

LA DIVINA: THE BIRTH OF THE SINGER/ACTOR

by

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## ABSTRACT

In the world of Musical Theatre and Opera, it is not acceptable to simply have a pretty voice; you must be able to portray the character you are singing and ground it in reality. Drama in music theatre was highlighted in the Early Romantic Movement by bel canto composers Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti who re-designed the opera scene format to better tell the story. Late Romantic composers, Puccini and Verdi, took it a step further by writing music to compliment the drama of the story.

Twentieth- Century Opera singer Maria Callas is admired for her famous portrayals of title roles in Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi and Puccini operas. Callas combined bel canto vocal technique with her dramatic, realistic acting in her opera roles and revolutionized the art form. Callas stressed the importance of understanding and interpreting text and music with precision, detail, specifics and artistry. Her techniques set the standard for future aspiring singer/actors.

In the 1970's, Callas lost her ability to sing, so she conducted Master Classes at the Julliard School of Music. Her Master Classes were the inspiration for Tony Award-Winning Playwright Terrence McNally's biographical play, *Master Class*. The play, *Master Class*, shows Callas as an overbearing, intimidating diva instructing opera students. The play also contains several vulnerable flashback monologues that break down the layers of Callas' harshness. McNally's script shows Callas as a guarded, domineering, and callous woman; however, when she is singing or talking to her lover, she becomes a vulnerable, exposed, and available woman.

With research and examination of Callas' life, operatic career, operatic composers, bel canto technique, and music analysis, I wrote an original script to portray the multi-dimensional Callas in a one-woman show featuring famous arias Callas is known for singing.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As a singer of Musical Theatre and Opera, it is important to have excellent vocal technique and a sympathetic interpretation. It is important to be a Singer/Actor. The vocal technique should aid the drama of the music and text. Dramatic singers began developing these skills in the early Romantic period with Opera composers Bellini, Donizetti and Rossini restructuring the art form to aid the story. Later, composers Verdi and Puccini began to write music with the emphasis on the drama of the story (Burkholder). These composers forced singers to become responsible for acting moments; their stories could not be told through “pretty” singing.

These composers wrote operatic music for the Italian bel canto singing technique. Bel canto literally means “beautiful singing.” However, if you get to the root of its technique, it stresses a legato musical line, low stress on the voice, clean passaggio, with calm and quiet singing in high registers (Burkholder). Bel canto is a relaxed approach to singing, which arguably frees the actor to be more realistic and natural in performance. Arguably, the bel canto style is not suited for the heaviness of Verdi and Puccini; however, in the 1950’s opera singer Maria Callas began implementing bel canto technique to these composers’ works.

Twentieth Century Opera singer Maria Callas made her successes in Europe and America during the 1950’s and 1960’s. She is famous for her unique portrayals of leading roles in Bellini, Donizetti, Rosinni, Puccini, Verdi and Wagner operas. She utilized bel canto technique combined with dramatic soprano interpretation of roles. She is known as one of the pioneers in the art form of breathing dramatic life into operatic characters and supporting her choices with controlled vocal technique. Callas was not afraid to show imperfections in her voice for the sake

of drama. Her specific understanding and analysis of each role inspire many singers, conductors, composers and scholars.

Later in Callas' career, she lost her voice, and she began to conduct Master classes at the Julliard School. Her Master classes became the inspiration for Tony Award-winning playwright Terrence McNally's play, *Master Class*. In *Master Class*, McNally portrays Callas as an overbearing, harsh and unforgiving diva. McNally does show some signs of her vulnerability when she begins to discuss her personal life with the audience. However, for the most part, the audience sees Callas as domineering and arrogant. I disagree somewhat with McNally's interpretation after listening to some of Callas' Master classes. McNally paints an accurate picture of her in her vulnerable states, but Callas was not as harsh with the students at Julliard as McNally makes her out to be.

With this thesis, I used McNally's play as inspiration for a new original one-woman show about Maria Callas that paints her in a more positive, accurate light. I studied his play and monologues for structure, language and expression of vulnerability to convey a passionate, wise and dramatic diva. I wrote an original one-woman show and utilized famous arias sung by her to portray her as a talented artist and a human being. I also was inspired by several famous interviews she conducted, specifically her last interview with journalist Phillippe Caloni in April 1977. The intention of my one-woman show is to explore Callas' life history; operatic composer information; bel canto technique and how it is applied to singing specific arias; music analysis; the process of developing an original script; and my rehearsal and performance process.



## CHAPTER TWO: MARIA CALLAS BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Maria Callas was born on December 2, 1923 in New York City. Her mother could not look at her after she was born because her mother was disappointed Maria was not a boy. This attitude at Callas' birth explains the estranged relationship Callas had with her mother. Callas had an older sister, and according to her mother, was prettier than her, which arguably caused self-image issues for Maria. Maria's mother taunted her on a daily basis for being overweight and incredibly awkward (Adoin). However, when Maria was 5 years old, her mother discovered her singing talents and pressured her to sing and perform all the time ("Maria Callas"). Callas' father grew tired of his wife's pressuring attitude; they divorced in 1937 and Callas' mother took Callas and her sister back to Athens (Adoin).

In 1937, Callas' mother insisted she audition for the Athens Conservatorie; however, Callas was not accepted due to her lack of refined talent. Maria attended the Greek National Conservatorie, where she studied with Maria Trivella, her first teacher. Callas studied at the Greek National Conservatorie for two years, and after graduation, she immediately auditioned for the Athens Conservatorie again. Her mother was able to arrange an audition with Elvira de Hildago, and Maria was accepted ("Chronology"). Maria found herself immersed in music at the Conservatorie from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. (Harewood). Maria not only would learn from her personal classes, but she would observe de Hildago working with other students -- tenors, basses, mezzos, altos -- it did not matter to Maria ("Chronology").

De Hildago is arguably responsible for Callas' early performance career. De Hildago helped her land roles with the Greek National Opera, which helped support her family. While she worked at the Greek National Opera, other jealous singers would stand in the wings and make

comments about her. The singers were arguably jealous of Callas' raw talent, dedication and dramatic abilities (Adoin). In 1942, she sang the role of "Tosca" for the first time at the Park Summer Theatre Kaftmonos (Huffington). In 1944, after Callas' successes in Greece, Hildago encouraged Callas to establish herself in Italy. Callas went against Hildago's advice and moved back to America to find her father and make a career ("Chronology").

Callas' moved to America and was able to find work with an opera company in Chicago for a production of Puccini's *Turandot* in 1946. Unfortunately, the opera company went bankrupt, and Callas was unable to make her American debut. However, she made a lasting impression on the European singers in the company, and they introduced her to leading, Italian conductor Tuillo Serafin. He was looking to cast a dramatic soprano, auditioned Callas, loved her voice and flew her to Naples. In 1947, she made her Italian debut in Verona in *La Gioconda*. She later landed the role of "Isolde" in Serafin's *Tristan and Isolde* by sight-reading the entire score at the audition. Serafin had no idea Callas had never learned the role before. Her impressive relationship with Serafin established her in Italy. Callas says, "Serafin taught me that there must be an expression; there must be a justification. He taught me the depth of music, the justification of music. That's where I really, really drank all I could from this man" (Harewood). While in Italy, she met Giovanni Battista Meneghini. Meneghini was an old, wealthy industrialist who took an active, romantic interest in Maria Callas. In 1949, they were married, and Meneghini supported Maria and her operatic endeavors ("Chronology").

A major turning point in Callas' career happened in 1949. She was cast as Brunhilde in Serafin's production of Wagner's *Die Walkure*. At the same theatre, they were doing *I puritani*. The leading soprano in *I puritani* became ill, and Serafin told Callas to take her place as "Elvira"

in six days (Harewood). Callas did not know the role. Both “Brunhilde” and “Elvira” are very demanding and straining on the voice. Maria learned the role of “Elvira” in six days and performed. After this, she insisted on learning bel canto technique, which changed her life (“Chronology”).

Another major turning point in Callas’ career was her massive weight loss. In 1954, Callas lost 60 pounds and looked like a superstar. She was not satisfied playing bel canto heroines and being so heavy. In 1956, she finally made her New York Metropolitan Opera debut and sang the roles of “Norma”, “Tosca” and “Lucia”. Unfortunately, the New York paparazzi attacked Callas by reporting her scandals and rumors instead of her performances. In 1958, she made her Parisian debut, with Aristotle Onassis in the audience admiring her work. In 1959, Onassis invited seven friends on his yacht, including Callas and Meneghini. Onassis and Callas fell in love, and Callas ends her ten-year marriage to Meneghini (“Chronology”). From 1960-1963, Callas devoted most of her time to enjoying the luxuries of International fortune with Onassis and performing infrequently in recitals. Onassis did not care for her operatic singing. He liked dating her because she was a celebrity figure (Adoin).

In 1964, after much begging and persuading, she made a return to the operatic stage in *Tosca* at Covent Garden. In February 1965, she sang nine performances of *Tosca*. In March, she made her return to the Metropolitan Opera in two performances of *Tosca*. In May, she returned to Paris to perform in *Norma* for five performances, even though her voice was greatly fatigued. On May 29, after Act Two, Scene One of *Norma*, Callas became very ill, and the rest of the opera was cancelled, which enraged audiences. In July, she was scheduled for five performances to sing *Tosca* in Covent Garden, but she was medically advised not to perform. However, she

decided to perform once at the Royal Gala on July 5, which was the last major performance of her operatic career (“Chronology”).

In 1966, Callas decided to deny her American citizenship and take a Greek citizenship, which annuls her marriage with Meneghini. With the annulment of her marriage she expected Onassis to marry her. In 1968, Onassis married the widowed Jackie Kennedy (“Chronology”). Callas discovered about the wedding the day before in a press release. These acts completely broke Callas and are arguably to blame for her vocal decline in her forties (Adoin).

She spent 1970-1972 giving voice master classes at the Julliard School. These master classes taught students about her career, song interpretation and vocal placement. She concluded after these Master Classes that she failed at bringing her art form to the youth. She believed that to be an artist, it is something you are born with; it’s not something that can be taught (“Maria Callas”). Her voice continued to decline during these master classes. In 1973-1974, Callas performed a recital series. In 1974, Callas gave her last public performance in Sapporo, Japan. In 1975, Onassis died of a gallbladder infection, and Maria escaped to Paris to live as a recluse. On September 16, 1977, Callas died at the age of 53 in Paris of a heart attack (“Chronology”).

Many opera scholars, audience members, opera enthusiasts, directors, conductors and singers have had several characteristics to describe Callas’ voice. The most consistent characteristics are: voice of drama, flawed voice, raw emotions, lived and breathed the characters thoughts, spot on interpretations, dramatic soprano, ability to sing both coloratura and mezzo-soprano work. Many influential singers and conductors have commented on her work as being influential to their lives and their craft.

Multi-faceted composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein simply put it, “Callas? She

was pure electricity”(Adoin). Francesco Sicillini, head of Teatro Comunale in Florence and later Artistic Director of La Scala, was urged to listen to Maria Callas in 1948 by his colleague, conductor Tuillo Serafin. After hearing her sing, Sicillini said, “I was overwhelmed, and tears streamed down Serafin's cheeks. This was the kind of singer one reads about in books from the nineteenth century — a real dramatic coloratura” (Adoin). Opera enthusiast and editor James Jorden says:

"With Callas' singing, even hearing three or four notes strung together, you hear, 'Oh, I didn't hear how she did that before. That's so beautiful; to take just these few simple notes, and to go from this note to that note in such an elegant and graceful way, shows so much and means so much.' And so, every time you listen, you hear something a little different. You hear something a little more sophisticated." (Neary).

Many singers of several capacities have been influenced and inspired by Callas’ interpretations and fearlessness on stage. The humble and prominent opera diva, Montserrat Caballe discusses Callas:

“She opened a new door for us, for all the singers in the world, a door that had been closed. Behind it was sleeping not only great music but great idea of interpretation. She has given us the chance, those who follow her, to do things that were hardly possible before her. That I am compared with Callas is something I never dared to dream. It is not right. I am much smaller than Callas” (Adoin).

The once hailed queen of rock, Linda Ronstadt, credits Callas as a major influence in her singing career by saying, “She's the greatest chick singer ever. I learn more about bluegrass singing, more about singing Mexican songs, more about singing rock-and--roll from listening to Maria

Callas records than I ever would from listening to pop music for a month of Sundays” (Holden). And lastly, up and coming opera star Natalie Dessay has been complimented for her unique interpretations, acting skills and bel canto vocals. Dessay credits Callas as an inspiration to her career in the article “Mad About the Girl” by David Baker in *Opera News* by saying:

“I used to listen again and again to recordings by Maria Callas. She was so musical and so theatrical at the same time. That is rare! I admire the way she cares for the words, so that everything comes from the text. She takes everything from the text and the music to elaborate a character and make her really interesting and impressive. She brings her own nature to the part — what she is, her passion, her fragility, doubts, feelings, violence — everything she is. And she never betrays the text or the music. We're very different, thank goodness, and I am happy with my own voice. But I feel very close to her in terms of discipline — trying to be as disciplined as she. She is an example to follow! Maybe in the past, people were more interested in voice and beautiful sounds. Maria Callas changed that. She arrived, brought a new way of doing opera, opened the way for us. We don't have any excuse now for not doing it!”

Maria Callas died far too young, but left a legacy for opera singers to follow for many years to come. She rose above her mother's over-bearing position and became an operatic star in her own right. She had a successful opera career in Greece, America, Italy, England and France. She was constantly in the media for her performances and unfortunately her divorce and affair with Aristotle Onassis. Her personal life was not as successful as her opera career, but in the end, her true fans saw through the paparazzi, and saw her for who she really was; an artist.

### CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPMENT OF ITALIAN OPERA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND BEL CANTO TECHNIQUE

Opera had developed and changed quite dramatically from when it became a genre in the early 1600's to the start of the nineteenth century. In Classical Opera, composers focused on the recitatives, choruses, arias and duets as separate works. Arguably, scenes in classical opera were very choppy and did not have a good flow. The big "pay off" in a classical opera was the aria, and there was not much focus on the scene itself or the development of plot. The aria and the musical works were the most important part of the opera. The presentation of musical elements is what was important and not so much the flow of the story itself. Composers such as Monteverdi and Mozart paved the way for early nineteenth century, Romantic opera composers to expand and help the art form grow (Batchvarova).

When one thinks of early nineteenth century opera, three names come to mind: Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti. Later in the nineteenth century, Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti arguably influenced Italian composers, Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini. Rossini was the "Father of Romantic opera". He was incredibly innovative for the field of opera because he contributed two major techniques: bel canto technique and scene structure. Bel canto emphasizes great control of the voice, legato melody lines, intricate ornamentations and specific interpretation. Rossini created a new scene structure to change the Classical Opera genre by focusing on the flow and structure of the opera scene. His scenes and plots became the emphasis. His operas were very easy to understand because of the connection to the characters and true development and awareness of the scene taking place (Batchvarova).

The bel canto technique emerged in the early nineteenth century in Italy by opera composer Gioachino Rossini. Later, composers Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti wrote operas in Rossini's coined "bel canto" style (Grout). Bel canto in Italian means "beautiful singing". According to *A History of Western Music*, "The term refers to the elegant style characterized by lyrical lines, seemingly effortless technique and florid delivery" (Grout). Some other characteristics of bel canto technique include a clean passaggio with no break, legato phrasing, light, soaring quality of voice in higher registers, relaxed body and jaw, and light, effortless, and clean ornamentations. Bel canto stresses a relaxed body and voice so there is no strain. Also, the relaxed execution of music allows the singer not to push the voice or allow it to become too heavy. Bel canto opera composers wrote music that contained sixteenth note runs, high-sustained notes and ornamentations (Batchvarova).

Rossini revolutionized the opera genre by developing a new scene structure that helps the musical works aid the drama of the storytelling. The operatic scene begins with an introduction, then a scena. The scena is the recitative moment that contains useful dialogue, plot and sets up the aria. Rossini wanted to be able to express more than one mood in recitatives and arias, and he does so by utilizing three sections: the cantabile, tempo di mezzo and the cabaletta. The cantabile is "slow and lyrical", tempo di mezzo works as the transition between the cantabile and the cabaletta and the cabaletta is lively, upbeat and is usually where the emotions and core of the aria lies (Grout). Rossini, along with other bel canto composers, used many different styles of music in a single aria to create a multi-dimensional character. This technique is used in Rossini's popular aria, *Una voce poco fa* from *The Barber of Seville*, which Maria Callas is famous for singing (Grout). Rossini wanted to show the world the essence and beauty of the human voice.



The focus for a Rossini opera was not in complicated orchestrations, but on the scene structure and the beauty of the human voice to convey drama (Batchvarova).

Later, bel canto composer Bellini uses Rossini's three-section technique in his *Casta Diva* from *Norma* and *Ah! Non credea mirati* from *La Sonnambula*. Bellini used "long, sweeping, highly embellished, intensely emotional melodies" to aid the drama of the story (Grout). Major differences between Rossini and Bellini are that Bellini's orchestrations are more complicated, and Bellini was not as excessive with his ornamentations (Batchvarova). Gaetano Donizetti followed in Rossini and Bellini's style in creating opera that aided drama-driven opera and allowed the orchestra and chorus to be active in storytelling. According to *A History of Western Music*, "Donizetti, like Rossini, has an instinct for the theater and for melody that effectively captures a character, situation or feeling" (Grout).

In the mid-nineteenth century, Giuseppe Verdi, influenced by Rossini's scene structure used the two-part aria structure in *Vieni t'afretta* in *MacBeth*. John Adoin says that Verdi uses Rossini's bel canto structure: "as an exposition of Lady Macbeth's strength" (Adoin). Verdi became popular in the mid-nineteenth century. Verdi was highly influenced by the music of Donizetti. Verdi wrote operas drawn from inspiration from literature, nationalism and exoticism. Verdi had three main periods of his life. The first period begins with the works *Macbeth*, *Rigoletto*, *Il Traviatore*, and *La Traviata*. These were the first of his operas to be performed and were highly influenced by the ideas of nationalism and literature. Nationalism is putting in ideals of one's country in one's music. His opera plots were taken from famous literature of the time (Batchvarova).

