloratura is used far more extensively in soprano roles than in those of any other voice range in the Mozart operatic repertoire (...) Second, within the comic opera genres, coloratura appears in all type of roles, from serious to comic, in the soprano voice range, and in three distinct vocal *Fächer* - dramatic, lyric, and soubrette - whereas in other voice ranges, coloratura tends to be used in only a single *Fach* and character type. Third, Mozart extensive use of coloratura throughout a number of different female roles - and the lack of it in most male roles in the comic genres - allow us to read the musical device as an expression of Mozart's view of feminine rhetorical style. (Lynn, 2006, p. 6)

From Mozart's earliest compositions, the vocal coloratura is not merely an adornment of musical technique, but an emotional tool that delves into the complexities of the human soul; it is a virtuoso interweaving of notes that dances over the score, preludes *the musical* in substance and cadences *the stylistic*: a metaphysical embodiment of a duality that elicits musical, as well as psychological speculation. It is not only an example of agility or brilliance in the rapid or repeated notes, but also in the use of musical ingredients such as elongation (*legato*, *portamento*), conjuring a sonorous universe of semi-suspended passages that immerse the listener in the essence of emotion and feeling. Mozart's use of coloratura reveals an intersection between the singer's technical skill and the emotional state that the music itself seeks to convey. In many of his scores, vocal flourishes not only furnish the musical cadences, but also serve as a mirror of the character's dramatic action and behavior. The agility and expressiveness in the higher tessitura of the female voice become an agent of the character in-itself, traversing her own way of being, and taking the audience on an intense and profound emotional musical journey.

In Mozart's music, coloratura often coexists with lyrical and emotional locutions, suggesting the idea that joy and sadness, serenity and excitement are linked in life in the same way that these different melodic lines are connected. Coloratura is present in several of his compositions, such as the famous aria of the Queen of the Night, in *The Magic Flute*, precisely sung by a coloratura soprano. In this piece, Mozart uses musical nimbleness to convey extreme emotions such as passion, anger, revenge, and other inner conflicts. This aria consists of penetrating and passionate high notes, probably the most difficult music for a soprano. It displays almost all the classical ornaments of Italian *bel canto*, exploiting the dynamic polarity between *staccato* and *legato*, leading us to the most primal sense of exaltation amidst powerful *martellatos*. The coloratura here is not just a demonstration of technique, but a mechanism for expressing the tortured feelings of the Queen of the Night, revealing her deepest and darkest passions.

In contrast, in arias such as *Dove sono*, or *Deh vieni non tardar* from *The Marriage of Figaro*, the melodic lines unfold with remarkable temporal extension. In these sequences of prolonged notes and ornamentation, the opulent emotionality characteristic of Mozartian singing is

shown: each *cadenza*, each nuance, stands as a singular manifestation of the complex - and distinct - nature of the character's spirit. The value of this musical composition lies not only in the expertise that Mozart demands of the soprano, but also in her faculty to capture and bring, through each extended melodic line, the finer shadings of Susanna's, or the Countess of Almaviva's emotion. With the addition of coloratura to the role of Susanna, Mozart transformed it from a simple soprano *buffa* into a complex *mezzo carattere* of the operatic genre (Lynn, 2006).

We must also mention the case of Constanza, protagonist of *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, and especially her third aria, *Martern aller Arten*, probably the longest and most complicated piece in Mozart's soprano literature, along with the Queen of the Night's mentioned. In this case, the composer uses the coloratura as a kind of rhetorical device useful to reinforce the prevailing mood of the musical number: when the melodic singing is no longer sufficient to externalize the disturbance experienced by the character in question, the coloratura vocalizes what the singing has failed to address (Lynn, 2006).

In their agility and flexibility, these bursts of notes could symbolize a (meta) projection: creative freedom, which *speaks* of that musical subconscious that challenges the limits of convention - in music and in *existence* in general - exploring new frontiers of sound-articulation. Following this idea, each melisma could be an opportunity for the interpreter to give wings to his own creativity and leave a unique mark on the work of the Salzburg prodigy. In this way, coloratura transcends the most elementary technique to become an anagram of the experience of the musical *being*. Each ornament or passage of rapid notes reveals both the emotional inscrutability and the subjective dexterity of the interpreter, paradigm of an aesthetic that unfolds from the same musical principles.