Later, Verdi expresses comedy and exoticism with *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Aida*. These operas represent his middle period. *Un Ballo in Maschera* is a hilarious comedy filled with tricking people with disguises. In *Aida*, Verdi breaks away from nationalism to explore exoticism. *Aida* is set in Egypt and not in Verdi's home country of Italy, which was very innovative for the time. *Aida* also emphasizes the use of spectacle with the large crowd scenes, big entrances, costumes, sets, dancing and animals on stage. These ideas were taken from France's "Grand Opera" (Batchvarova).

Verdi's later period works include *Falstaff* and *Otello*. This is the return of the ideas of literature, specifically Shakespeare. Both these operas show extremes in both comedy and drama. Verdi revolutionized the opera world with *Falstaff* because he was able to create a hilarious opera with the lack of arias. Verdi wanted to emphasize the character's relationships with one another to move and emphasize the plot. Arias can be very internal. There are not many big and memorable arias in *Falstaff*; however, the relationships of the characters are very well-established that it does not matter (Batchvarova).

In the later portion of the mid-nineteenth century, the idea of realism and verismo came into play with composer Giacomo Puccini. Puccini took Verdi's fascination with exoticism a step further with his Asian influenced operas, *Madame Butterfly* and *Turandot*. What was unique about Puccini's operas is that not only were they set in Asia, but they sounded Asian. The ideas of Asian music are very apparent in the operas, especially in the aria "Signore Ascolta" from *Turandot*. Verdi's *Aida* sounds like an Italian opera set in Egypt; the dramatic themes, sets and costumes transport you to Egypt but the music does not. Puccini's Asian operas use Asian influenced music and are set in Asian cultures (Batchvarova).

Puccini also did not buy into the spectacle influence of the Grand Opera. Puccini focused on human emotions and their relationships. Puccini focused on verismo, which, as defined by *A History of Western Music*, is “nineteenth-century operatic movement that presents everyday people in familiar situations, often depicting sordid or brutal events” (Grout). He cared about characters enriched in deep plot, not lavish costumes, sets, grand entrances, etc. Two of Puccini’s greatest works that convey messages of human emotion are *La Boheme* and *Tosca*. Puccini wrote many arias for *Tosca* of pure grit and emotion to convey the lover’s struggles, such as “Vissi d’arte” and “E Lucevan le stelle”. *La Boheme* deals with issues of being a starving artist in Paris, having tuberculosis and falling in love. The opera features six dynamic characters and their stories of love, art, sickness, death and poverty. Puccini is able to show a first meeting through “the candle scene”, love duet “O suave fanciulla” and heartbreak “Donde Lieta”. Puccini was able to capture the human emotion in an opera so convincingly (Batchvarova).

Maria Callas felt most at home singing the bel canto composers Rossini, Donizetti and most importantly, Bellini. She believed the music of the bel canto composers was harder to sing than the hardest of Wagner music. She thought there was more honesty, control, depth and realism in the bel canto composers’ work. She believed Puccini gave a great deal to the verismo of operatic music but did harm to the voice. She loved Puccini’s music; she thought it was beautiful, but nothing was better to her than the works of Rossini, Donizetti and, most fondly, Bellini (“The Callas Conversations”).

The bel canto technique is the technique Maria Callas used for her singing. Callas said: “If you don’t have bel canto, you can’t sing any opera. Even the most modern opera” (Haeword). According to Callas, to train your voice in bel canto, one must use specific exercises in scales

and trills to train your voice. Callas compared her bel canto training to how athletes train; the voice is a muscle and it needs to be trained (Haeword). The bel canto technique fell from practice in the early twentieth century when high intensity and heavy vocal tones of operas written by Wagner were dominating the opera world. Callas helped bring the bel canto technique back to the forefront of the opera world. Callas believed that “no matter how heavy the voice is, it should always be kept light” (Harewood). “There is no question that Miss Callas sparked new interest in the largely forgotten bel canto operas of the 19th century. These were the words of Bellini, Donizetti and Rossini, most of which had not been heard since the era when they were written” (“Maria”). Many opera directors and singers were claiming that bel canto operas “were considered too difficult and too uninteresting musically to be worth reviving. Miss Callas showed that they could be sung, that the melodies and all the embellishments that were thought to be for virtuoso display could be turned to genuine dramatic use” (“Maria”). Callas took bel canto technique to a new level by applying the technique to non-bel canto operas by Verdi and Puccini (Adoin).

*A History of Western Music* says that Rossini believed bel canto singing wants to accent the beauty of the human voice; the voice is the most important instrument in the orchestra (Grout). Rossini believed the human voice contained many emotions. Callas said the following to John Adoin regarding bel canto technique:

“*Bel canto* does not mean beautiful singing alone. It is, rather, the technique demanded by the composers of this style — Donizetti, Rossini, and Bellini. It is the same attitudes and demands of Mozart and Beethoven, for example, the same approach and the same technical difficulties faced by instrumentalists. You see, a musician is a musician. A singer is no different from an instrumentalist except that we have words. You don't excuse things in a singer you would not dream of excusing in a violinist or pianist. There is no excuse for not having a trill, for not doing the acciaccatura, for not having good scales. Look at your scores! There are technical things written there to be performed, and they must be performed whether you like it or not. How will you get out of a trill? How will you get out of scales when they are written there, staring you in the face? It is not enough to have a beautiful voice. What does that mean? When you interpret a role, you have to have a thousand colors to portray happiness, joy, sorrow, fear. How can you do this with only a beautiful voice? Even if you sing harshly sometimes, as I have frequently done, it is a necessity of expression. You have to do it, even if people will not understand. But in the long run they will, because you must persuade them of what you're doing” (Adoin).

Callas learned from Tuillo Serafin, famous Italian conductor, that you must serve the music; you cannot get by on a beautiful voice alone; you must know your music.

Other vocal scholars agree with Callas' argument for *bel canto* singing being more than “pretty singing”. Author, Clara Kathleen Rogers, *The Philosophy of Singing*, says the following on *bel canto* technique:

“Those who regard the art of singing as anything more than a means to an end, do not comprehend the true purpose of that art, much less can they hope ever to fulfill that purpose. The true purpose of singing is to give utterance to certain hidden depths in our nature, which can be adequately expressed in no other way. The voice is the only vehicle perfectly adapted to this purpose; it alone can reveal to us our inmost feelings, because it is our only direct means of expression. If the voice, more than any language, more than any other instrument of expression, can reveal to us our own hidden depths, and convey those depths to other souls of men, it is because voice vibrates directly to the feeling itself, when it fulfills its natural mission. By fulfilling its natural mission, I mean, when voice is not hindered from vibrating to the feeling by artificial methods of tone - production, which methods include certain mental processes, which are fatal to spontaneity. To sing should always mean to have some definite feeling to express” (Rogers).

David Ffangcon-Davies, author of the book *The Singing of the Future*, believes the reason people believe *bel canto* relies on a beautiful voice is because “this false position is due to the idea that

the "Arte del bel-canto" encouraged mere sensuous beauty of voice, rather than truth of expression" (Ffangcon-Davies). However, he later states that bel canto uses a "versatility of tone" to aid the expression of the piece (Ffangcon-Davies). Bel canto technique teaches one to work several different registers of the voice, such as chest tones, medium voice and head voice, for interpretation purposes. One learns to work several different registers of the voice to have several options when singing. Also, it allows a singer to have a wide range and sing many different styles of music (Marchesi). Arguably, the access of three different voice types effortlessly and smoothly is why Maria Callas was able to sing Lyric Soprano roles, Dramatic Soprano roles and Mezzo-Soprano roles.

The bel canto technique allowed Callas to lighten her sound, expand her versatility, and helped aid her in her famous interpretations. Callas was able to bring bel canto technique to the opera world in the 1950's by singing famous bel canto operas written by Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti. Callas opened the doors for opera singers such as Joan Sutherland, Beverly Sills and Kathleen Battle to use the bel canto technique, which was almost out of practice.

## CHAPTER FOUR: MARIA CALLAS' REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE PROCESS

Maria Callas learned a great deal about her acting process from Maestro Tullio Serafin. He taught her to “serve the music” (Harewood). What Serafin meant by “serving the music” was to pay attention to every detail the composer gave you and to treat the music with respect. Serafin told Callas: “You must serve music because music is so enormous and can envelop you in such a state of perpetual anxiety and torture but it is our main duty” (Harewood). Serafin taught Callas to forget about the notes on the page and focus on the truth of the interpretation after learning the role.

When Callas was handed a new role, the first thing she would do was read through the score, study the role and how the character fits into the big picture of the opera. She would study the score act by act, meticulously looking for clues and details about her role. She would ask questions about her roles such as: “Who is she? Where is she? Does the character agree with the music? Do the music and the characterization compliment the characters intentions and emotions?” She believed the last act was most important. She said, “The last impression is the best” (Harewood). She believed you could have amazing previous acts, but if your last act is bad, there is no way to save the performance (Harewood).

After she studied the score, she would learn the music as is: “Nothing more and nothing less” (Harewood). She would find a skilled pianist who was very particular to teach her the music. She would study the conductor’s cuts, tempos, and cut offs. As she was learning the music, she would focus a lot of her energy on the embellishments for expression (Harewood). She believed there was always an emotional reason for every scale, trill or embellishment written in the score. She also believed each dynamic marking was there for a specific reason by the

conductor for interpretation purposes; she believed they were there to express acting intentions. For example, the smoothness of a legato marking might indicate the character is trying to persuade someone. A sforzando, rhythmically accenting the notes, might be to terrorize or taunt someone. A pianissimo might indicate a character's fear; the character is so afraid to speak in fear someone will hear them (Adoin). Callas believed the composer put everything in the music for a reason -- to heighten the drama and tell the story.

Serafin also taught Callas that after the score was learned, she should truly look into the composer's work and take great care for it. He told her to speak the role to herself without music. Serafin then wanted her to focus on the recitatives, more speech-like quality moments of the aria, to find a lot of the truth in the character. Serafin told Callas that she knew her music very well, but he wanted her to go home and speak the score to herself and figure out how she would sing the music in her own way, to be completely free. He said to her: "Miss, you know your music very well. Now I want you to go back home and start reading out loud the recitatives. You have to read them as if they were in prose, this way you'll find the rhythm you want to keep when you sing" ("Maria Callas"). He wanted her to be free from the page and organically interpret the music. Callas said about Serafin's process: "It's not done in one day, in one week, and in fact I don't think it's ever finished. An interpreter grows" (Harewood).

Callas believed performers should give the most credibility possible to the music. Opera needs to be down-to-earth and logical. Callas believed opera needed to be found in a place of truth, no over-acting or the public would find it ridiculous and not take it seriously. Callas believed, "Opera is something that has been dead for quite a while ago, so if we really don't try our very hardest to give it much seriousness and much persuasiveness and dignity, its not taken



in with pleasure” (Harewood). Callas took her roles, their given circumstances and the music very seriously.

Callas discussed how important the whole company is to the process of the opera. After you learn the role and have studied the score, you need the other company members to thrive. Callas said, regarding the company of an opera, “You cannot do this alone. It is so important to have a great conductor with you who will help you with his orchestra. You need also a great stage director and good colleagues. It is a teamwork of seriousness, great science, great faith, great sacrifice. We depend one on the other for the success of the performance” (Adoin). Callas would go above and beyond many of her colleagues by going to the conductor’s first rehearsal with the orchestra. She wanted to visualize the conductor’s tempos and cut offs. Also, from a practical standpoint, Callas was near-sighted and had trouble seeing the conductor (Harewood).

Callas is known for coupling great vocal technique with dramatic interpretation. Callas believed it was not acceptable to have one and not the other. This idea is illustrated best after she listened to herself sing the “Sleepwalking” aria from Verdi’s *Macbeth*. She believed everything was vocally perfect. However, the artistic director, Walter Legge, told her after she listened to it, she would want to do it over again (Adoin). She listened to the recording and agreed. After listening to the recording of herself, she said, “It was vocally perfect...but I had to do it all over again. I had forgotten the character’s moods, her feelings, her perception. I had forgotten about that and sang a technically and perfect aria” (“Maria Callas”). It was so important to Callas to hear the emotion and tactics of the character, all of the specifics, not simply a vocally beautiful performance. She later discussed about playing Lady Macbeth: “How can a mad woman with

crazy thoughts jumping from one to the other be conveyed in a straight, lovely kind of evenly paced vocal piece? It cannot” (Adoin).

Here is an example of Callas breaking down the “Sleepwalking Scene” from Verdi’s *Macbeth*, beat by beat. One can see the specificity she gives her work through her in-depth analysis of every note and word.

“You see, I think she must have at least six mental thoughts that come to her here, one completely different from the other. For she has reached a state of mind that is, shall we say, conscience. She is a very ambitious lady, and for the sake of her vanity, she has persuaded her husband to kill the king so that he could become king. Disaster has come because she could not stand her guilt and went mad. She finally copes with her madness in this Sleepwalking Scene. A mad person, of course, has one thought into another without continuity. One minute she is talking about the bloodstains on her hands, terrified that she can never get them clean, and right away she says, ‘Come now, we must get ready to receive these people, everything else is fine.’ All of a sudden, she comes back to another mental attitude. So you cannot perform it with only one line from beginning to end. You have to break it into every one of her thoughts” (Adoin).

Callas is able to notice dynamic and rhythmic markings made by the composer, Verdi, to accentuate the character. Callas truly believed everything in the music was there to heighten the drama. Callas later describes Lady Macbeth’s state of mind during the “Sleepwalking Aria” by noticing: “Her mind is wandering one minute, terrified the other, commanding the next. And Verdi helps you convey this, for instance, at ‘tanto sangue immaginar,’ by marking the notes sforzando, which means ‘touching’. They are rhythmically accented to convey terror: ‘Could-not-i-ma-gine’” (Adoin).

Callas was also known for playing another Verdi heroine, Leonora from *Il Traviatore*. In the opera, The Count di Luna is pursuing Leonora; however, she has feelings for his rival, Manrico. Manrico and Leonora are forbidden lovers. When they attempt to get married, the Count has Manrico captured. Leonora attempts to save him and professes that if she is unable to

save him, she will die with him. The role is extremely dramatic and multi-dimensional. Callas was able to use her bel canto training and attention to detail with this Verdi score, which was cutting edge at the time.

“As Travatore’s early nineteenth-century aspects glossed over, musically vagrant Leonora’s became the norm. But Callas never concerned herself with the norm, and so she learned Leonora in the only way she knew how -- “like a sponge”, absorbing every note and expression mark written by Verdi. Again, Callas’s bel canto schooling uncovered a wealth of detail in Leonora’s music. It was as if an old, romantic painting, beloved but dim, had been cleaned to its original tints” (Adoin).

Much of the reason Callas was able to play these tragedian roles with such compassion was because she could relate to these characters. Her personal life was a tragedy in some regards, specifically her estranged relationship with her mother and her love life. “Callas had a special empathy for wronged, unhappy women and though Leonora’s character is of limited dimensions, it is a part filled with the sort of contrasts which lent Callas dramatic impetus” (Adoin). Callas was able to use aspects of her personal life to convey her characters on stage.

It is very apparent after research of Callas’ rehearsal and performance process that her process is very rigorous, time consuming, specific, rewarding and successful. Callas believed the interpretation and the musicality of the music were married. The music was written to aid the drama; you cannot ignore one or the other. The marriage of musicality and acting is important to performing an operatic role. Callas’ attention to detail in all aspects of portraying an operatic role, such as analyzing and vocalizing a score, helped her bring truth to her roles.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SCRIPT WRITING PROCESS

I have been inspired by Maria Callas since the age of 17. My fascination with Maria Callas started when I began singing more classical music my senior year of high school. I had been taking Musical Theatre voice lessons during high school, was known as “the loud soprano” among my musical theatre circle of friends, and was excited to tackle classical music. I never really listened to opera; I really did not know a thing about it. So, I searched the Internet for opera recordings to get my feet wet. The first recording that popped up on my search engine was “Vissi D’Arte” from Puccini’s *Tosca*, sung by Maria Callas. I listened to the aria and began to cry. Music had never made me cry like that before. I got chills all over my body. Even though I did not understand the lyrics of the aria, I could understand the meaning. Maria conveyed all her emotions and passion for the aria in the recording, so I did not need a translation. After that day, I knew I wanted to sing like that.

Throughout my college career, I bought her recordings and listened to them constantly. I began to take classical voice lessons and felt great about my newfound “opera voice.” I loved the musicality, the difficultness, the passion, and the strength that opera music possesses. I began singing in the Music Department’s voice studio Master Classes, where I was nicknamed “the actor.” Apparently, in the Music Department, it was unheard of to act the arias you were singing. I took my nickname as a compliment. I did not know how to sing any other way. How could you neglect the acting when you are singing such passionate music? How are you supposed to convey the composer’s meaning if you are simply standing in place with no emotion? During this time in my life, I really felt I could identify with Maria Callas. She changed the opera world by combining acting and singing.

At the end of my undergraduate junior year, my theatre professor approached me about a possible project. He handed me the script to Terrence McNally's *Master Class*, which is based on the life of Maria Callas. My theatre professor is a huge opera buff, so I knew how near and dear to his heart it was. I read the script and fell in love with it and was thrilled to perform it. I performed the play in the beginning of my senior year. I played Sharon Graham, the "diva" student. I truly enjoyed my time working on this show about one of my idols. I loved singing Verdi's glorious aria, "Vieni t'afretta," and thinking about how Maria would have interpreted the aria.

However, singing in the play put me at a crossroads I faced my whole time as an undergraduate. Am I an opera singer or an actress? I kept feeling like I had to choose; do I do theatre or music? But I did not want to choose. I loved singing the aria in the play. However, I loved it because of the passion, emotion and storytelling. I loved telling the story of Lady Macbeth through Verdi's complex score. Why couldn't I do both? Why did I have to choose? I came to the conclusion I would not choose. Thus, that is why I am a candidate to receive an MFA in Musical Theatre.

When it came time to choose a thesis topic, I reflected on my experiences in graduate school. What stuck out to me the most was learning how to be a great actor/singer. I learned how important the interpretation was to convey the music. Every single class I took taught me this very message I needed to hear. I learned how to be specific with my music and my acting pieces. I learned how to "serve the music," as Maria Callas said. I learned it is not okay simply to have a pretty voice, and you have to be active. I also learned about becoming the actor/singer through teaching Musical Theatre Voice as a Graduate Assistant. I teach vocal techniques to

undergraduate students that aid the storytelling of their pieces. For instance, I might have a singer belt a note to get someone's attention. I have asked a student to sing a high note at a pianissimo to show desperation and vulnerability.

I was thinking back on *Master Class* and how much I enjoyed the writing and integration of music. I decided to take the monologues from *Master Class* and turn them into a one-woman version of the play. I spent a good chunk of my Christmas break putting together the script and adding arias throughout the play. However, I realized it was not legal to cut a published author's work. I would run into a lot of copyright issues if I did my play this way. So, I decided to write my own one-woman show about Maria Callas. There are two things that scare me most as a theatre artist: playwriting and one-woman shows. I have decided to tackle both these fears in my thesis. Another thing I learned in grad school: I need to take risks and stop being so safe all the time.

The first thing I did was listen to old recordings of interviews with Maria Callas. I needed to get a feel for her style of language and what was really important to her in life. I jotted quotes in a notebook of specific things she said. I was particularly interested in her last interview with Phillippe Caloni in April of 1977. This interview was her last radio broadcast before she died. I was so impressed with how wise, classy, remarkable, and fascinating she was in all her interviews, but, in particular, the interview with Caloni. I especially loved hearing her talk about her art form, process and the idea of "serving the music."

However, when I began jotting notes about Maria, I found myself attempting to censor her. For example, Maria discusses her hatred for fat singers in the interview with Caloni. I thought people might not like my character if I said those things. I reflected more, and these

negative thoughts kept lingering in my mind. When I was talking to people about my project, I told them about the fat singers statement, and they found it so intriguing. Plays are written about colorful and flawed people, not perfect people who are sweet and kind to each other all the time. I decided to add the dialogue about fat singers in the show. It was a very important part of her life and who she was. Plus, she would not censor herself and neither should I.

One quality I noticed about the interviews was the distinct difference between American interviews with Callas and European interviews with Callas. The European interviews wanted to know about her as an artist, and the American interviews wanted to know about her sex life with Onasis. The European interviews were far more interesting, and I got a better understanding of who Maria was. Maria was much more available and talkative in the European interviews than in the American interviews. Maria was very uncomfortable and guarded in the American interviews. The Americans were obsessed with talking about Onasis “leaving” her for Jackie Kennedy. Maria handled the rude interviews with class and truly made the American journalists look bad. I decided to have an aspect in the show that did talk about her relationship with Onasis, but I do not want it to be a focal point. I want the art and the music to be first. I want this play to be about Maria as an artist passing her infinite knowledge to future singers and artists. The only reason Onasis will be mentioned in the show is because he did affect her as an artist.

I drew a great deal of inspiration from a biography of her life, *Maria Callas: The Woman Behind the Legend*, by Arianna Huffington. Huffington said many of the same things most biographies said about Callas, but Huffington was able to offer more unique stories about Callas. There were so many unbelievable stories about Callas from this book that could be plays on their own. For example, she met her first real friend, an Italian soldier, through singing Italian arias on

her balcony everyday. I was very inspired by the book and wanted to include many of the stories to show the public a very different side of Maria Callas that few know.

After listening to many interviews, watching a couple of DVDs of Maria Callas, and reading a few biographies of her, I felt somewhat prepared to begin tackling the actual writing of the script. However, I needed to figure out the structure of the script. I took a playwriting course as an undergraduate, but I was writing ten-minute plays with more than one character. I remember my playwriting professor saying it was very difficult to write a solo show. At the time, I had only seen one solo show live and read a few solo shows. One-person shows are very unique in structure, and I was not comfortable writing one without doing more research on the one-person show structure.

So, I decided to go to the Orlando Fringe Festival and see as many one-person shows as possible. The four solo shows that taught me the most about the structure were *Full of Grace*, *Oddlie*, *Gimpel the Fool* and *6 Guitars*. In the play, *Full of Grace*, the actress played three different characters surrounding the same theme, which was faith. The actress used active language, had someone she was specifically talking to and storytelling in her play, which was very effective. The balance of active language and storytelling kept the production interesting. In the play, *Gimpel the Fool*, the theatre company had a very impressive sound design. There would be times that the actor was storytelling and times when he was talking to a person, who actually responded to him in the form of a voiceover. I thought this was fascinating, and I was shocked the voiceover technique worked. In the play, *Oddlie*, the actress sang, told stories and played different characters. I loved how she integrated her singing in the show, which proved to me that putting music in my show is a convention that could work. I was incredibly impressed with the



show *6 Guitars*. The actor played six different characters sharing down-to-earth stories of how music has affected their lives. This confirmed that a play dedicated to the art of music making is interesting and touching.

One of the quotes I read in a biography kept sticking out in my mind: “Only when I sing do I feel loved” (“Maria Callas Quotes”). This line made me very sad, and I knew there was great truth behind it in Maria’s life. I looked through my research and began to see a distinct throughline with this quote and her life. Only when Maria sang did her mother love and accept her. Maria’s first husband, Baptista, only loved her because of her voice; he was obsessed with her becoming “La Divinia”. Onassis loved her because she was a celebrity, and she was a celebrity because she could sing. Three of the most important people in her life loved her because of her singing ability. If she could not sing, these people would not have been in her life. I had to find a way to put this idea into the show.

I had figured out a structure I thought could work and began writing. I wrote it in the format of her last interview with Phillippe Caloni. The interview would give it specificity. I wanted to have moments of flashbacks and moments where she talked to the audience. So, there was action dialogue, storytelling and singing. I would have all the interviewer questions as voiceovers. I wrote a draft of the script and edited it for a month and a half. After I had an official draft, I read the script and realized I have no clue why Maria is on stage. Why is she saying all this wise information about music? Why is she telling people about her personal life? The objectives were not clear. Maria did not really want anything, and that makes for a boring play. I decided the objective would be to right all the wrongs that have been said about her in the press. People think many different things about Maria Callas, and I want to paint her as a

brilliant artist. In an interview, Maria discussed how she hated the media for making her out to be someone she was not. How perfect would it be for Maria to get her chance to tell the public who she really is before she dies. Having the objective made the last bit of editing so much easier and specific.

I sent the script to Professor Earl Weaver, my thesis chair, and was petrified at what he would have to say about it. No one had read the script but me. I was personally attached and thought the script was a giant mess. I was afraid of being judged, which is a fear I need to get over very quickly. I had no idea whether it was going to work or not. It was reassuring when Professor Weaver sent me the script back with notes and positive feedback. He said, "It sounds interesting, and I cannot wait to see you perform this, my Prima Donna!" That was exactly what I needed to hear to move forward with the project.

I had a read-through of the script implementing the music. I had the script on my computer reading it to myself for two months but never reading it aloud and on my feet. I was surprised by how much of the script I actually liked. I also found a lot of awkward wording. There were many spots where my dialogue was not direct enough. Maria Callas is very direct. I found the simpler the better when it came to the dialogue. I did not know how much of each aria I was going to sing until the first read-through. The read-through gave me a good gauge of how long I should sing. I do not want to sing most of these arias in their entirety, because it would make the show too long.

However, while reading the script aloud, I realized how much I did not like all the voiceovers. I like the idea of using the device a couple of times, but there would be about twenty voiceover cues; that would be abusing the device. Also, I did not like the interruption of the

dialogue; I want the show to be about Maria addressing her fans for the last time. I do not want the show to be about Maria speaking to this unknown voice.

I discussed the voiceover idea with a friend who is a sound designer, and he told me of some of the issues I'd be running into. He thought if I put the voiceovers through a speaker system in a theatre, it would sound like a "God-like" voice I was talking to. I definitely did not want that. He mentioned putting a speaker downstage and having the sound coming towards the audience instead of over the audience's heads. I did not really care for that option either. I began to think that if an actual person was not there asking me the questions, the convention could work. The audience could identify with seeing the person, and I could work off him.

I want to keep this a one-woman show. I felt the interview questions as voiceovers were over-complicating the show, and I'm not sure it is worth it. So, I decided to cut the interview questions. Some of voiceover lines that were not done by the interviewer, such as the Italian Soldier and the Greek Captain, Maria will simply act out. This is a technique used in many solo shows I've seen. This technique is used in Terence McNalley's *Master Class* when Maria has her flashback monologues. I decided to cut the interview questions and simply have the dialogue flow from one monologue to the next. The questions I wrote have become transition lines for the next monologue. There are times where Maria might ask a question and then answer it. This is a convention I have seen on the TV show, *The Office*. The characters are in an interview, but you never hear the interviewer ask the questions to them. Often times, the characters will repeat the question and then answer it. It still creates the atmosphere that the characters are in an interview without hearing the question.

Once I took my show to the rehearsal process, I realized I had written too much. Luckily, I wrote too much, because I feel it is easier to cut lines than add dialogue. My director, Peter Cortelli, was helping find the appropriate sections of the play to cut lines. We would run the play in sections, and Peter would tell me to cut three to five sentences in several paragraphs. I was having a difficult time finding where to cut the lines when I was not in rehearsal and staring at my computer screen. When I was rehearsing the script on my feet with Peter, I was able to find where the show was dragging and where Maria was simply rambling.

The script writing process has taught me a lot about dramatic writing and doing careful research on an historical figure. I have been able to reflect on what inspired me to write this script, research Maria Callas, and watch several original solo shows to gain inspiration. I have learned a great deal about dramatic structure and what works for the theatrical stage and what does not. I believe the script writing process was the hardest and most rewarding part of this thesis.

## CHAPTER SIX: CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### Maria Callas

#### I. APPROACH AND STYLE OF THE PLAY

- A. What is the genre of the play? Musical, One-Woman, Biographical, Drama
- B. What is the basic or central meaning of the play?: You have to be a singer/actor to make it; you have to serve the music. There are two sides to every story. Just because you have fame, fortune and an incredibly successful career, does not mean you are happy. Only when I sing do I feel loved.

#### II. WHERE?

##### A. Place and surroundings - location

1. country/state: France
2. city/town/village etc.: Paris
3. building/structure: Radio Interview and flashbacks at various opera houses, The Met, Maria's home, Greek Ship, Maria's home balcony.
4. room and furnishings: Radio Interview: chair, small table, glass of water, piano.

##### B. Immediate past location

1. Where are you coming from? Your immediate past location: My lovely apartment in the city.
2. What were you doing there? Why? I was getting cleaned up, putting on nice clothes. I have an interview later in the afternoon. I want to look and feel my best.
3. How long were you there? Why? I was there all morning getting ready for my interview with Mr. Caloni
4. Why did you leave? I had a radio interview to get to.

5. Why did you come here? Why at this time? Mr. Caloni has asked me to do a radio interview. This is the time we agreed upon.
6. Have you been here before? I currently live in Paris, but I have never had an interview with Mr. Caloni. I have never been to his recording studio.
7. Do you know anyone here? If yes, who? Yes, Phillippe Caloni, interviewer. We have spoken on the phone and I have listened to his radio programs before.

### III. WHEN?

A. Year and/or Period: Paris, France – April 1977.

1. Season of the year - fall, spring, summer, winter: Spring
2. Weather conditions - raining, snowing, sunny, etc.? It was sunny today.
3. Time of day or night: Day

### IV. WHO? - CHARACTER

A. Background

1. Who are/were your parents? George and Evangelia Kalos
  - a. What do they do for a living? How do they feel about that? Are they happy:  
My father was a pharmacist. My mother was a housewife and adored the arts. It was wonderful that my father had a very decent and respectful job. I wish my mother had a job so she would not have bothered me so much with singing. I wish she did not love the arts as much as she did. My parents were not happy. My father and mother have opposite personalities. My father is unambitious, working class, down to earth and does not appreciate the arts.

My mother is driven, passionate and wants to be in high social society. They eventually got a divorce.

- b. How do/did you get along with your parents: My father and I had a very distant relationship. He did not appreciate my operatic singing, but supported me in whatever way he could. I did not see much of my father growing up. After my parents divorced, my mother moved my sister and I back to Greece, and father stayed in New York. My mother and I did not get along. She was always pressuring me to sing and perform. She was always telling me how fat and ugly I was. I was constantly being compared to my sister. My mother held a grudge against me because I was not a boy. Apparently, I was supposed to be a boy.

2. Where/when were you born? I was born in New York City.

- a. What is your nationality: Greek.
- b. Where do/did you live? How do you feel about it? I lived in Greece for the majority of my childhood. I liked it, but I longed to go to America and be with my father. I wanted to get away from my mother and sister.
- c. Do you have any brothers or sisters? How many? How do/did you get along? How do you feel about that? I had one sister, Jackie. She was thin, blonde and beautiful. My mother loved her more than me, so my sister and I really did not get along.

3. When you were growing up, did you have many friends? Were you popular?

Why? How do feel? What were you like as a child? I did not have very many friends growing up. I was shy at school. Later, I went to the Athens Conservatorie, and music was my priority. My mother did not allow me to play with dolls or kids; I was to read, play the piano and sing. If I could do it all over again, I would have played with children more. I would have had a childhood. I was too mature for my age. The students at the Conservatorie did not like me very much because I was very talented. They would talk about me and say hurtful things behind my back. The students would wait in the wings during my performances in hopes that my voice would crack.

4. Did/do you go to school? How long? I went to regular school until I was thirteen and then I attended the Athens Conservatorie.
  - a. Did/do you like it? Why? I loved the Conservatorie. I loved my teacher, Madame de Hildago. I loved spending my days with music.
  - b. Were/are you a good student? Why? How do you feel?: I was a very good student. I was at the Conservatorie from 10am-10pm. I played the piano and sang during my free time. Music created discipline for me. I wanted to play with the kids in the beginning of my childhood, but after a while, I got used to singing and studying music all the time.
  - c. Favorite subjects? Why? Music, obviously. I always liked literature as well. I loved the passion, adventure and imagination of literature. I liked to read.
  - d. Are you smart, clever, wise, cunning, intelligent, learned, etc.? How do you feel about it? I am very smart, wise, learned and intelligent. I take great pride



in my intelligence. At times I wished I had been more learned in other areas besides music.

5. Who have/had the greatest influences on you? In what way? First: Madame de Hildago, my first teacher at the Conservatorie. She shaped my voice technically and gave me the proper tools needed to be a nearly perfect singer. She gave me great confidence in myself. She was the stepping-stone I needed to get into the world of opera. Second: Maestro Serifin. I learned so much about interpretation of music, singing, acting and performing. He also jump started my career in Italy, which helped me become a superstar. Third: Aristotle Onasis. He was my lover. He taught me to be spontaneous, enjoy the finer things in life, taught me to make love, be intimate and have sex. He taught me how to let go and focus on myself and not myself simply as an opera singer.

#### B. Present

1. What do you do in life (job, title, etc.)? I'm an opera singer.
  - a. Do you enjoy what you do? I do enjoy what I do.
  - b. Are you good at it? I'm very good at it. I'm not perfect, but I have very high standards for myself I will never reach. Throughout the years I have become better at looking at my voice from an objective point of view, which is very hard.
2. What is your philosophical/religious background and/preference?
  - a. Do you practice a religion (Catholic, Baptist, etc.): Non-traditional Orthodox

- b. Do you believe in God or gods? Spirit? Force? I believe in a God, a Divine Power, but I do not know its name.
- c. Do you believe in life after death, heaven, hell, etc.?: Yes.
- d. Do you have any special beliefs, ideas, etc. If yes, what? If not, why not? I believe a higher power is watching over me. I do not believe in organized religion, it has never really appealed to me. I'm not an atheist either; I remain positive about the world.
- e. Do you have any special fears or hang-ups, etc.? If yes, what? Dying alone.
- f. Do you have any special likes, dislikes, prejudices? If so, what? I try to be kind and respect everyone. I believe in karma -- if I was a disrespectful person, I know it would come back to me. I give the sign of the cross before I walk on stage. It's a habit and a superstition. I feel it's a good luck sign. I am against hypocrisy. I do not forgive easily. I am well-mannered.
- g. Do you consider yourself (character) to be moral, immoral, amoral? Why? I am moral because I am kind and respectful to others who respect me. I am not mean or ugly towards people, because I believe it will come back to hurt me in the end.
- h. How would you describe yourself (happy, sad, upbeat, optimistic, pessimistic, friendly, introverted, outgoing, confident, etc., etc., etc.)? I have a tendency to be pessimistic, but I do not like this aspect of myself. My close friends keep me upbeat and positive. I'm confident. I'm introverted and shy.

3. What is your societal level?
  - a. High class, low class, aristocracy, royal, middle class, etc? I was born into a lower middle class. My mother desperately wanted my family to be in the high society. My father did not really care about those things. I am currently in the High Class, because I'm a celebrity.
  
4. What is your economic position and/or condition?
  - a. Is it the same now as in the past? How do you feel about this? I am a lot richer than I used to be. I like having high-class jewelry, clothes, parties, food, cars, vacations, but I do not believe the money can make me happy. It's the relationships I have made throughout the years that makes me truly happy.
  
5. How old are you now (chronological)? 53
  - a. Are you mature or immature for your age? Why? I'm very mature. I always have been.
  
6. How is your health? How do you feel about this? My health is good. Except I suffer a great deal of stress and anxiety. I take care of myself. I exercise regularly and eat well. It is very important for me to remain thin.
  
7. What is your marital status?
  - a. Married, single, divorced, widowed. How do you feel about this? I am divorced. I am glad I got out of the marriage to Baptista. I miss being in a relationship with Onasis. I truly loved him. I know it's for the best that we are

not together. I suffered a lot of myself to be with him. I miss him dearly though. He is dead now. He is a great pain in my heart. He causes a lot of my anxiety and stress in my life.

- b. Do you have any children? If yes, how many? Boys or girls? Twins? No children. I was pregnant. I had an abortion.
- c. Did/do you want them. How do you feel about this? I wanted a child and a family more than anything. I wanted to quit singing and settle down. But the man I was with did not want me to have a child. This broke my heart. I thought having his child would make him commit to me. I thought this was my chance at a normal life.