Sesto's aria *Parto, parto*, from Mozart's last opera, *La Clemenza di Tito* is a jewel of refined coloratura. The piece takes place during a critical episode for the character of Sesto (male, but sung by a mezzo-soprano), who becomes embroiled in a plot of love, betrayal, and loyalty. The technical ornateness of this piece demands rigorous technical skill from the mezzo-soprano: from the outset, the vocal line presents rapid, virtuosic *fioritura*; the singing and transitions between scales reflect Sesto's agitation as he confronts his own inner dilemmas. This articulation sets out as a powerful, mood-setting, mood-lengthening apparatus, in which the composer uses these boosts to deliver the character's anguish and passion. The repetition of the phrase "Parto, parto" in the middle of the lines suggests a sense of urgency and determination. The expressiveness in the control of dynamics and hues intensify the character's emotional intensity, showing his vulnerability while capturing the storm that supports the vocal portrayal of Sesto.

In Mozart's scores we could also find examples of arias for the male voice with rich and eloquent coloratura: *Il miotesoro*, Don Ottavio's aria in *Don Giovanni*, and *Fuor del mar*, sung by the protagonist in *Idomeneo, Re di Creta*. The first, sung by a light lyric tenor, is in the second act of the opera, and is characterized by a complex melodic line. The coloratura here is a mixture of *legato* and vocal deftness. These musical phrases testify to Don Ottavio's devotion and determination to express his love for Donna Anna. The tenor's technique must be precise in order to achieve the smooth transition between slow notes and the clear execution of the fast ones, which adds an emotional dimension to the performance of this operatic role.

*Fuor del mar*, also sung by a tenor, comes at the end of *Idomeneo* and presents a powerful difficulty, plagued by *fioritura* and melodic long phrases that require exceptional vocal control, especially in the sustained *fiato*, a metaphorical sign of Idomeneo's torment and liberation. The

ability to navigate between the vocal registers and to face the rapid scales with clarity is essential to show the exaltation and resolution in the performance of this tortuous role. In *Il miotesoro*, the vocal works express Don Ottavio's hope and moral commitment, while in *Fuor del mar* it reflects the protagonist's constitution and his physical and emotional release from the sea storm. Without necessarily having a coloratura voice, great singers gifted with the tenor *spinto* voice, such as Luciano Pavarotti and Plácido Domingo, have graced the list of exegeses of *Idomeneo* and *Don Giovanni's* Don Ottavio, leaving us with reference recordings on video and compact disc.

### 3.2. Rossini: The Vitality of the Coloratura, a Neo-Rococo Discourse

The appearance of Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) on the scene heralds an era in the history of music, and in particular Italian lyric opera, at the dawn of Romanticism. In studying his compositions, we find a fascinating metamorphosis in Rossini's use of coloratura. The *Swan of Pesaro* left an indelible mark on classical opera, transforming the style and conventions established by Mozart, whom we consider to be his closest predecessor. In Rossini's work, unlike Amadeus's, the compositional approach to coloratura is characterized by an exuberance and virtuosity that resonate with a unique vitality, as we shall see, characteristic of a neo-discourse of Rococo aesthetics, a style that flourished in the second half of the 18th century. We believe that Rossini's coloratura, despite its romantic origins, brings forth the Rococo (and Gallant) style by offering a richness of detail and structure that testifies to the artistic sophistication of the period. In this sense, the music of Gioachino Rossini unfolds as a bridge between two epochs, combining the opulence (perhaps excessive) of the old Rococo with the passion and sensitivity of the Romantic, creating a unique and evocative musical discourse.

Rococo style in music (or in this musical neo-discourse created by Rossini) is distinguished by an emphasis on grace and lightness. On the score, it is characterized by the *concertante*, along with wiry melodic lines, refined harmonies, and the extensive use of simultaneous and repetitive adornment. Like Rococo art, Rossini's music seeks to delight and surprise, eschewing Baroque grandeur in favor of a more delicate, recollected aesthetic. From a philosophical point of view, Rossinian Rococo traces - and reproduces - the sensibility of the time, in which elegance, intimacy and a particular externalization of emotion prevail. In contrast to the monumentality of the Baroque, the Rococo embraced the idea of the charming and the subjective: *the intimate* and sought to convey more refined and subtle emotions. This aesthetic is displayed in the score through less rigid musical configurations and softer harmonic colors, coupled with a more detailed attention to coloratura, creating a listening experience that seeks to captivate and evoke a sense of charm.