### C. Physical Characteristics

- 1. Height - short, medium, tall, etc.: Tall at 5'8"
- 2. Weight - thin, lean, gaunt, fat, obese, muscular, etc: I was fat for all my childhood and the early part of my career. In 1954, I lost 60 pounds and became thin. I weighed 150 pounds.
- 3. Temperament - calm, relaxed, easy going, nervous, high strung, uptight, laid back, etc: I am nervous, high strung, uptight, classy.
- 4. Movement - quick, slow, fidgety, graceful, fluid, regal, poised, strong, weak, relaxed, stiff, rigid, determined, undetermined, natural, affected, clumsy, efficient, bouncy awkward, etc.: I am quick, fluid, poised, strong, determined, natural, specific. I do not move very much, but when I do, it is to make a point.

5. Neat, sloppy, etc: Neat
6. Facial hair, clean shaven, etc: N/A
7. Bald, thinning, hairy, etc.: Thick, long brown hair.
8. Straight, Erect, stooped, etc.: Straight
9. Handsome, average, plain, ugly, beautiful, cute, sexy, etc.: Beautiful
10. Complexion and Coloring.: I have olive colored skin because of my Greek decent.
11. Any physical defects -- scars, etc? If so, how do you feel about them? No
12. Any speech problems, dialects, etc.? If so, how do you feel about them? I have a very proper European accent. I have been able to get rid of many of my Greek mannerisms and have the European accent because of the several languages I speak.
13. What are you wearing? Any character externals (cane, monocle, eye glasses, etc.)?  
: I am wearing a high class outfit with lovely jewelry, and my hair in a tight bun .

#### D. Business and Movement

1. How does the style of the play affect (influence) your movement in the play? The play is a one-woman show, so I need to be strong in my movements. I need to be even more specific with my movements, because I'm the only one on stage. When I'm in the interview portions, I'm sitting in a chair. When I'm in my flashback moments, I'm standing and active. The flashback moments provide action for the interview.

2. How do such factors as the character's age, social status, education, and health suggest the type of movement to be used in the play? I'm 53 years old. I have gone through a great deal of stress within my life and profession. I do not move as fast as I used to, nor do I speak as fast. I'm still full of energy, but everything is a little bit slower. I'm very well-educated and of high social status, so I carry myself with the utmost pride. I sit up straight, not slouch. When I am walking, I move with grace and smoothness.
3. How do such factors as physical environment, climate, and familiarity with the surroundings suggest the movement to be used in certain scenes or the play as a whole? When I am talking to Mr. Caloni in the radio studio, I'm not in a familiar environment. Mr. Caloni has been gracious and friendly to me, so I'm not uncomfortable, but I'm not fully comfortable like I would be if I was in my own home. I sit up straight, not lounge around. I am very careful to be well-mannered and polite. I do not take my shoes off, put my feet up on the chair. When I'm in my flashbacks or talking to the audience, I'm a little more comfortable. I'm in familiar environments. I am very uncomfortable talking to the press; it is the press who have spread horrible rumors about me in the past. I have trust issues with people of the press, even if they are as nice as Mr. Caloni. My audience represents my fans; I care about what my fans believe about me; I want them to know the truth. When I am talking to the audience, I am trying to prove to them that I am a true artist and a good person.
4. How does the mood of the play affect the type of movement to be used?: When I'm

singing, I'm very open, vulnerable and available. My movement is more fluid.

When I'm discussing art and music, I'm very poised and assertive but still passionate. When I'm talking about my personal life, I'm very guarded. I speak in short thoughts. My body becomes slightly rigid, cold and cut off from the person talking to me. I might fold my arms in front of my chest.

5. How do the demands of dress (costume) affect the movement? My dress is very high class, expensive, and glamorous. I hold my head high, perfect posture to show off my dress as best as possible.
6. Does the playwright indicate any necessary movement or business which must be incorporated into the character? If so, what does it suggest to you about playing the role? I (Shelley), the Playwright, denote that I (Maria) am sitting for the interview. The sitting indicates I'm having an intimate and long conversation with someone. I'm indicated to stand and play scales on a piano after a "quiet ordinance" sign indicated to the audience, which shows what a bold character I am. I do not accept authority well. It is indicated there is a gun pointed at me. My movement is very tense and still at that moment. I begin to sing in this moment, which again shows what a bold and daring person I am. Many of the performances are described as full of emotion and storytelling, which indicates I must convey the acting of the arias to their fullest. I also must show this with my body, tell the music's story with my body and voice combined. For one of the performances, I croak, which shows I am flawed, but also very embarrassed.

#### E. Dialogue and Language

1. Are there differences in language from one character to another which tend to clarify characterization? There are no differences in language in the actual script, but there are characters from different parts of the world (Greece, Italian and France).

2. Does your character speak with any dialect or use a particular regionalism in his/her speech? Explain.: I speak with a Southern European Accent (Greek) with flavors of Italian and French from spending time in those countries. Specifics of the dialect are:  
-Does not gesture very much, has perfect posture, speaks with formal language; well spoken, very classy, intelligent, talks a lot, speaks several different languages (English, Italian, French and Greek), very smooth, legato speech, attractor state for speaking voice is lower in pitch, but has up and down range, very Expressive, her dialect is a mixture of all of the languages she speaks, French “pouty” lips; forward facial structure and dentalization, Italian rhythm and dentalization, British RP drops the “r” at the ends of words and open  $\Lambda$ , and Dark and rich Greek ( $\alpha$ ). The Consonant Changes in IPA are: t and d – dentalize,  $\text{ər}$  --  $\text{ə}$  (Drop the “r” at the ends of words).  $\text{ʒr}$  --  $\text{ʒ}$  The Vowel and Dipthong Changes:  $\text{aɪ}$  --  $\text{ɑ}$ ,  $\text{æ}$  --  $\text{ɑ}$ ,  $\text{eɪ}$  --  $\text{ɛ}$ ,  $\text{ʌ}$  --  $\text{ʌ}$  (open and dropped).

3. Are there any factors in the character's age, social status, education, or health that will require a change from your "normal" speaking voice? Explain. Yes. I (Shelley) am a 24-year old Caucasian, middle class, down to earth, musical theatre artist, actress, classical singer, teacher, girl from Kentucky. I am playing a 53-year old, upper-class, European, opera singer,



divorced woman of Greece. I need to change the pitch of my speaking voice (lower) and speak with a dialect. I need to get rid of my Kentucky mannerisms in my speech -- not speak so high and youthful, and speak a lot slower. Maria's high-class persona and assertive behavior causes her to speak a little slower and with importance. I need not to move as much and sit still. I need to be more specific with my movements and my voice. Maria is very well-spoken, I (Shelley) often say anything on my mind; sometimes it sounds good, and sometimes it does not. I think and speak very quickly; Maria is the opposite.

#### V. MOTIVATING FORCE/DESIRE, OBJECTIVES, INTENTIONS - WHAT? & WHY?

A. What is the motivating force/desire of your character? (What drives your character throughout the play?):

1. What do you want? To right all of the wrong accusations that have been made about me in the past. To show the public what a great singer/actor I am.
2. What will you, or do you, do to get it? I will talk about my music, talk about my process, sing, explain my situations, defend myself, tell stories and experiences. I will thrill audiences, show wisdom, show class, show character, get excited, keep composure, be well spoken, show compassion.

B. Obstacles - What element (in the other person, yourself, or the situation) impedes or prevents you from accomplishing your intentions? The paparazzi making harsh and untrue accusations about me, the public, Mr. Caloni asking questions about my personal life. It makes me very uncomfortable to talk about my ex-husband and Onasis. I become very guarded, and I am not confident. I want to get angry, but I must keep my cool.

1. How do you deal with the obstacles? Take deep breaths, think before I speak, speak with confidence and class, sing and explain my side of the story. I show passion. I speak longer about music and acting than I do about my personal life.
2. What creates the conflict in you? Hearing wrong accusations about myself as an artist and my personal life. Hearing the press talking more about my sex life than my performances. Seeing stories about me getting sick at performances and condemning me as a singer. I got sick at performances less than any of my peers, but the press finds it more interesting to write about my failures. Hypocrisy. Disrespectfulness.
3. When does the obstacle arise from you? When Mr. Caloni asks me questions about my personal life. I do not handle the situation well.
4. What responses from the other characters or situation do you expect and not get? I answer a question about my personal life with Onasis with finalization. The subject is finished and it's time to move on, yet Mr. Caloni still asks me another question.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: ARIA ANALYSIS

Title of the Aria: O Mio Babbino Caro (Oh, My Dear Papa)

Name of the opera: *Gianni Schicchi*, which is a part of three operas called *Il Trittico* (Simon).

Name of the Composer/Lyricist: Giacomo Puccini (Simon).

Year of Original Production: *Gianni Schicchi* premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1918 (Simon).

Translation of the Aria:

O mio babbino caro,	Oh my dear father,
mi piace, è bello bello,	I like him, he is very handsome.
vo'andare in Porta Rossa	I want to go to Porta Rossa
a comperar l'anello!	to buy the ring!
Si, si, ci voglio andare!	Yes, yes, I want to go there!
E se l'amassi indarno,	And if my love were in vain,
andrei sul Ponte Vecchio	I would go to Ponte Vecchio
ma per buttarmi in Arno!	and throw myself in the Arno!
Mi struggo e mi tormento,	I am pining and I am tormented,
O Dio! Vorrei morir!	Oh God! I would want to die!
Babbo, pietà, pietà!	Daddy, have mercy, have mercy!
Babbo, pietà, pietà!	Daddy, have mercy, have mercy! ("The Aria Database").

Brief Synopsis of the Plot:

The Opera takes place in Florence, Italy in 1299. A rich man, Buoso Donati died and his relatives, Cousin Zita and her nephew Renuccio, are searching for his last will and testament in hopes he has left behind a fortune for them. There has been a rumor that Donati has left his entire estate to the local apothecary. Renuccio finds the will and agrees to read it if Zita will allow him to marry Lauretta, daughter of Schicci. The Schicci's are of lower social status than the Donati's because they are new to Florence. Zita agrees Renuccio can marry whomever he chooses as long as Donati has left her a huge fortune. Renuccio reads the will to find out that Donati has left his

estate to the local apothecary. Zita refuses to allow Lauretta and Renuccio to be married.

Lauretta and Schicci come to the wake of Donati. The relatives do not appear to be mourning Donati's death, so Schicci assumes he is still alive. When Schicci discovers he is dead and the relatives are behaving this way over the will, he is disgusted. Renuccio begs Schicci to talk to his aunt Zita about marrying Lauretta, but Schicci refuses because of his selfish family. Lauretta sings "O Mio Babbino Caro" to convince her father to talk to Zita. Schicci agrees to get a notary to come up with a new will. Schicci divides all of Donati's assets among the family. Each family member bribes Schicci for a portion of the will. He takes the family's bribes and comes up with a new will. He divides the assets accordingly and leaves him with the house. The relatives are furious and storm out. However, there is no problem with Lauretta and Renuccio getting married anymore (Simon).

#### Brief Character Analysis:

Lauretta is a 21-year old girl who lives with her father in Florence. She is madly in love with Renuccio, a wealthy young man, age 24, who lives with his Aunt Zita. Her strongest desire is to marry Renuccio. However, because of her social status, they cannot marry. She tells her father she would want to die if she cannot marry Renuccio. She is very young, innocent, and passionate. She is very sure of her love. She says she will throw herself in the Arno if her love were not true for Renuccio. She does not care about his money; she is in love with him.

#### Music Analysis:

"O Mio Babbino Caro" is in Ab Major, which is a very warm, bright and tender key. The key of the aria works wonderfully for the aria because Lauretta is speaking one-on-one with her father. The key signature is 6/8, which is like a waltz. The tempo is romantic, even and never

changes. The dynamics crescendo and decrescendo very smoothly throughout the entire aria. The dynamics represent the rollercoaster of emotions Laretta is going through in the piece.

The first line “O Mio Babinno Caro” (My dear father) is in even and steady tempo. Laretta is trying to reason with her father, convince him to talk to her lover’s aunt. She is desperate to marry him, but she does not want to lose control of her emotions yet. She needs to remain calm and the slow, steady tempo with the mezzo-forte dynamics accentuate Laretta’s mood. The first line crescendos into a forte on the line “Mi piace e bello, bello” (I like him, he is very handsome). Laretta is describing her infatuation with Renuccio. The A5, which is high in the tessitura of the voice, the highest note sung in the piece, shows Laretta trying to gain her father’s attention; she wants him to listen to her. The next line decrescendos to a mezzo-forte on the line “Vo’andare in Porta Rossa a comperar l’anello!” (I want to go to Porta Rossa to buy the ring). The line “Si, si, ci voglio andare!” (Yes, yes, I want to go there!) remains at a mezzo-forte and represents a charming moment for Laretta. The “Si, si” (with the breath in between) in a speech quality register is incredibly conversational and poignant. That line crescendos to a forte on more dramatic subject matter “E se l’amassi indarno” (And if my love were in vain,).

The next line stays in the higher register of the voice to represent the severity of the situation “andrei sul Ponte Vecchio ma per buttarmi in Arno!” (I would go to Ponte Vecchio and throw myself in the Arno!) The higher register of the voice almost represents a yelling and desperation. When we are heated in our daily conversation, we often speak louder to make our position heard. Puccini did the same for Laretta. The dynamics decrescendo to a piano on “ma per buttarmi in Arno” (and throw myself in the Arno). The quieter dynamics represent the solemn nature of death; Laretta would die if she threw herself in the Arno. Also, the quieter

dynamic is a great contrast between forte; quiet also is able to hold people's attention. The line, of course, crescendos to a forte on "Mi struggo e mi tormento" (I am pining and I am tormented) in a higher register of the voice. Laretta is being very dramatic here, and Puccini writes fourths from E5 up to A5 to represent the range of emotions Laretta is experiencing.

The range of emotions and heightened drama represented earlier in the piece are soon contrasted by the pianissimo, prayerful moment "O Dio!" (Oh God!). The pianissimo dynamic in a high tessitura of the voice gives an angelic, innocent quality to the soprano voice. The next line crescendos to a mezzo-piano "Vorrei morir!" (I would want to die!).

The second to last line of the piece crescendos from a mezzo-piano to a mezzo-forte and then decrescendos to a piano on "Babbo, pietà, pietà!" (Daddy, have mercy, have mercy!). The assortment of dynamics represents the final tactics Laretta is using on her father. She sings "pieta" on an A5, crescendoing and decrescendoing on a half note. The A5 is the highest note of the piece, and the dynamic markings indicate the depth of her sadness. Laretta repeats the line "Babbo, pietà, pietà!" (Daddy, have mercy, have mercy!). This line is in a speechlike quality register of the voice. The singer would use more chest tones to produce the sound. This is Laretta's final plea with her father to have mercy on her; she is speaking to him in her calm, speaking voice. Nothing is heightened. It is a very simple and honest ending.

The text to this aria is very straightforward; there is not a lot of subtext. It is very different from musical theatre lyrics where a lot of what the character is feeling is unsaid; musical theatre lyrics are rich with subtext. She is saying everything she feels. The lyrics are incredibly honest and at a high point of emotion. Her thoughts are not long-winded and her sentences are short. The shorter sentences help convey her distress. When people are distressed,

they often are so upset, they are not well-spoken, and they say everything that comes to mind.

She was not planning on giving this speech to her father; she is thinking as each breath mark is indicated in the music. The lyrics are somewhat melodramatic because she is saying she is “tormented” and she would rather die than not marry Rennuccio. She also states that if her love were in vane, she would throw herself in the Arno. She is passionate, but obviously very upset by the idea that she cannot marry the love of her life.

Maria’s career:

Maria never played this role, but she is extremely famous for her dramatic, sensitive and specific interpretation of “O Mio Babbino Caro”.

Title of the Aria: L'Amour Est Un Oiseau Rebelle (Habanera Aria)

Name of the opera: *Carmen*, French Opera Comique (Simon).

Name of the Composer: Georges Bizet (Simon).

Name of Librettists: Henri Meihac and Ludovic Halevy (Simon).

Year of Original Production: March 3, 1875 (Simon).

Translation of the Aria:

L'amour est un oiseau rebelle	Love is a rebellious bird
que nul ne peut apprivoiser,	that nobody can tame,
et c'est bien en vain qu'on l'appelle,	and you call him quite in vain
s'il lui convient de refuser.	if it suits him not to come.
Rien n'y fait, menace ou prière,	Nothing helps, neither threat nor prayer.
l'un parle bien, l'autre se tait:	One man talks well, the other keeps silent;
Et c'est l'autre que je préfère,	it's the other one that I prefer.
Il n'a rien dit mais il me plaît.	He said nothing, but I like him.
L'amour! L'amour! L'amour! L'amour!	Love! Love! Love! Love!
L'amour est enfant de Bohème,	Love is a gypsy's child,
il n'a jamais, jamais connu de loi;	it has never, ever, recognized the law;
si tu ne m'aimes pas, je t'aime	if you love me not, then I love you;
si je t'aime, prends garde à toi!	if I love you, you'd best beware!
Si tu ne m'aimes pas,	if you love me not,
Si tu ne m'aimes pas, je t'aime!	if you love me not, then I love you
Mais, si je t'aime,	but if I love you,
Si je t'aime, prends garde à toi!	if I love you, you'd best beware!
Si tu ne m'aimes pas,	if you love me not,
Si tu ne m'aimes pas, je t'aime!	if you love me not, then I love you
Prends garde à toi!	You'd best beware! ("The Aria Database").

Brief Synopsis of the Plot:

Carmen is a Spanish gypsy who lives for enticing men with her sexuality. She goes from man to man and never settles down to fall in love. Men are infatuated with her. The men ask Carmen when she is going to choose a lover. She sings L'Amour Est Un Oiseau Rebelle (Habanera Aria). She eventually rips off her bodice and throws herself at Don Jose, the Corporal of the Dragoons. She convinces him to fall in love with her. Carmen causes Don Jose to lose his



respect and dignity. Don Jose stoops to the lowest of the low and becomes a gypsy with Carmen.

Later in the opera, Don Jose accidentally stabs her in a bullfight and she dies (Simon).

Brief Character Analysis:

Carmen is sexy and she knows it. She is spontaneous, outgoing and does not like to follow rules. She knows men cannot resist her, and she uses this knowledge to her advantage.