While his orchestration displays distinctly novel tendencies, Rossini's melodic language is based on consolidation: an extreme refinement of two typically Italian traditions, the school of the castratos and the *concertante* aesthetic applied to the voice, coinciding historically with the disappearance of the first and the dwindling of the second. Rossini integrated into his writing for voices a system of expression perfectly suited to the training of the singers of his time. (Colas, 2004, p. 104)

We are sure Rossini, although a nineteenth-century composer, can certainly be considered a late exponent of the Rococo style in opera. Although his career developed in the Romantic period, his musical approach has affinities with the characteristics of that style. Among other things, Rossini was noted for his acute attention to the technical dexterity of vocal tessitura, aspects inherent to Rococo. His ability to create joyful and virtuosic melodies is in keeping with the essence of the Rococo, which sought to captivate and thrill the audience. The vivacity



of his compositions, often driven by these rapid *fioritura*, patents the jubilant attitude and refined sophistication typical of the Rococo. Rossini's influence as an exponent of this new musical discourse can be seen not only in his technique and compositional subtleties, but also in the searching of lighter emotions and the exploration of comedy in his operas. Rossini was also characterized by the preservation of musical components from earlier styles, which gave him a uniqueness in his creative approach.

For Rossini, Italian music is not an imitative art, but rather one that is ideal and expressive. This art is incapable of representing human emotions and passions, as painting or sculpture do, but it has the power to awaken them in the soul of the listener. Its aim is to give pleasure and its means of doing so are based on rhythmic clarity and melodic simplicity. Like the Italian men of letters of his time, Rossini places melody at the centre of Italian musical art - postulates, indeed, that it is fundamental to Italian cultural identity. (Colas, 2004, pp. 104-105)

As we may see, Rossini's implicit perspective on Italian music reflects a nuanced blend of aesthetic elements, emphasizing a departure from mere imitation towards an art that is both idealistic and expressive. As musicologist Damien Colas stated lines above, in rejecting the notion of music as a portrayal of human response akin to visual arts, Rossini indirectly proposes that Italian music possesses a unique ability to awaken emotions within the listener's perception. From a philosophical standpoint, the composer aligns with the Schopenhauerian idea that music, unlike painting or sculpture, doesn't mimic external reality but rather engages with the internal world of emotions and passions. By asserting that Italian music has the power to call up sentiment, he positions it as a medium capable of transcending the limitations of representation (Schopenhauer, 2010).

Rossini's assertion that melody is fundamental to Italian cultural identity is a noteworthy claim. It echoes the feeling that the ethos of a culture can be encapsulated in its artistic forms, emphasizing the role of music as a cultural anchor. In this light, Gioachino Rossini's perspective fosters an appreciation for the unique qualities of Italian musical art, going beyond imitation to become a vessel for resonance and a key component of the nation's cultural identity. His famous operas, such as *L'Italiana in Algeri*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* or *La Cenerentola*, are a feast of coloratura, in which the protagonists' arias are dizzying displays of vocal articulation. In Rossini's prodigious hands, vocal pyrotechnics are transformed into a firework that accompanies and illuminates the operatic scene. Unlike Mozart, Rossini's coloratura - more earthy and less sublime - is not the manifestation of the most complex emotion, but the evolution of a formulation of pure technical skill and musical joy *per se*. Gratuitousness, immanence, fire: a kind of vocal vertiginousness. In the arias of Rossini's operas, these elements of the voice are used to create an atmosphere of lightness and entertainment. The opulence and brilliance of coloratura reflect the exhilaration of human experience. Rossini uses this technique not only to impress the audience vocally, but also to capture the sparkle of life, suggesting images of energetic characters and comic situations.

Rossini's acceptance of singers adding adornment to vocal parts was a historical circumstance rather than a reflection (or even consequence) of his explicit intentions. The collaborative art of furnishing melodies, shared between composer and singer, was a unique tradition of post-Rococo inventiveness. However, caution is warranted in attributing this practice to the composer's desires or viewing it as a sign of an inevitable decline. In the post-Rossini era, the Italian tradition of *canto fiorito* transitioned from *opera seria* to *frenchopéra comique* and Viennese *operetta*, undergoing various technical and semantic transformations. This evolution underscores the dynamic nature of musical practices rather than a linear decline:

(...) ornamentation of vocal parts by the singers themselves is completely legitimate in Rossini. That Rossini was one of the last *maestri* to cultivate such an art of singing - sustained partly by composer, partly by singer, and presuming the interaction of the two - is merely a historical contingency, one that we should be wary of interpreting as evidence of the composer's wishes, or, worse still, of the inevitable decline of that system. In the decades that followed Rossini's theatrical career the Italian art of *canto fiorito* passed from the domain of *opera seria* into *opéra comique* and subsequently into operetta, at the price of multiple technical and semantic evolutions. (Colas, 2004, p. 120)