Carmen does not know what to do with love; it makes her incredibly vulnerable and uncomfortable. She finds love for the first time in Don Jose.

Music Analysis:

“Habanera” begins with four measures of a simple, seductive tango. The opening vamp is low in pitch, which adds a sensual, flirtatious quality to the opening of the piece. The staccato pitches on the opening and closing of each phrase adds a bit of mystery to the listener. The 2/4 rhythm allows for the fast, tango-like melody line for the singer.

The opening lines, “L'amour est un oiseau rebelle que nul ne peut apprivoiser, et c'est bien en vain qu'on l'appelle, s'il lui convient de refuser” (Love is a rebellious bird that nobody can tame and you call him quite in vain if it suits him not to come) is very light, which gives an enticing quality. The eighth note rhythms allow the singer to keep the sound light, because they cannot stay on a single note for a long period of time. The sixteenth note triplet on “peut” and “vient” gives an ornamentation to the tango rhythm and transports us to Spain; this forces us to believe we are listening to a Spanish gypsy even though she is singing in French.

The next lines, “Rien n'y fait, menace ou prière, l'un parle bien, l'autre se tait: Et c'est l'autre que je préfère, Il n'a rien dit mais il me plaît” (Nothing helps, neither threat nor prayer. One man talks well, the other keeps silent; it's the other one that I prefer. He said nothing, but I

like him) are very similar in rhythm and melody to the opening lines, except there are slides going into each of the phrases. The slides add a crescendo into a different dynamic and add smoothness to the strict eighth note, tango rhythm. The singer crescendos to a forte and immediately decrescendos back to a mezzo-piano. The change of dynamics shows the spontaneity and impulsive behavior of “Carmen”.

The line, “L'amour! L'amour! L'amour! L'amour!” (Love! Love! Love! Love!) builds and crescendos into a forte on an E5. The E5 is the highest note sung thus far throughout the aria, which shows intensity of the word “L'amour”. The last “La mour” decrescendos to a piano, and the aria returns to the tango rhythm and flirtatious quality. The constant changing of dynamics represents Carmen toying with men's emotions with her sex appeal; she is using several different tactics to lure men.

The last lines return to a very similar melodic and rhythmic line as the beginning: “L'amour est enfant de Bohème, il n'a jamais, jamais connu de loi; (Love is a gypsy's child, it has never, ever, recognized the law;) si tu ne m'aimes pas, je t'aime si je t'aime, prends garde à toi! (if you love me not, then I love you; if I love you, you'd best beware!) Si tu ne m'aimes pas, Si tu ne m'aimes pas, je t'aime! Mais, si je t'aime, Si je t'aime, prends garde à toi! Si tu ne m'aimes pas, (if you love me not, if you love me not, then I love you but if I love you, if I love you, you'd best beware! if you love me not). The lyrics are very repetitive and very flirtatious. There is a call and response section between the melodic line the singer is singing and the accompaniment on the lines “garde a toi!” and “t'aime!” The orchestration is adding an explanation point for the singer, driving the point home.

The last lines: “Si je t'aime, si je t'aime, prends garde à toi! (If I love you, if I love you,

You'd best beware!) crescendos to a forte and a fermata. This is the only fermata in the aria thus far. This aria is very quick-paced for most of the time, so it is fascinating that there is a hold. The slowing of the tempo is on the phrase, "You'd best beware". Then the last phrase, "prends garde a," is sung a capella ending on the word "toi" back with accompaniment. There is an ornamentation on the word "garde" which means to keep. Carmen wants the men to pay attention to that line, thus why it is sung at a slower tempo, a capella, and with a fermata and an ornamentation.

Maria's career:

Callas is one of the few operatic sopranos who can sing the mezzo-soprano role of "Carmen", Her voice had deep, dark, rich, chest tones that were appropriate for mezzo roles. She also possessed the acting ability and personality to play the vivacious role. However, Callas never played the role onstage, but she did a recording of it. She performed this aria when she was 13 on a cruise ship as her first professional singing gig. She has sung the aria in many concert venues. John Adoin said:

"In Callas's voice, Carmen became a bright, defiant, healthy creature. She was also very French in attitude, given Callas's fastidiousness of voice and language. More than any other, Callas made one feel Don Jose was (in Carmen's mind) an interlude in which her vanity was wounded rather than a culminating affair in which her destiny was sealed. Of course, singing Carmen on record is a different matter from acting her onstage – in a very real sense, it avoids the part's ultimate challenge. Yet so luminous is Callas's recorded Carmen that it remains compelling on its own" (Adoin).

Title of the Aria: Mi chiamono Mimi

Name of the opera: *La Boheme*

Name of the Composer: Giacomo Puccini (Simon).

Name of Librettists: Luigi Illica and Giusseppe Giacosa (Simon).

Year of Original Production: February 1 1896 (Simon).

Translation of the Aria:

Mi chiamano Mimi,	They call me Mimi,
il perché non so.	And why I don't know.
Sola, mi fo	Alone, I make
il pranzo da me stessa.	Lunch for myself the same.
Non vado sempre a messa,	I do not always go to mass,
ma prego assai il Signore.	But I pray a lot to the Lord.
Vivo sola, soletta	I live alone, alone.
là in una bianca cameretta:	There is a white little room
guardo sui tetti e in cielo;	I look upon the roofs and heaven.
ma quando vien lo sgelo	By when the thaw comes
il primo sole è mio	The first sun is mine
il primo bacio dell'aprile è mio!	The first kiss of April is mine!
Germoglia in un vaso una rosa...	Rose buds in a vase
Foglia a foglia la spio!	Leaf and leaf I watch it!
Così gentile il profumo d'un fiore!	That gentle perfume of a flower!
Ma i fior ch'io faccio,	But the flowers that I make
Ahimè! non hanno odore.	Ah me! they don't have odor! ("The Aria Database").

Brief Synopsis of the Plot:

*La Boheme* takes place in Paris, France in 1830. The plot centers on a group of Bohemian artists who are best friends. Mimi (a flower maker and seamstress) and Rodolfo (a poet) fall instantly love. However, they cannot be together because Mimi has tuberculosis and is about to die. Rodolfo does not want to fall in love with her only for her to die. However, Mimi becomes very sick towards the end of the opera and Rodolfo stays by her side. Mimi dies in Rodolfo's arms (Simon).

### Brief Character Analysis:

Mimi is a poor flower-seller with tuberculosis. She is independent. She lives alone and gets used to it. However, she gets lonely; she does not have very many friends or family. She is a very simple woman. She tries to make selling flowers artistic. She is timid and shy. Knocking on Rodolfo's door to light her candle was one of the boldest moves she has ever made. She is very classy. She is very sensitive, but strong. She falls in love quickly with Rodolfo and loves his bohemian friends. In her dying days, she clings on to Rodolfo; she needs him to be there with her.

### Music Analysis:

This piece is written like a conversation both in rhythm and in melodic line. The rhythm of the piece contains many eighth note rests, which represent the pause in conversation. The melodic line goes up and down in inflection, which represents the range of an expressive speaking voice. The accompaniment is relatively minimal, often times eighth note chords, to give almost a recitative quality to the opening, more conversational part of the aria; there are moments with no accompaniment to allow the singer a bit of freedom with the text. There are a variety of dynamics, which show the range of emotion throughout the aria. Often times, Mimi is simply talking about mundane things, such as the fact that she does not know why she is called Mimi. In those sections, she is singing at a quieter or speechlike quality voice.

The first line, "Mi chiamano Mimi, I'l perche non so," begins with a "lento," which is a music direction for slow. This line is incredibly free and conversational for the singer. Puccini separates the thoughts "Il perche" (And why?) and "non so" (I don't know), which makes it somewhat flirtatious and playful. Puccini separates the thoughts with the

accompaniment by having “Il per” without accompaniment and having an eighth note chord come in on “che” of “Il perche” to accent the end of the thought. Very similarly, Puccini does the same thing with “non so” having the chord coming in on “so” to accent the end of the phrase. The dynamics of the opening line are at a pianissimo to represent the conversational and lighthearted part of the aria.

The next line, “Sola, mi fo il pranzo da me stessa. non vado sempre a messa” (Alone, I make lunch for myself the same. I do not always go to mass) is at *allegretto moderato* tempo, which means at a moderately quick pace. The tempo is moderately quick because Mimi is simply saying ordinary day-to-day things about herself. The accompaniment follows Mimi’s melody line on staccato notes. The staccato notes give the section a very flirtatious and lighthearted feel. The melody line is at a speechlike quality range for a soprano starting at an A4 and going up to an E5. This is a decent range to show the expressiveness of Mimi’s speaking voice.

The line, “ma prego assai il Signore” (But I pray a lot to the Lord), slows down to *poco rallentando* (define) with minimal accompaniment of eighth note chords. The eighth note chords accent where the stress is on each word, and there is an eighth note chord to accent the punctuation at the end of the sentence. Puccini slows down here because Mimi is trying to emphasize that she is very faithful even though she does not go to church. The lack of accompaniment and pianissimo dynamics shows the reverence in the Lord.

The line, “Vivo sola, soletta” (I live alone, alone), is sung without any accompaniment and has the tempo marking of “*piacere col canto*,” which means at the singer’s pleasure. The lack of accompaniment gives a very solemn, stark and alone feel to the aria. Also, it makes the singer’s voice exposed and vulnerable. This is the most vulnerable line sung in the aria so far.

She is not only confessing to Rodolfo that she lives alone, but one can hear in the melodic line and the rhythm that she does not like to be alone. If a singer plays to the end of the opera here, one can hear the idea that Mimi will die alone. Mimi is scared to die alone.

The next line, “là in una bianca cameretta: guardo sui tetti e in cielo (There is a white little room I look upon the roofs and heaven), goes back to “a tempo.” Arguably, Mimi became vulnerable around Rodolfo; she is uncomfortable so she quickly changes the subject to something more common. The accompaniment aids the melody line with staccato notes except on the line “e’ in cielo” (and heaven). The accompaniment is three eighth note chords accenting each word. The tempo slows down to a rallentando. Arguably, the “heaven” Mimi is reflecting on is her thinking about going there since she is about to die. The line “e’ in cielo” is melodically very similar to “vivo sola, soletta”. The lines have a connection to one another. After the line “e’ in cielo,” there is a fermata over a quarter rest. This held pause for the singer and accompaniment represents a turning point in the aria. The aria takes a more serious, sentimental tone after the rest. The singer may use the rest to breathe in her new thought. The rest represents a realization Mimi is having through her conversation.

The next line, “ma quando vien lo sgelo il primo sole è mio” (By when the thaw comes the first sun is mine), begins on a *Andante molto sostenuto*, which means “look up.” A note for the singer is “con molta anima,” which means with much expression, and the dynamics are *pianissimo*. It is fascinating that Puccini put “con molta anima” and *pianissimo* dynamics on the same line because often times singers take quieter dynamics mean less effort. The accompaniment aids the melody line, but instead of staccato notes, there are chords and they are played legato. The accompaniment aids the singer by growing in intensity and speed little by

little. The singer crescendos with each measure to a fortissimo.

The line, “il primo bacio dell'aprile è mio!” (The first kiss of April is mine!), begins with the accompaniment building up to the line (which one?) with four eighth note chords that are accented to a crescendo to fortissimo dynamics. The words “bacio dell’a” (the first kiss) are accented and on quarter notes in melody line and in the accompaniment. The first kiss is very romantic, something typically cherished in a new relationship. Mimi is talking about a fantasy of spring romance. The word “è” (is) is on an accented A5 eighth note, which is the highest note in the aria. I find this fascinating that Puccini wanted to use such intensity in the voice on the word “is”. Puccini puts great importance on the word “is” by making it accented. The word “mio” (mine) is not accented and decrescendos to a mezzo-piano. Puccini makes the word “mio” (mine) start on an E5 and go down to a D5, which makes the word have a downward inflection.

The next line, “Germoglia in un vaso una rosa... Foglia a foglia la spio!” (Rose buds in a vase Leaf and leaf I watch it!), goes back to conversational tempo from the beginning and the dynamics are pianissimo. The range of the melody line is in a speechlike quality for the singer ranging from an E4-D5, which sits comfortable in a soprano range. The singer will be able to convey she is in a more casual conversation by singing this range. The accompaniment aids the melody line and helps grow in intensity by each measure. The line, “foglia a foglia” (leaf by leaf), is on two triplets, which aids the poetry of the language she is using; the triplets show text painting of the leaves falling on the ground.

The line, “Cosi gentile il profumo d'un fiore!” (That gentle perfume of a flower!), begins on a forte and crescendos to a fortissimo by the end of the line. The line uses the word “gentile” in the text, but the melodic line and intensity in the accompaniment make it far from gentle. The



strength in the line indicates Mimi's excitement for her metaphor and how she is getting lost in her own thoughts. There is a tenuto on the "mo" of "perfumo" and the accompaniment follows the singer. The tenuto is also on an A5, which is a high register of the singer's voice. Mimi is thinking about the beautiful romantic smell of the rose, and she lingers on the thought before she finishes the sentence.

The last line, "Ma i fior ch'io faccio, Ahimè! non hanno odore." (But the flowers that I make Ah me! they don't have odor!), goes back to a piano dynamic and decrescendos to a pianissimo by the end of the line. This line is a transition from Mimi getting swept up in the emotion of her fantasy to reality; she is reflecting on the flowers she makes and comparing it to her life. Her life consists of being alone and working an ordinary job; she does not have the romance she desires. Her flowers are not romantic like real rose; they do not even smell. The melody line is in a speechlike quality range to convey Mimi discussing her thoughts out loud; when one discusses their thoughts out loud, they do not shout them, they are at a conversation level. The line "Ahimè!" (ah me!) has a trill which gives it more excitement and spontaneity. When one says the phrase "Ah me!" in real life, they are usually surprised or excited about something and the trill accentuates the excitement emotion Mimi is feeling.

Mimi is able to be very straightforward when talking of mundane things such as her name, what she does, and where she lives. The minute she is talking about something important, about being lonely, about the fear of dying alone, she begins to talk in poetry. She compares her life to the spring, how she longs for that happiness. But she does not point blank tell Rodolfo she is unhappy and lonely in her life; she speaks in metaphors. She catches herself wrapped up in emotion and goes back to talking about mundane things. She tells him she has been a burden to

his evening. She is not used to someone to listen to her thoughts.

Maria's career:

Maria never played the role of Mimi onstage; however, she did a recording of the role. There are several ingénue actresses who sing roles like Mimi, so Maria never received this part. Also, she was an unconventional choice because of her strength on stage; she was arguably best suited for stronger women roles. However, John Adoin says, regarding her recording of Mimi: "Her portrayal is affecting" and "Looking at her story and music dispassionately, if such is possible, she forthright and of a single color. Yet within this confine, Puccini fashioned a nature so sympathetic that Mimi makes the most direct appeal possible to a listener's sensibilities. This appeal is what Callas so thoroughly exploited" (Adoin).

Title of the Aria: Vissi D'Arte

Name of the opera: *Tosca*

Name of the Composer: Giacomo Puccini (Simon).

Name of Librettists: Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa (Simon).

Year of Original Production: January 14, 1900 (Simon).

Translation of the Aria:

Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore, □	I lived for art, I lived for love,
non feci mai male ad anima viva! □	I never did harm to a living soul!
Con man furtiva □	With a secret hand
quante miserie conobbi aiutai. □	I relieved as many misfortunes as I knew of.
Sempre con fè sincera	Ever in true faith
□ la mia preghiera □	My prayer
ai santi tabernacoli salì. □	Rose to the holy shrines.
Sempre con fè sincera □	Ever in true faith
diedi fiori agl'altar. □	I gave flowers to the altar.
Nell'ora del dolore	In the hour of grief
perché, perché, Signore,	Why, why, Lord,
perché me ne rimunerì così? □	Why do you reward me thus? □
Diedi gioielli della Madonna al manto,	I gave jewels for the Madonna's mantle,
e diedi il canto agli astri, al ciel, □	And songs for the stars, in heaven,
che ne ridean più belli. □	That shone forth with greater radiance.
Nell'ora del dolor □	In the hour of grief
perché, perché, Signor, □	Why, why, Lord
ah, perché me ne rimunerì così?	Ah, why do you reward me thus? (“The Aria Database”).

Brief Synopsis of the Plot:

The plot centers around Tosca, who is a beautiful singer in love with an artist, Cavaradossi. Cavaradossi is painting a picture of Mary in the church, thinking of Tosca. The portrait of the woman is obviously inspired by Tosca. Angelotti, a Roman political prisoner, hides in the church in which Cavaradossi is painting. Angelotti explains he is going to put on women's clothing his sister left him in the church as a disguise and escape. Cavaradossi agrees not to tell anyone. Tosca enters, sees the painting and claims that Cavaradossi was not inspired by

her but by another woman. Cavaradossi assures Tosca she is his muse. Cavaradossi and Angelotti leave the church. Scarpia, the chief of police come in the church with suspicions that Angelotti was in there. He convinces Tosca that Cavaradossi has been unfaithful to her in hopes that she will lead him to Cavaradossi and Angelotti.

Spoletta, Scarpia's assistant, has arrested Cavaradossi. The police question Cavaradossi about Angelotto's whereabouts and Cavaradossi will not confess. The police beat Cavaradossi. Scarpia convinces Tosca to tell him Angelotti's whereabouts. Cavaradossi is in prison about to be executed. Scarpia tells Tosca he will make a deal with her that if she sleeps with him, he will set Cavaradossi free. This proposition inspires a prayer, the aria, "Vissi D'Arte". Spoletta informs Scarpia that Angoleti has killed himself. Scarpia says Cavaradossi will be killed in the morning. Tosca is extremely reluctant. Tosca eventually agrees to the conditions as long as a contract is drawn. Tosca wants to make sure she and Cavaradossi will be safe. Scarpia says they will stage a fake death for Cavaradossi. The two sign the document. Scarpia comes to Tosca to make love to her, and she stabs him to death. She places a crucifix on his body and candles around him. Tosca grabs the document that insured his fake death.