In Rossini's compositions, fast coloratura can dispatch jubilation, enthusiasm or even nervousness, while those slower and more lyrical would suggest melancholy, hope or resignation. A prominent example of this is Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*, where the composer endows this female role with remarkable *fioritura*, especially in *Una voce poco fa*, a cavatina from Act I. The *accoutrement* of Rosina's musical entrance expresses her youth and playfulness, capturing all the energy, wit, and sparkle of her personality. Caught up in the difficulties of the plot, Rosina uses melisma, trills, and all manner of vocal agilities to state her intelligence, determination, and irony, and to reveal her resolute character and her ability to navigate the intrigues that surround her throughout the plot of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*.

Known to audiences for her meticulous coloratura, we have Angelina, the protagonist of *La Cenerentola*. *Nacqui all'affanno* musicalizes her transfiguration, from her initial situation of suffering and sorrow to the triumphant event of love, when she is united in marriage with the prince. The intense rhythmic and musically controlled speed of the coloratura in Cenerentola's aria conveys the character's vivacity, while the longer and more elaborate *fiorituras* indicate, as in Mozart, moments of reflection and deep emotion.

Tancredi's aria *Di tanti palpiti*, for its part, reveals a mixture of lyrical and melodic lines, varnished with a virtuosity that has held the attention of audiences throughout the years since its successful premiere. From the very beginning of the vocal number, the orchestral introduction sets a sweet tone that prepares the way for the mezzo-soprano's entrance. At the musical climax of the *cabaletta*, repeated *appoggiaturas* serve to accentuate the passionate moments of the protagonist. These figures are sonorous articulations of the turbulence that Tancredi is experiencing at that moment in the action. Without sacrificing clarity or tonal purity, the singer must skilfully balance a complicated technique to enhance the subjective interpretation of the character.

In the female voice, illustrious Mozartian and Rossinian coloratura performers have left an indelible mark on the musical scene, as well as a wonderful inheritance of audio and video recordings. Among the divas, the colossal figures of Maria Callas, Dame Joan Sutherland and Montserrat Caballe stand out. These luminaries are followed in the artistic wake by names such as Lucia Popp, Gundula Janowitz, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Victoria de los Angeles, Kathleen Battle, Kiri Te Kanawa, June Anderson, Hildegard Behrens, Natalie Dessay, Diana Damrau; outstanding contralto and mezzo-soprano singers: Teresa Berganza, Ewa Podles, Frederica von Stade, and Cecilia Bartoli, all of whom have given memorable performances in this genre. More recently, the composer's legacy has been enriched by the voices of Joyce DiDonato, Elina Garança, Daniela Barcellona, Dorothea Röschmann, Anna Bonitatibus, Patricia Petibon, etc., who continue the tradition of excellence and refinement in the depiction of both Mozart and Rossini operatic genius.

### 3.3. *From Mozart to Rossini, the Transformation of Coloratura in the Musical Subconscious*

Gioachino Rossini, famous for his virtuosic and exuberant style, incorporated coloratura into his operatic compositions, creating a sound image somewhere between technical brilliance and the euphoria of passion. Mozart, on the other hand, tended towards a more classical elegance and refined simplicity, concentrating on more melodic structures in which rhythm and musical measure - or pulse - are somewhat dissolved, elements that reveal an emotional depth that emerges without the need for exaggerated displays of the voice. Another significant difference between the two composers lies in the influence of their respective cultural contexts. Rossini, immersed in the romantic Italy of the 19th century, reflected on the score the theatricality of his time. Mozart, operating within 18th-century Viennese classicism, adhered to a more controlled and balanced aesthetic, traits which he reflected in his vocal writing, particularly in his use of coloratura. This contextual - and musical - difference is manifested not only in the compositions of each, but also in the underlying philosophy that informs and completes their creative approaches.

The metamorphosis of the coloratura from Mozart to Rossini embodies a change in the relationship between composer, performer, and audience. Mozart works in emotional profundity, using coloratura as a stylistic device that completes the action and communicates with the listener's experience and musical subconscious. In contrast, Rossini takes a more playful and extroverted approach, using it as a vehicle for virtuosity and musical celebration. This paradigm shift is not only stylistic, but also symbolic of a transition from musical perception as individual artistic articulation to a collective appreciation of technique in vocal lyricism.