Tosca brings Cavaradossi the document that shows he will have a fake death. She tells him to be a very good actor. The firing squad shoots at him and he falls. Tosca believes Cavaradossi has done a beautiful acting performance. However, he is dead; Scarpia has betrayed his word. Tosca is devastated. The police discover that Tosca has killed Scarpia. Spoletta grab Tosca and she releases from their grip and hurls herself over the edge of Castel Sant Angelo (Simon).

### Brief Character Analysis:

Tosca is a dramatic singer who is in a passionate love affair with the artist Cavaradossi. She is a very strong, smart and talented woman. She is faithful to the Lord. In a desperate situation, the person she wants to sort her thoughts with is the Lord. She even questions him because of the horrible situation; however, in the end, we know she is faithful. She is smart to draw a contract that says the police will keep her and her lover safe. She has the courage to kill a man who is trying to rape her. Even after she kills him, she lays a crucifix on him.

### Music Analysis:

The opening line, “Vissi d’arte, vissi d’amore, non feci mai male ad anima viva!” (I lived for art, I lived for love, I never did harm to a living soul!), is very similar to a recitative; it prepares the listener for the aria proper. The piece begins in 2/4 with a tempo *Andante lento appassionato*, which means moderately slow with passionate emotion. The dynamics for the singer begin on a piano and the accompaniment begins on a pianissimo. The melodic line decrescendos to a pianissimo and melodically goes down to a F4 on the word “soul”. Arguably, Puccini made this choice to use pianissimo dynamics to express the reverence of the word. Also, the F4 in a soprano’s voice is a chest voice note; the chest voice allows the singer to use a more raw, deeper, warmer and speechlike quality sound to the voice.

The line, “Con man furtiva quante miserie conobbi aiutai. (With a secret hand I relieved as many misfortunes as I knew of), begins very similarly to the opening line and then it crescendos to a forte on “quante”. There is an octave jump (A4 to A5) between the words “furtiva” and “quante”. Puccini expresses the line “quante miserie conobbi aiutai” (I relieved as many misfortunes as I knew of) with accented notes and triplets. The accented notes help

highlight the anguish Tosca is feeling. The triplets help show a change of inflection in speech; when one speaks, we change the rhythm and inflection in the middle of a sentence, especially when there is a heightened emotion.

The aria proper begins on the line, “Sempre con fè sincera la mia preghiera ai santi tabernacoli salì. Sempre con fè sincera diedi fiori agl’altar. (Ever in true faith my prayer rose to the holy shrines. Ever in true faith I gave flowers to the altar). The aria proper begins on piano dynamics and the tempo is “con grande sentimento,” which means with grand sentiment. The aria proper’s range at the beginning is G4-Eb5, which is the medium voice for the singer; it lives in the higher end of a speechlike quality voice for a soprano. The tempo is moderate and legato, which aids the lyrics. The lyrics are very solemn, reverent and prayerful, and the tempo helps illustrate that. On the word “altar” there is a decrescendo that also helps aid the delicateness and sincerity of the Lord; when a soprano decrescendos on a note that is relatively high like an Eb5, the sound disappears into a pure, church choir sound that is piercing and haunting to the ear.

In the line, “Nell’ora del dolore perché, perché, Signore, perché me ne rimunerì così?” (In the hour of grief why, why, Lord, why do you reward me thus?), Tosca begins questioning the Lord; questioning his choices for her and her fate. The accompaniment does not completely follow the singer in this line. The accompaniment acts as a separate character. The rhythm of the melody line has several triplets, which causes syncopation. The singer is off the main beat, which also illustrates Tosca’s frustration and lack of admiration for the Lord at this given time. The previous line is of the rhythm of a prayer, but this next line is frustrated conversation. Puccini has an upward inflection in the melody line on the word “così?,” which illustrates the question mark punctuation.

The next line returns to the more prayerful, reverent tempo “Diedi gioielli della Madonna al manto, e diedi il canto agli astri, al ciel, che ne ridean più belli.” (I gave jewels for the Madonna's mantle, and songs for the stars, in heaven, that shone forth with greater radiance.) The accompaniment acts as a separate character again by not simply aiding the melody line but aiding the emotion of the prayer; the accompaniment does not play the melody line in rhythm or in melody. The range is in a medium speechlike quality voice for the singer, and the rhythm is very legato.

The last line, “Nell’ora del dolor□ perché, perché, Signor, ah, perché me ne rimunerì così?” (In the hour of grief why, why, Lord ah, why do you reward me thus?), is Tosca’s final plea with the Lord. She has tried to be reverent, proving herself by all of her good deeds and showing her frustration. Now Tosca is being straightforward and blunt and asking the Lord a very direct question. Puccini separates the repetition of the word “perché, perché” with a breath. Also, each “perché” goes up in melodic line by a half step, which helps the growing intensity. The word “Signor” ends on a half note Bb5 at a forte, which is the highest note in the aria. The Bb5 on a forte shows a great intensity in the singer’s voice; almost as if Tosca is shouting at the Lord. The “ah” is a cry of desperation for Tosca and sung on an Ab5 beginning on a mezzo-forte that decrescendos to a G5 on a pianissimo. The decrescendo on the word “ah” represents Tosca’s heartbreaking crying and sobbing. Tosca asks one last time, “perché me ne rimunerì così?” (why do you reward me thus?), on a pianissimo dynamic. Tosca has calmed down, but she desperately wants to know why she cannot be with her lover. The last line has minimal accompaniment and the accompanist follows the singer. The tempo slows down and all the notes are accented. There is a rest before Tosca finishes the sentence. Tosca is so desperate she has to take a pause before

finishing her final thought with the Lord.

Maria's career:

Tosca was Maria's first professional role at the Athen's National Theatre when she was 17 years old. She played Tosca when she made her comeback at the MET after not performing for about three years. She received critical acclaim for her specific portrayal of this role. She played Tosca in Covent Garden in 1972, which was the last operatic role she played. John Adoin says: "Callas' Tosca was at its best a total theatrical experience. Though she captured the role's full-bodied emotion, it was the small brushstrokes of detail, which made her portrait so finished. As Tosca she highlighted childish aspects within the woman. The possibilities of contrast again fired Calla's imagination, for this Tosca was fearful of her love with Cavaradossi and fiercely protective of that same love in conflict with Scarpia. It was the interplay and mixture of these two aspects of character which made the woman rather the prima donna emerge and turned Callas's Tosca into so intimate an experience" (Adoin).



Title of the Aria: Vieni! T'affretta!

Name of the opera: *Macbeth*

Name of the Composer: Giuseppe Verdi (Simon).

Name of Librettist: Francesco Maria Piave (Simon).

Year of Original Production: March 14, 1847 (Simon).

Translation of the Aria:

Ambizioso spirito tu sei, Macbetto	Macbeth, you are an ambitious man.
Alla grandezza aneli ma sarai tu malvagio?	You want to be great, but will you be wicked?
Pien di misfatti è il calle dell potenza,	the way to the power is full of crimes,
E mal per lui	and plague on him
che il piede dubitoso vi pone, e retrocede!	that begins that way doubting and then goes back.
Vieni! t'affretta!	Come on! Hurry up!
Accendere ti vo' quel freddo core!	I will fire your cold heart!
L'audace impresa a compiere	I will make you able
Io ti darò valore.	to complete the bold undertaking.
Di Scozia a te promettono	The witches promise you
Le profetesse il trono...	the Scottish throne...
Che tardi?	What are you waiting for?
Accetta il dono, ascendivi a regnar.	Accept this gift! Ascend it and reign! ("The Aria Database").

Brief Synopsis of the Plot:

At the beginning of the opera, Macbeth has won great battle. He is regarded as a heroic individual. With all the attention he is receiving from his army, he begins striving for more and more power. His wife, Lady Macbeth, encourages Macbeth to gain a higher status, power over Scotland, and money. He begins doing whatever it takes to gain power, such as killing King Duncan. Lady Macbeth loses her mind because she feeds Macbeth's need for power. She becomes so completely mad that she kills herself. In the end, Macbeth is killed trying to seek power in unjust ways (Simon).

### Brief Character Analysis:

Lady Macbeth desires power, fame and passion. Her need for power consumes her life more than anything. She wants her husband to gain power. She becomes so consumed with these ideas that she becomes mentally insane. Eventually, she kills herself.

### Music Analysis:

The first lines, “Ambizioso spirito tu sei, Macbetto. Alla grandezza aneli ma sarai tu malvagio?” (Macbeth, you are an ambitious man. You want to be great, but will you be wicked?), are sung without accompaniment. This section is the recitative before the aria proper. It begins on an E5, which is a high register of a singer’s voice. It starts so high to grab the attention of the listener. The high register could represent speaking very loudly to someone. The line “tu sei Macbetto” begins on a G#4, which is in the chest voice for a soprano, to give it a more honest, from-the-heart feeling. Lady Macbeth is saying her husband’s name; his name is sacred and should have a gentle feel. The word “malvagio” (wicked) begins on a D#5, lingers on an F#5 half note and ends on an E5. I love that Verdi puts the stress of the word “va” on the half note to stress the rhythm of the language. The high register and amount of time spent on the word “malvagio” creates text painting; we can hear the wickedness in the singer’s voice.

The next lines of the recitative are *Pien di misfatti è il calle dell potenza, E mal per lui che il piede dubitoso vi pone, e retrocede!* (The way to the power is full of crimes, and plague on him that begins that way doubting and then goes back.) They have very limited accompaniment. The accompaniment consists of accenting notes that do not play the melody line but accentuate the mood of the piece. The accompaniment has the same rhythm as a witch is stirring a spell in her magic pot. You can hear Lady Macbeth plotting an evil plan, and the accompaniment helps

demonstrate that. Each individual thought Lady Macbeth is having is accented in the accompaniment by three chords. The three chords represent the punctuation of each thought. One of the many bel canto moments happens on the word “retrocede” (relegate). There is a sixteenth note ornamentation on the vowel “eh” beginning on a G5, going all the way to a C6 and down to a G4. The ornamentation on the word “retrocede” (to relegate) means Lady Macbeth is trying to convince Macbeth to delegate a major decision to her; this is very important, which is why there is so much attention given to the word for expression.

The first line of the aria proper begins with *Vieni! t'affretta! Accendere ti vo' quel freddo core! L'audace impresa a compiere* (Come on! Hurry up! I will fire your cold heart! I will make you able). The first word begins on a F5, which, similarly to the recitative, is very high in the singer's voice and evokes attention in the listener's ears. Throughout the opening lines there are several trills on the ends of words. The trills are there to express the excitement and expression in Lady Macbeth's voice. The line “Io ti darò valore (to complete the bold undertaking) builds with two trills in the singer's chest tones and crescendos to a B5. The phrase decrescendos with two ornamentations. There is a fermata on the “va” of “valore”. Verdi accents the natural rhythm of the language by lingering on the “va” of “valore”.

The line “Di Scozia a te promettono Le profetesse il trono...” (The witches promise you the Scottish throne...) accents the beginning of the sentence, the ending of the thought and the stress of each word. Lady Macbeth is addressing her point with much precision using the accented notes and staccato rhythm. There is an ornamentation on the word “trono,” which means “throne”. This is extremely important because Lady Macbeth wants Macbeth to take the Scottish throne; she wants the power. The ornamentation puts stress and importance on the word.

Lady Macbeth asks and answers this question several times in the aria: “Che tardi? Accetta il dono, ascendivi a regnar.” (What are you waiting for? Accept this gift! Ascend it and reign!) The first time she asks the question with a piano dynamic and crescendos to a fortissimo on the phrase “ascendivi a regnar”. The next time Lady Macbeth sings the line, she sings “accetta il dono” at a pianissimo and crescendos to a forte on the notes Gb5 to an Ab5 on “ascendivi a regnar”. Lady Macbeth is shouting to Macbeth to receive the throne. The gift is sacred, so she sings the gift at “a piano”, but the reign of the throne and its power is what she wants. One can hear the strength in the register of Lady Macbeth’s voice. The higher notes accentuate the drama of the situation. At the end of the aria, Lady Macbeth asks Macbeth one last time, “Che tardi,” and then she lets out a cry on “Ah”. The “Ah” is unaccompanied and begins with a sixteenth note run and ends on a slower eighth note run. The “Ah” is her cry of excitement and the ornamentation shows the range of her excited emotion going from an Ab4 to C6.

Maria’s career:

Maria Callas is known for her specific and dramatic interpretation of the iconic Shakespeare role. She was able to sing Verdi’s score with perfection while portraying a mentally insane woman. According to John Adoin, “Vieni! t’affretta” is a traditionally cast bel canto aria. Verdi used conventional means in “Vieni! t’afretta” as an exposition of Lady Macbeth’s strength”(Adoin).

Title of the Aria: Tu Vedrai

Name of the opera: *Il trovatore*

Name of the Composer: Giuseppe Verdi (Simon).

Name of Librettist: Leone Emanuele Bardare and Salvatore Cammarano (Simon).

Year of Original Production: May 2, 1855 (Simon).

Translation of the Aria:

Tu vedrai che amore in terra	You will see that never
Mai del mio fu piu forte;	there was on earth a love stronger than mine;
Vines il fato in aspra Guerra,	it won over destiny in bitter confrontation,
Vincera la stessa morte.	it will win even over death.
O col prezzo di mia vita	So it will, either I shall pay with my life
La tua vita io slavero,	to save yours,
O con te per sempre unita	or eternally united
Nella tomba io scendero	I shall go to the grave with you (“The Aria Database”).

Brief Synopsis of the Plot:

Lenora is a princess who is in love with the troubadour, Manrico. Count Di Luna is in love with Lenora and is very jealous of Manrico. Manrico has been sentenced to death, which devastates Lenora. Di Luna and Manrico duel over Lenora. Manrico wins the duel. Di Luna attempts to abduct Lenora to be with him, but Manrico takes her away so they can be together in love. Di Luna captures Manrico and takes him his (Di Luna's) camp. Lenora, upset that Manrico will die, poisons herself so she can die with him. They die in each other's arms (Simon).

Brief Character Analysis:

Lenora is intelligent, beautiful, strong, dramatic and passionate. She is in love with Manrico. Even though Di Luna is who she is supposed to be with, she does not settle for someone she does not love. She is a very honest person. She is so faithful and feels so strongly

for Manrico that she agrees to take her life if she cannot be with him. She is very loyal and she stands behind what she believes one hundred percent.

#### Music Analysis:

“Tu vedrai” begins with *sotto voce* (under the voice) and *pianissimo* dynamics. Lenora is extremely upset that her husband must die; she can barely speak, thus the quiet dynamics. Verdi accents specific vowels in each of the words to accentuate the rhythm of Italian language; the accent markings on these key vowels makes it sound conversational. There is a *crescendo* and then a *decrescendo* on the line “*Vin se’ il fato in a spraguerra*” (In this hour of doom supernatural). This dynamic marking shows the arc of the phrase and the height of Lenora’s emotions; her emotions are up and down, and the dynamics paint that picture for the listener.

The next section begins with “*nella tomba scendero*” (And with joy for thee I die!). There is a *fermata* on an A5, which is the highest note sung thus far. This A5, which is towards the top of a Soprano’s *tessitura*, represents a cry for help – an exclamation of desperation. There is another *fermata* on an E5. The two *fermatas* in this measure represent the singer’s control of the phrase; the singer needs to be incredibly expressive here. It makes sense there is a freedom on this phrase, because it means “And with joy for thee I die!” The phrase is the entire point of the aria. In the end, Lenora kills herself because she does not want to be with anyone but Manrico. She is inspired to kill herself after this aria. The line “And with joy for thee I die!” is what she is going to do, and she learns this throughout the aria.

The line, “*Con te per sempre unita, si nella tomba scendero*” (I’ll see the love I gave thee, with joy for thee I die!), is in a speechlike quality voice for a soprano ranging from an F5-

Db5. Verdi, again, accents the stresses of every word to further the conversation like quality.

Lenora is sorting through her thoughts; she is deciding to take her life.

The next section of the aria lives predominantly in the higher tessitura of the soprano voice. Lenora's thoughts are becoming more and more heightened. With each soaring high note, one can hear the pain, anguish and fear Lenora is feeling by choosing to take her life. The last line of this section, "per sempre, per sempre, unita nel la" (for thee, for thee I die, for thee I), builds with accented notes and a gradual crescendo. The accented notes and gradual crescendo represents Lenora's bottled up emotions about to explode.

Maria's career:

Lenora represents one of the many dramatic soprano leading ladies Callas is known for playing. John Adoin states:

"Travatore makes its way on sheer invention and vitality. Callas did more for Leonora in one sense than she did for Norma, for the Bellini heroine, however misused, was recognized as a role for a singer with a specific training and technique. But Verdi's Leonora is no less a bel canto figure, a fact decades of imprecise singing and a simplification of the music have hidden. Leonora's stylistic stance became obscured when a new Italian style of opera produced a new breed of vocal artist who sang the bel canto aspects of the role from a modern viewpoint. As Travatore's early nineteenth-century aspects glossed over, musically vagrant Leonora's became the norm. But Callas never concerned herself with the norm, and so she learned Leonora in the only way she knew how 'like a sponge,' absorbing every note and expression mark written by Verdi. Again, Callas's bel canto schooling uncovered a wealth of detail in Leonora's music. It was as if an old, romantic painting, beloved but dim, had been cleaned to its original tints. Of Verdi's ladies, Leonora is among the most melancholy, and this made her particularly ripe for Callas's personal mode of expression. Callas had a special empathy for wronged, unhappy women and though Leonora's character is of limited dimensions, it is a part filled with the sort of contrasts which lent Callas dramatic impetus. In *Travatore* she ranged through a variety of attitudes and emotions from the dreamlike (as a not too distant cousin of Bellini's sleepwalker) to the impassioned. Callas not only gave life to these qualities but wrapped them in a unique aura of mystery" (Adoin).

Title of the Aria: Ah! Non credea mirati.

Name of the opera: *La Sonnabula*

Name of the Composer: Vincenzo Bellini (Simon).

Name of Librettist: Felice Romani (Simon).

Year of Original Production: March 6, 1831 (Simon).

Translation of the Aria:

Ah, non credea mirarti  
si presto estinto, o fiore;  
passasti al par d'amore,  
che un giorno sol(o) duro.

Oh, I didn't believe to see you  
so quickly extinct, o flowers;  
you have passed away like love  
that one day only lasted.