In exploring this metamorphosis, an intriguing question arises: how does coloratura, in its various manifestations, reveal aspects of the musical subconscious from an interdisciplinary approach that draws on philosophy, psychology and music? Sigmund Freud postulated that the human mind contains deep and unexplored layers whose contents flow in symbolic forms (Freud, 2010). Applying this theory to musical power, we can interpret coloratura as an *overpass* between the conscious and the subconscious. In the Mozart arias quoted above, the coloratura acts as an inner whisper emanating from the remotest arias of the soul. Each trill or mordent encapsulates latent moods, giving voice to the longings and fears that reside in the musical subconscious (collective and of the other characters). In this sense, Mozartian coloratura constitutes a symbolic (meta) *language* that unravels the deepest layers of the human psyche, revealing subtle truths that elude (and are beyond) limited linguistics and verbal expression. Rossini's coloratura, on the other hand, is presented as a joyful *affirmation* that scorns the prejudice that the musical subconscious always remains (and must remain) in the dark. Gioachino's artistry seems to unearth the richest and most high-spirited musical impulses and bring them to the forefront of the listening experience. In this context, the use of coloratura in Rossini's works crystallizes into an execution of *revelation*, where the musical subconscious is exposed with a clarity and energy that tests the more serious technical-musical conditions of academic opera.

## 4. Conclusion

### The Impact of Ornamentation on the Musical Subconscious: Between Aesthetics and Auditory Psychology

The 'good all times' have gone; they sang themselves out in Mozart. How happy *we* that his Rococo still speaks to us, that his 'polite society', his tender yearning, his child-like delight in things Chinese and Arabesque, his courtesy of the heart, his longing for delicacy, amour, the dance, the smile-through-tears, his faith in the South, can still appeal to *something left* in us! (...) Mozart, the echo of a great European taste that had lasted for centuries. (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 179)

The relationship between the musical subconscious and the auditory impact of coloratura, especially in the works of Mozart and Rossini, is a fascinating journey through the human mind, combining interdisciplinary resources: philosophical and psychological. As we explore these interconnections, we become aware of the *psycho-logical* fabric that encompasses memory, emotion, and creativity in the universe of music. Throughout this investigation, we have analyzed how the interplay of the musical subconscious manifests itself in distinctive ways in the musical compositions of Mozart and Rossini, highlighting some of their contributions to the creative experience of coloratura and thus to the appreciation of the genre of opera.

In the Mozartian musical subconscious, memory is intertwined with emotion. Listening to coloratura releases - and enables - memory, evoking emotions rooted in past experiences. The delicacy of the melodic line, the precision of the ornamentation and the composer's careful harmonic choices in *Don Giovanni*, or any other work, suggest windows into the self or the psyche of the audience. Rossini, for his part, by exploring the use of coloratura in a comic and virtuoso context, suggests a lighter but no less interesting or profound relationship with the musical subconscious. The melodic lines are means for hilarity, creating a unique experience in which music is combined with psychology and humor. In this sense, the musical subconscious activated by Rossini acts as a catalyst for the release of joy and the affirmative celebration of self and existence, underlining the festive dimension of his musical genius.

At this point, Gestalt psychology can shed light on the experience of listening to Rossini's vocal ornamentation. Gestalt suggests that we perceive whole patterns and forms rather than individual parts. In a similar way, Rossini's coloratura, with its agility and speed, forms an integrated whole that transcends the individual sections of the score, creating a listening experience that is more than the sum of its parts (Reybrouck, 1997). This psychological approach is important because it illustrates how the musical subconscious can process the textures of music and reveal an understanding of the unity of the score.

The dialogue between the musical subconscious of Mozart and Rossini is also supported by the philosophy of the aesthetics of reception developed by Gadamer. This approach suggests that the interpretation of a work of art involves a fusion of the listener's experience and the creator's intention (Gadamer, 1994). In the case of coloratura, aural reception mutates into a dialogue, not only with the creator (through the performer), but also with the composer's own musical subconscious and that of the listener. Mozart's oeuvre demands a more intimate involvement of the spectator in the affective world of the composer, linked by the singer who performs the score; Rossini, on the other hand, urges us to a more active participation in this phenomenon, where the spectator becomes an accomplice in the *affirmation of the existence* that emanates from the music. The musical subconscious acts as a mediator in this aesthetic

dialogue, serving as a place where the composer's intentions and the spectator's experience (acquired or past) meet. In Mozart's work this space is a sanctuary of feeling, in Rossini's it is a festive stage of virtuosity and full affirmation.