Potria novel vigore  
il pianto mio recarti  
ma ravvivar l'amore  
il pianto mio, ah no, non puo.

Perhaps new life  
my tears will bring to you  
but to revive love  
my tears, o no, cannot. (“The Aria Database”).

Brief Synopsis of the Plot:

La Sonnabula means “the sleepwalker”. The opera is about a young woman named Amina who is about to be married to a farmer named Elivino. They are about to be married when the Lord of the castle, Rodolfo, comes to town to warn everyone there is a town phantom. The marriage is not completed. Later that night, Rodolfo sees Amina opening his window and coming into his castle. He concludes she is sleepwalking and she is probably the town phantom. The town is skeptical that she is not a phantom. However, Rodolfo proves she is innocent. The town sees Amina sleepwalking when she sings “Ah non credea mirati”. She discusses the ring Elvino is giving her. When she awakens from her sleep and she is in Elvino’s arms. The two marry (Simon).



### Brief Character Analysis:

Amina is an orphan and very innocent. She does not realize she sleepwalks. People accuse her of being a town terror, but she has an honest condition. She longs to get married to Elvino and have a family.

### Music Analysis:

The entire piece is very haunting and legato; there are no staccato or percussive moments in the aria. The aria is very legato because it is a sleepwalking scene; Amina is in a dream. The accompaniment is simple, legato and repetitive, which gives the piece a haunting, mysterious feel. The accompaniment is a character in the piece; it represents Amina's dreams as she sleeps because of its evocative nature and it keeps driving the piece.

The first line, "Ah, non credea mirarti si presto estinto, o fiore; passasti al par d'amore, che un giorno sol(o) duro" (Oh, I didn't believe to see you so quickly extinct, o flowers; you have passed away like love that one day only lasted), is very legato and contains many ornamentations. The most interesting ornamentation is on the word "fiore," which means flowers. Flowers are very romantic, and Amina is singing this aria to her fiancé. The flowers have an ornamentation, which draws attention to the word; Amina is elongating the word "flowers".

The next line, "Potria novel vigore il pianto mio recarti ma ravnivar l'amore il pianto mio, ah no, non puo" (Perhaps new life my tears will bring to you but to revive love my tears, o no, cannot), represents Amina breathing in a new thought; perhaps a new dream. The accompaniment is still repetitive and simple, but it has lost the haunting quality that was in the previous section. One can hear hope in the melody line because it is still legato, but not as many

ornamentations; the melody line is more straightforward. The most extensive ornamentation in the aria occurs at the end on the word “d’amor,” which means love. The ornamentation ranges from a G4 to an Ab5. There is a trill beginning on a B4 going up to an E5. The trill gives artistic freedom for the singer. It is my job to create a trill that conveys the emotional quality of the aria. The range shows importance of the word as well as the range of emotion that goes with an important word like “love”. It is important to elaborate on the word “love” because that is what Amina longs for most of all. She is asleep when she is singing and thoughts of love take over the thoughts.

Maria’s career:

Bellini was a Bel Canto composer, which was Callas’ specialty. Callas became La Scala’s “La Divinia” after playing the role of Lucia. John Adoin says, referring to Lucia in *La Sonnambula*, “She fashioned the part at the outset as an ingénue, not a soubrette, using what has been termed her “Little Girl Voice”. Callas showed a softer side of herself when playing this role. She was able to show a brighter side to her darker voice.

Title of the Aria: *Casta Diva*

Name of the opera: *Norma*

Name of the Composer: Vincenzo Bellini (Simon).

Name of Librettist: Felice Romani (Simon).

Year of Original Production: December 26 1861 (Simon).

Translation of the Aria:

*Casta Diva, che inargenti  
queste sacre antiche piante,  
a noi volgi il bel sembiante  
senza nube e senza vel...*

O pure Goddess, who silver  
These sacred ancient plants,  
Turn thy beautiful semblance on us  
Unclouded and unveiled... (“The Aria Database”).

Brief Synopsis of the Plot:

Norma is married to Polline, and they have two children. Polline is tired of being with Norma; he feels she is too old and decides he is in love with Adalgisa. She is an innocent, young virgin who is reluctant to leave with Polline. At the end of Act One, Adalgisa confesses her love to Norma. Norma contemplates killing their two children but decides not to. The government threatens to kill Polline for betraying his wife, but Norma insists it was her fault, too. The two die together (Simon).

Brief Character Analysis:

Norma is a very noble woman. She takes the institution of marriage very seriously. She is devastated when Polline wants a divorce. However, in public, Norma is able to keep composure. Norma is able to hear another woman confess her love to her husband and keep her cool. She is incredibly composed, poised and classy. She has angry and irrational thoughts when she is alone. However, she never acts on her irrational thoughts. In the end, she is very loyal to her husband and dies with him. She claims the failed marriage was both of their faults, not just Polline’s.

## Music Analysis:

This aria is Norma's prayer to her "Goddess". The lyrics are very reverent as Norma speaks to her "Goddess" in crisis. This "Goddess" could be the Virgin Mary, but it is not indicated that it is a Christian God.

When Norma says "Casta Diva" for the first time in the aria, there are ornamentations on the "a" vowel of "casta" and the "i" vowel of "diva". The ornamentations give the name importance. The accompaniment does follow the melody line, but also plays a repetitive underscoring of the melody line. The accompaniment is very simple, reverent, and comforting which complements the prayerful lyrics. The accompaniment acts as a separate character that shares the scene with Norma.

The next line, "che inargenti queste sacre antiche piante," (who silver these sacred ancient plants), has several ornamentations on the pure "eh" vowel on the words "che" and "queste". There is a trill on the "che" that is not written note for note; there is an indication for a trill from an A4 to D5, but it is not written out like the other ornamentations. The trill gives the singer freedom to put their personal touch on the piece. The trill can allow the beauty of the singer's voice to come through and show their individual emotion. Bellini is very specific with every ornamentation throughout the piece, except for this trill.

The next line, "a noi volgi il bel sembiante" (Turn thy beautiful semblance on us), uses accented notes going into an intricate run. The accented notes are on the vowel "ah" of "sembiante". The accented notes are A5s, which is the highest note of the aria so far. The accented A5 goes up a half step to a Bb5 on a fortissimo. After the Bb5, each strong beat is accented to show the pulse of the piece. The higher notes represent the intensity of the section of

the aria. Instead of Norma's reverent prayer, it is now a plea to her Goddess. The accented notes going down the scale after the Bb5 represent the resolution of the phrase. The accented notes help the singer take control of the tempo.

The last line is "senza nube e senza vel..." (Unclouded and unveiled...) and is more specific and holds intricate ornamentations on the pure "eh" vowel of "senza". There is an ornamentation on the word "senza" (unclouded) because arguably Norma wants her Goddess to give her a vision; she needs clear guidance. I love the use of the word "unclouded" because it indicates that right now Norma's life is clouded, hazy, and confusing. Her husband has admitted to cheating on her, and he is leaving her. Norma needs clear and specific advice; unclouded.

Maria's career:

The character of Norma is very similar to Maria Callas. She played the role of Norma more than any other role in her lifetime. Bellini was her favorite composer.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE JOURNAL

I am going into this rehearsal process overwhelmed and scared out of my mind. However, I am excited for the challenge and looking forward to bringing my words to life. I took playwriting my senior year of college because it scared me, so I'm excited to be writing again. I was in a job interview for a theatre and they asked me what scares me most in theatre. I told them starring in a one-woman show that I wrote. I wanted to challenge myself with my Masters Thesis project and this show will do it.

September 3:

Today, Peter discussed his initial staging, lighting and sound ideas. He believes the script is broken into three sections: the interview, flashbacks and talking to the audience. He wants to show the audience these three sections through specific staging and change of lighting. I was incredibly impressed with Peter's preparation. He has a great understanding of my script. I was so excited when he would discuss my script and the ideas he got from it. It made me confident in the script I wrote. He told me a couple things I needed to add to make things clearer. We did a read-through of the show so we could make sure to distinguish the three sections. The read-through was thrilling. For the first time throughout this process, I felt I had a real show. I could see my show coming alive with Peter's ideas and reading it aloud. Peter and I would bounce ideas off each other. It felt so good to collaborate with someone on this project. I have spent so much of this process alone. I also became very overwhelmed. What am I getting myself into? First, the script is lengthy and the arias are incredibly difficult. Second, I wrote the script in a speech pattern that is very unlike mine. I had a hard time reading some of the lines at times

because the dialogue is incredibly formal. I am going to have to spend every waking moment eating, living and breathing this show until I open. Bring on the challenge!

September 10:

Peter and I blocked the first three pages. Peter has broken the script up into four parts, which I believe is very smart. I think my script can be very overwhelming. Breaking it up into sections makes it more manageable. We blocked part one today. Peter first gave me the blocking of all three pages. Peter reiterated the idea that my body shifts for the interview process, when I speak to the audience and when I am having a flashback. Peter kept the blocking simple and specific, which I think is very effective. He kept reiterating that he did not want to overcomplicate things; he wants the audience to understand the story. I stumbled through the blocking with a couple of stops for minor adjustments. I ran through part one twice with music and once without music to give my voice a break.

The main note Peter kept giving me was to make sure to take my time in between each section (interview, talking to the audience and flashback). He said I need to give time for the audience to digest what they just saw and heard. Also, he told me to slow down and take my time. I have a tendency as an actor to not take pauses and rush over dialogue. Peter's note will be a big challenge for me. Peter is not giving me a lot of acting notes right now, which I like. I feel a great deal of freedom to try new things. Each time I ran through Part I, it was different. I was discovering new things about Maria each time. If Peter was bombarding me with acting notes right now, I would not have the freedom to play. I like having some creative freedom as an actor. I need to make the blocking comfortable in my body before I can worry too much about specific acting notes. When I was singing the arias, I discovered which arias I knew the translations better

than others. I need to bring my translations to rehearsals. I honestly thought I had a better understanding of some of the arias, and I really do not. I understand “Mi Chiamano Mimi” very well. I need to go over the “O Mio Babbino Caro” translation.

September 14:

Today Peter and I reviewed Part I blocking and blocked Part II. I found the blocking was becoming very predictable, which I liked. It’s simple and makes sense. We ran Part II twice, once with singing and once without. When I was running Part II, I find Maria rambling too much. There are many lines I can cut, but I’m not sure which lines yet. I told Peter after we blocked the show and started doing stumble throughs, I wanted him to make note of places to cut lines. He agreed saying that he felt there were a couple of moments during the interview sections of Part II that were getting lengthy. He said the dialogue was good, but I had already made my point. I’m looking forward to making the show a bit more concise.

I’m beginning to find a speaking voice for Maria. I’m playing a lot in rehearsal with her voice, and I began hearing glimmers of what I want for the final show. I play with vowel changes, getting rid of intrusive “r”s, playing with range and maturity. I have been trying to pay close attention to how I move my body. I am sitting up straight in my chair, trying to gesture as little as possible and walk with a purpose. I want my body to show strength, age and wisdom.

Musically, it helped a great deal to go over the meanings of the arias before rehearsal today. I was able to sing them and interpret. I was able to make many new emotional discoveries with the arias today, which was great. I find it hard at times to emotionally connect to these arias because they are not in English. I know the translations, but Italian and French are not my native language, so there is a distance with the foreign languages and me at times. I’m working on this.



September 16:

Today Peter and I finished blocking the whole show. Peter and I have begun to collaborate a lot on the blocking, which is fun. He comes to the rehearsal period with many ideas, and often times I elaborate on his original idea. Or Peter sees a moment in the show that I do not see and he accentuates it with blocking. I was especially pleased with Peter's blocking for the ending of the show. I never would have thought of it, and it gives the show some finality. Peter is beginning to give me vocal and acting notes, which is helpful. He told me to speak in a lower, solemn register for my last monologue to the audience. I really enjoyed this note. It gave me a chance to become vulnerable, which is something I struggle with as an actor.

Peter gave me ideas of where to cut my script, and I made notes. I also began to cut lines as I was rehearsing. Peter told me the areas I need to cut were in the interview section, which is the section I tend to ramble too much. I couldn't agree more. I need to cut lines from the interview section because I am not driving the story as much here. Peter said if the line is not driving the story, cut it. This is great advice.

I wrote this script with the intention of not dwelling on Maria's relationship with Onasis. I wanted to show Maria Callas as an artist. I did not spend a long time writing the sections dedicated to her personal life. However, right now, the sections written about her personal life are the best written. I am able to identify and relate to them because the sections are short, simple and to the point. I need to go back through my script and make certain interview sections like this. It was an incredibly productive rehearsal.

September 21:

Today Peter and I ran the entire show without music. I was able to ask any questions about blocking throughout the run, which was incredibly helpful. We would run the show in sections, and after we ran each section, we would stop and Peter would give me notes. I am really enjoying the idea of breaking up the show into sections; it makes it easier to manage and not so overwhelming. I loved that Peter would stop me after each section and give me notes, because sometimes his notes for a specific section could apply to the whole entire show, not just the section we were working on. Today I was impressed with how much of the dialogue I actually knew in Parts I and II. I caught myself in rehearsal putting my script down and reciting it from memory. With that said, I also realized how much work I need to do on Parts III and IV.

Here are the notes Peter gave me for Part I:

- He wants me to make the interview sections more clear, conversational, fun and passionate. When I state the question “Did it bother me?” I need to give it more thought before I answer the question.
- I need to end the intro into the Captain section with a beat before going into the flashback. Peter wants me to play with more of a pivot movement in the body on the flashback moments when I play multiple characters.

Notes for Part II:

- Peter wants me to look at cutting more in the “Prima Donna section.
- Peter wants to give a beat on the phrase “Let me tell you a story” moment before discussing the arias of Lady Macbeth. He wants me to emphasize and slow down the phrase “its all in the music”.

- He wants me to take more time with my movement on stage; he feels I'm always in a rush to get places. In general, I need to slow down and allow myself to take in the moments on stage.

Notes for Part III:

- Peter feels the transitions from interview to audience are getting better.
- I need more emphasis on the line "What I represented".
- Peter thinks I am doing a better job at taking my time, which allows the audience a chance to digest what has happened. He wants me to give finality to each section, to give each section a conclusion before moving on to a new topic.
- He wants me to distinguish how I talk to the audience versus how I talk to Mr. Caloni in the interview. The interview is more on the spot and more guarded. The audience is about storytelling, more honest, and vulnerable. I need to find a way to distinguish these two sections with my voice and with my movement.
- Peter thought I did a good job at taking my time on the Onasis section. He felt I rushed the "capricious woman" section. He wants me to think about how I feel of being accused of cheating in performance?

Notes for Part IV:

- He said when I take my time on my transitions and my dialogue, it's beautiful. He wants me to be consistent in taking my time. I need to allow the moments to affect me. Taking more time will allow me to be vulnerable.
- He wants me to put a pause on the line "It's a misery (pause) it's a suffering".

September 23:

Today we ran the whole show and timed it. Today was also the first time our stage manager, Alicia Spruill, came to rehearsal. Peter and I wanted to wait until we had the whole show blocked before she came. We want her to start getting a feel of where the cues go in the show. Alicia also discussed marketing ideas, such as video interviews to go on the *La Divina* Facebook page. Peter and I are very excited about using new marketing ideas, especially since they do not cost us any money. The show run time was 45 minutes, which I am pleased with. I think once the audience is there, it will run about 50 minutes, which was my goal. Today's main focus was to get continuity of the show, to make sure there are no staging problems and to get Alicia up to speed on the show. Peter gave me the following notes:

- The intro was much better, not as rushed, but could still be slower.
- At times, I rushed into the interview. I need to settle into it, take my time.
- I feel like I'm talking too slow and taking too much time; Peter says I can take even more time.
- I need to be consistent with my movements when I change characters in flashback sections.
- "Or so I thought" -- there needs to be a mood change in my voice.
- After singing the recitative of "Vieni t'affretta," I need to wait a beat before coming in with dialogue.
- Give more of a conclusion in my voice and body when I end each section. Give it a button so the audience knows I am finished with this section and moving on.
- I said "Battista" strangely.

- Loves the mood change at the top of Part IV.

September 30:

Today we ran Parts I and II and cleaned up blocking and began diving into more acting moments. I know my blocking now, so Peter and I are ready to dive into what this script is really about. I loved that we focused only on Parts I and II; this show is very overwhelming. It was nice to focus on small chunks of the script. I was quite proud of myself, because I rarely looked down at my script. We ran Parts I and II twice. The second run, it seemed to finally click. Peter and I both felt this. I told him that part of the reason was because I am relying less and less on my script and I'm more comfortable. Also, I am really taking Peter's notes about slowing down. I'm allowing myself to feel the moments and breathe. I finally understand what Be Boyd meant in my first semester acting class about breathing and acting. I remember she kept trying to get me to take honest, deep breaths and speak from the first breath, don't stifle it. I struggled with understanding this idea. However, I am noticing in rehearsal the more I take deep breaths and speak on my first breath, I am finding more genuine and vulnerable moments. For example, I found myself in tears at the end of "Mi chiamano Mimi". When I said the line, "His eyes would fill with tears", my eyes were filled with tears. I did not plan this, but I allowed myself to truly feel the moment; it felt so organic and real. It was not controlled and I loved it. I am such a controlling person and actor. This new slower breathing is allowing me to find more organic moments in my show. Here are the notes Peter gave me:

- Keep the first line straight out to the audience; do not try to look at all the audience members. More statuesque and direct.
- Mouth "thank you" after I sing the aria from *Carmen*.

- Take a moment to see the doll. Hug the doll; take it all in before I start speaking.
- Find ways to segue way into the song. Use my face to change the beat from speaking to singing. What happens to Maria when she goes from singing to speaking? Show the transformation.
- Look at the window when describing the Italian Soldier scene.
- Play around more with my stance while talking to the audience.
- Find words to accent that will transition from one section into the next one.
- Slow down in the interview section; it's getting better, but still slower!
- Don't show profile in the interview. Angle myself in such a way that the whole audience can see me.
- Don't slouch when talking to the audience. Maria is more relaxed when talking to the audience, but she probably wouldn't slouch.
- Dig deeper into arias, the emotions and really set the scene for the audience.
- After the second run, Peter began to see the life of Maria and her music.
- "O Mio Babinno Caro" best I ever sang the aria. Unapologetic. I need to get all arias up to the same level.