The musical subconscious reminds us that music is more than an experience of *consciousness*; it is also a trek through mind and feeling, where coloratura, as its own flash of genius, connects us to the deepest part of our existence. In this psychic symphony, the genius of Mozart and Rossini resonates like an echo that transcends not only space and time, but also *logos* itself. The taste for these vocal settings is rooted in the complex interaction between musical aesthetics and the listener's musical subconscious. The appreciation of these musical figures is also rooted in the resonance of the abyss of the musical subconscious, provoking cognitive responses that contribute to aural pleasure. The rapid variation of notes and scales stimulates the listener's mind, keeping it engaged and active. The musical subconscious responds to this cognitive stimulus by processing and appreciating the richness of these fugues, contributing to an experience that, when directly -and even unconsciously- linked to the performance, becomes a rewarding and surprising experience.

As we have seen, many elements can explain why this parade of lightness and casualness is so captivating and pleasurable for the listener, bridging the gap between musical aesthetics and psychology. Sensory and emotional experience, appreciation of technical achievement, cognitive stimulation, connection to the unexpected and novel, and full expressiveness, all contribute to the richness of this musical perception. By resonating with the musical subconscious, the phenomenon of coloratura becomes a key element that enriches the listening acquaintance and fills the spectator with aesthetic pleasure. In particular, the transformation of classical opera from Mozart to Rossini through the lens of coloratura leads us to explore not only the stylistic transformations, but also the complexities of the musical subconscious. Mozart, with his delicate and expressive approach, invites us to plumb the emotional depths of the human psyche, while Rossini, with his virtuosic freshness, challenges us to confront (though not directly) the musical subconscious with a boldness that resonates in every trill or flourish. This sonic journey reminds us that music, in all its forms, is a mirror reflecting the unfathomable richness of the human soul. The metamorphosis of vocal coloratura, from Mozart's deepness to Rossini's lavishness, demonstrates music's ability to capture a wide range of emotions and moods. This shift in the use of vocal agility in opera reflects not only different artistic approaches, but also different facets of human experience.

## 5. References

- Colas, D. (2004). *Melody and Ornamentation*, translated by Cormac Newark. In E. Senici (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Rossini* (pp. 104-123). The University of Oxford Press.
- Freud, S. (2010). *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Basic Books.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1994). *Truth and Method*. Continuum.
- Levitin, D. J. (2006). *This is your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*. Dutton.
- Lynn, K. (2006). *Decoration or Dramatic Function?: Mozart 's Use of Coloratura in Three Comic Soprano Roles* [PhD Thesis]. University of Waterloo, B A.
- Nietzsche, F. (1969). *Beyond Good and Evil*. Gateway Edition, Henry Regnery Company.



- Patel, A. D. (2007). *Music, Language and the Brain*. The University of Oxford Press.
- Reybrouck, M. (1997). Gestalt Concepts and Music: Limitations and Possibilities. In M. Leman, (Ed.), *Music, Gestalt and Computing. Studies in Cognitive and Systematic Musicology*. Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/BFb0034102>
- Sacks, O. (2007) *Musicophilia. Tales of Music and the Brain*. Alfred A. Knopf Inc.
- Schopenhauer, A. (2010). *The World as Will and Representation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Vaccari, N. (2013). *Practical Method of Italian Singing: Mezzo-Soprano (Alto) or Baritone*. G. Schirmer Inc.

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS, FINANCING AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

### **AUTHOR:**

#### **Francisco Aranda Espinosa**

University of the State of Hidalgo.

Has a Bachelor's degree in Music, Master's degree in Humanistic and Educational Research, and a PhD in Philosophy and History of Ideas. He has been teaching at the Piano Faculty, at the Academy of Arts, Autonomous University of Zacatecas, from 2017 to 2023. Since 2023 he has been a Full-Time Research Professor at the Institute of Arts, Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo (Mexico). He is a specialist in Music and Art Aesthetics, and the analysis of Opera, from an interdisciplinary approach.

[francisco\\_aranda@uaeh.edu.mx](mailto:francisco_aranda@uaeh.edu.mx)

Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2582-4431>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=es&user=UTdBjrYAAAAJ>

ResearchGate: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/>

Academia.edu: <https://uaeh.academia.edu/>