October 4:

Today Peter gave me a deadline to have my lines memorized, which is October 19. I am very happy he gave me a deadline, because I work well with deadlines. Also, once I get the papers out of my hand, I will be able to work on specific acting moments and be able to really live the life of Maria Callas. We discussed the idea of slowing down even more in my delivery. Peter said that when I slow down, I understand what I am saying. When I rush, I miss many

opportunities and acting beats. When I slow down, I actually hear myself. I loved these ideas and am really excited to apply them more to my rehearsal process. Peter also discussed his director's process with me, which was fascinating. He told me that when he watches rehearsal, he takes on the role of an audience member and thinks of questions he would ask if he were in the audience. That is what he gives notes on. He was saying what is hard about the one-woman show is that I am everything: I am the spectacle, I am the only one with lines, I am the only one who sings, so how do we make this interesting? We ran parts III and IV and here are Peter's notes:

- Pick a specific spot for the interviewer; don't look around. Have a focus point
- Good conversational attitude and taking time
- Loved the "Lucia" transition, very natural
- "Men on a pedastal" -- how does Maria feel about that?
- Emotional investment is great
- "I'm afraid he loved what I represented" -- Keep it straight out to the audience, then a slower transition.
- List of things to do with music: make it slower, have meaning for each one.

October 7:

Today we ran the show and timed it. The show ran 50 minutes, which I was really pleased about. It felt great to run the whole show without stopping, music and all. I am surprised at how strong my voice is becoming through this process. This show requires a lot of stamina, and my voice is getting stronger because of it. I was worried in the beginning that my voice was not going to be able to make it, but today proved that my voice is going to be okay. Peter and I

both decided we were going to cut the “croaking” bit today. We tried to make it work, but it was horrible, so I cut a large chunk of dialogue associated with it. We also discussed what we were going to do with the doll and the flowers. Peter had a great idea that I would leave them on the floor for the rest of the show until the end. Then at the end, I would pick up the doll and flowers, have another moment and take them to my apartment. This could work; I think we’ll see when we actually have the doll and flowers. Today’s focus was mainly on timing, cleaning up blocking and logistics with props and music.

October 12:

Today, my Thesis Chair, Professor Earl Weaver, came to rehearsal. I was incredibly nervous about this. Professor Weaver has always made me feel comfortable throughout this thesis process, but I respect his opinion so much. Also, he has only read the script; what if he completely hated what Peter and I had done with the script once it was on its feet? When I was doing my undergrad thesis, my thesis chair came to see a run-through a week and a half before we opened, and he ripped the performance apart. I guess I was so worried that was going to happen again. Plus, since I wrote this piece, I had more of a personal attachment to it. It took me a while through the run through to get comfortable with his presence there. Peter noticed that after the rehearsal. He couldn’t believe how many times I was looking down at my script at the beginning. However, throughout Parts III and IV, I felt more at ease.

After the run-through, Professor Weaver gave his notes, which really put me at ease. He discussed what worked with the piece, such as the scenes I was creating within the aria and the audience versus interview dialogue. I was excited to know that these aspects of the show worked.



He also gave me notes to work on, which weren't major, but very good points to make. Here are the notes:

- When I go from interview to audience, come alive and truly captivate the audience. I can see you are making a change, but make it even bigger.
- Think about the idea that you are lecturing the audience, like a Master Class.
- Where does Maria live? Let her breathe, work on arm movements. Think about leading with the heart. She is talking about music, which is where her heart is.
- Stay in lower voice; it shows maturity. I got very high at times (very Shelley); the lower voice suits Maria better, shows the maturity.
- Any time I would finish an Italian aria, I would start speaking in an Italian dialect for about 1-2 sentences.
- Show more confidence in the interviews.
- The beat change from interview into discussing my come back performance in *Tosca* needs to be stronger.
- The last Onassis section needs to be all interview.
- Make the beat change stronger from vulnerability to being strong and careful in the interview section about Ari.
- Last monologue: OWN the stage. This is my last lecture, my last aria. Take control!!
- What are Maria's physical mannerisms?
- Maria always is in performance mode.

It was really nice to get Professor Weaver's outsider perspective on the piece. He was giving me notes I had not considered. I loved his idea about lifting from the heart and how I need to

take more command of the stage. I have always thought I was overly confident on stage; that is a note I have been given before. It was nice to get his note that I needed actually to be more confident. It's been nice having Peter there to give me notes and he has been wonderful, but it was nice to have yet another outsider's opinion. Since this piece is a new work, I want all the help I can get.

October 19:

Today was my first rehearsal off book. It honestly went better than I thought. However, it was still a bit off. It was my first time off book, so it was not going to be perfect. I always fall flat on my face when I first get off book. I am constantly stumbling, not really acting and a bit of a scattered brain mess. I think I needed to fall flat on my face. I was getting too confident. I was paraphrasing lines left and right and making excuses for myself. I kept saying, "Oh, well! It's my script; I'm getting the general idea." But I worked too hard on this script to do that. The words I wrote are stronger than the crap I was making up. Peter told me my lines were a huge hindrance to my performance today. I was very quick to get offended and to be on the defensive about it. I thought, this is my first day off book, how dare he say that? But then, once I removed myself from the situation, I realized, he was exactly right. I open the show in a little less than a week. I have worked too hard to let this piece fall apart like this. I need to give the best of myself. I'm actually really happy Peter said what he said. I could tell he and my stage manager knew I could do better than this.

October 20:

Today was my second rehearsal off-book. Also, today was the first rehearsal my lighting designer, Nate, has attended. Today went a bit better, but I will only say a bit. I'm still not 100%

on my lines. After this rehearsal, I have decided to spend the entire night doing nothing but work on my lines. I am bound and determined to stop paraphrasing so much. I actually only called for a line once, but I was paraphrasing all over the place. Not as bad as yesterday. However, it's still not good. Yet again, I'm making excuses for myself. My stage manager, Alicia, makes a very good point. She took line notes in her script, and she would point out specific words I was messing up. For instance, one line is "you would **discover** I didn't really love him". I was saying "you would **realize** I didn't really love him." There is a huge difference. **Discover** is a much stronger word. What I wrote is much better, and it's something that subtle, but it makes all the difference. Again, I worked too hard not to stay true to my script.

After Nate saw my run through, he had a few comments and questions. Most of his comments were directed to Peter about lights. Peter wanted blackouts between each section of the script, and Nate did not like that. Nate said it ruined the flow of the script. Luckily, Peter was not married to the blackouts, so we decided to cut them. Nate and Peter had a very constructive dialogue discussing their lighting ideas. I felt so proud that I had such a collaborative environment to work in. Theatre at its best is supposed to be collaborative, and I truly felt that today.

He discussed with me about going from audience to interview, how I needed to make an even bigger deal about it. He said lights will help, but as an actress I need to make an even bigger change with my body and my voice. He said he loved "O Mio Babbino Caro" at the beginning because he actually knows that aria. Alicia agreed with Nate. I loved that he said that because that is exactly why I put that aria in the show. Everyone knows it; it's familiar; it will draw people into this show about opera. Opera scares and intimidates people easily. However, if I use

a familiar, popular aria, it will draw in people, and they will accept the more obscure arias later. He asked me what I was wearing, and I told him I was wearing a nice pair of grey dress slacks and a black gathered turtleneck (European style) and a dark brown wig. His response was, “Umm....I’m gonna say NO! First, black turtleneck? I hate that! Secondly, you are going to look frumpy!” I was shocked he said this. However, he then explained himself. He asked me why I wasn’t wearing a dress. I told him that was my first instinct but then I thought about it and decided no. Basically, I made up a bunch of stupid excuses why I was not going to wear a dress. He said he does not know anything about Maria Callas except what he has learned from this show. He said what he gathered from my script and from my show was this: Maria Callas is a diva, fashion icon, beautiful and a sex symbol. He said I needed to look like a million dollars. To be honest, he is exactly right. I loved he said what he said. He knows nothing about her, but from watching my show, this is what he perceived. I was fascinated by this. So, I have decided to wear a nice recital dress instead of my “frumpy” costume.

Here are the notes Peter gave me from today’s rehearsal:

- When you talk about your sister, focus on one section; your eyes wandered.
- Did I struggle? React to that.
- Play around more with mannerisms
- Have more fun with the *Carmen* aria.
- Do you have a crush on the Italian soldier? Make a choice.
- “Let me tell you a story” Are you interested in telling a story to Mr. Calloni? Show more excitement.
- “it’s all in the music” -- emphasize this line more.

- Anytime Maria talks about music, she goes into a different world. Play with this more.
- Be consistent with how you say “Prima Donna” -- emphasize the “n” on Donna.
- You rushed a beat on “personal life”.
- “Well what I mean is” -- Defend yourself more.
- There’s something about him. Envision spending time with him.
- “I gave everything for him. (pause) Everything.” What does the second “Everything” mean? Maybe Maria’s everything was not enough. How does that make her feel?
- Don’t rush “lets hope for the best”
- When you do crosses on the final monologue, make sure to still include the whole audience.
- What does the last line of the play mean to Maria.

October 21:

Today was the first full run-through with Sue Glerum (the accompanist) and with sound cues. I have had several rehearsals with Sue, but we only focused on the music. Sue had never read or seen the show. Today was a huge breakthrough for me. I studied my script and music all Wednesday night to be very prepared for today. I never called for a line and made huge improvements on my paraphrasing. Peter said that my singing was the best he ever had heard it because of Sue. He said Sue’s accompaniment took me into a different world, especially on “Ah! Non credea mirarti”. Sue and I both love that aria so much; we just have a great musical connection period, but it shows especially well on that aria. I was really glad our passion for the music shined through in rehearsal. I told Peter it was going to be very different when Sue is there, but I don’t think either of us was prepared for how different it was going to be. I’m glad

Sue added to the performance even more. I always talk about how the accompaniment is a character in a song; the accompaniment is my scene partner. I think today it really proved my point. I was thrilled. Here are the notes Peter gave me:

- Much better today! It's starting to click!
- Take more time when you walk up to sing.
- You had too much fun with the *Carmen* aria today. It was too sassy. Find the balance.
- Liked the distinction from audience to interview today; the longer pauses helped.
- Don't bow twice after the *Carmen* aria.
- Use the water glass in the interview.
- Ari interview was slow and personal today; keep it this way.
- Motivate the getting on the knees in the *Tosca* aria.
- Go all out on the *Tosca* aria. This is Maria's comeback...don't hold back! Feel it.
- "Madonna" in the *Tosca* aria sounded very American; focus on the "oh" of "Madonna".
- Are you frustrated on the line, "I'm only a human being. I'm doing my best."
- When you talk about Onasis, take time to figure out what you are going to say. Maria is still in an interview and is trying to be careful. She is extra careful when talking about Onasis.
- When you let your guard down in the Onasis sequence, I could really see it in your body today. Good. I could physically see you get stronger and become guarded again.

October 25:

Today we had a stop-and-go rehearsal and cleaned up blocking and worked on specific moments in the show. I was thrilled that we did this today, because most of the rehearsals have

been run-throughs. I understand and enjoyed doing the run-throughs because it helped me get a feeling of how the show flows. It also helped me with stamina. However, there were a few blocking problems and moments that were not working that Peter has wanted to fix. The transition from Part I to Part II was very abrupt and did not flow. Peter created a smooth cross going from audience into interview. I really liked this, but I had to play around with the cross a lot to make it look natural and comfortable. The first couple of times I did this cross, I looked like I was doing “blocking”.

The top of Part III has always been awkward. I have had a difficult time learning the text and making sense of it. Peter asked me to talk about why I wrote this section. I told him it was about Maria trying to defend herself because people have talked about how feisty and mean she was as an artist; colleagues and journalists were always discussing how difficult it was to work with her. Peter loved the idea of defending myself, and he wanted me to play that up more. Once I played up the defensive, the dialogue came more naturally and the moment was clearer. It really helped me to talk about the text specifically like that with Peter.

Peter and I worked the last monologue of the show quite a bit today. I was originally standing up because he told me to stand. Peter could not see my motivation to stand. I worked on creating reasons why I would stand. I liked that way Professor Weaver described the last monologue: it's Maria's last lecture and aria, own the stage. This helped me a lot with motivation to stand and walk around on the stage. Peter wanted me also to find motivations in all of my crosses during this monologue. I was having a hard time making the crosses and excluding part of the audience. For example, when I would walk stage left, I would only share to stage left and

not to center and right. Peter told me I needed to cheat my body to include everyone. I did not realize I was excluding audience members, so Peter's eye was very helpful.

One thing I particularly enjoyed about today's rehearsal was how collaborative it was. Peter would re-block something, and he would ask for my input or if I felt comfortable with the new blocking. Also, Peter would ask Alicia what she thought. Her eye was very helpful. Many times, Peter and I would come up with two options for certain crosses and we would ask Alicia which one she liked better. I love having so many different inputs in the show. I love that my team is so comfortable and honest with one another that I can ask for input and I always know they are telling me the truth.

October 26

Today I learned quite a bit in rehearsal. I ran the show, and Peter asked me how I felt about the run. I told him I was off and on, mostly off. He told me he agreed. He said I was trying a lot of new things, but most of it did not work. I was very ;presentational; I was too sassy; I was trying too hard; and I was, for the most part, distracted and not in the show. I agreed with him completely. The stress of performing this show on Friday finally caught up with me. I was incredibly nervous. I was doubting myself and the work I had created. I ended up venting a lot of my stress on Alicia and Peter. I cried quite a bit. I was upset with myself that I let my stress get the best of me. Also, I felt like I had ruined the show Peter and I had spent a month and a half creating. I felt bad about venting to Peter and Alicia at first, because I thought I might have offended them. But, in the end, I'm glad I told them where I was today. I was incredibly distracted, and I had not told anyone about it. I did not realize I was keeping all that stress inside me. In the end, I'm very happy I had that awful run. I tried a lot of new things for my character



that did not work, but now I know they do not work. I took it to an extreme, and it failed.

However, I know this now.

After I vented, we took a five-minute break and I was able to cool off. After the break, I ran the show again without music. I wanted to run the show again, because I needed to and also I wanted to end the rehearsal on a good note. I was very pleased with my second run. I was more grounded and realistic. Peter and Alicia agreed that my second run was much better. I do not think my second run would have been as successful if I had not vented to them.

October 27:

Today was the first rehearsal in the space. We spent the first hour establishing where the set pieces would be and spiking the floor. Nate was figuring out the light board, focusing lights and putting gels on specific lights. I got into full costume and makeup for the first time. I was so excited to be at the Rep! I had my own dressing room. I felt like quite a diva! Also, being in the Black Box Space made it so real to me. I was excited. My show is really being produced with lights, sets, costumes and everything. The point of this rehearsal was to set light cues, set levels for the sound cues and to do a cue-to-cue. We were able to accomplish all that in three hours. I was incredibly impressed with my team. Nate and Alicia worked brilliantly and efficiently together.

We worked my entrance with the sound cue to figure out exactly what part of the cue I would enter in on. The most complicated cue was the ending. We ran the ending about ten times to get the lighting and movement just right. I'm very glad we took our time with the ending.

When I was doing the run-through cue-to-cue, I could not help but smile the whole time. Again, my show is really coming to life! Doing this show is a dream come true and the cue-to-

cue was one of the moments that made me realize I'm really going to perform my original one-woman show.

October 28:

Today was my last rehearsal!! We started the rehearsal working the ending and adding Sue to it. We ran the ending about four times to make sure the music, sound and lights were perfect. Sue did a wonderful job of adapting to a new space and adjusting her music to match the sound cue; she figured out what chord the music cue began on by listening to it twice -- amazing! After we ran the ending, we did a full run-through. I felt the run-through was very successful. Being in costume, having the lights, piano, and set made the show come alive for me. The character of Maria Callas really clicked for me tonight. My main criticism of my run-through was that I needed to slow down. I was stumbling over my words a few times, especially at the beginning of the show. Once I got into a groove, slowed down and simply breathed more, I did not have as much of a problem.

We ran the show a second time without music to run the cues and so I could get another run through before opening. I skipped over three paragraphs and one aria in the script. I have never done this before. I became very anxious. Peter and Alicia assured me it was probably because we did not run it with music. I thought so, too, but I could not help but worry. Anyway, I am really excited about tomorrow. Tonight's run-through went really well and I cannot wait for an audience! I just hope that all the work I have done on being vulnerable comes through in the performances. I often freeze up and become guarded when I'm in front of an audience.

Performance 1:

I was shockingly not nervous about tonight's performance. I was really excited to share my work! Sue and I had a great talk before I went on stage. She told me: "You are sharing music and stories with people and that is something you love so dear; it's a beautiful thing!" I felt great about going on stage. My dad was in the front row, and I was really excited to share with him what I had been working on for so long.

Many different things happened to me tonight. The audience was small but very engaged the entire show. I cried during "O Mio Babbino Caro" because I could hear my father crying in the front row. The aria is sung to the character's father. I already think of my father when I sing the aria. Having my father there, front and center, crying, made it so surreal to me. I do not think it affected my performance in a bad way, but it changed the way I normally sang this aria.

I could not believe they clapped after I did the scales at the piano; it caught me off guard in a good way. It made the moment even funnier.

When I made one of my first crosses, my heel came out of my shoe, which looked and felt awkward. I adjusted my shoe with my foot and pretended nothing happened, but I felt I looked incredibly awkward.

When I sang "Ah, non credea mirarti", I did not breathe enough on my first pianissimo moment. My voice broke on one of the quieter high notes. I kept singing and tried not to let it affect me. Once this happened, I adjusted my body, relaxed and allowed myself to take deeper breaths. This aria is a very vulnerable moment for me; to make this aria work, the less movement, the better. I will know this for tomorrow and breathe more.

I became so emotional after many moments in the show that I was not normally letting my guard down. Some of the examples include singing "Mi Chiamano Mimi", talking about my

husband for the first time, the first time I talked about Ari, and the Tosca number. Specifically after the Tosca aria, I was breathing so heavily, I was literally clutching my heart. It felt incredible because it was this aria that started my love of opera and Maria Callas. I loved being able finally to sing it in front of people. It took me a while to catch my breath. I was not used to having that much emotion take over me in front of people before. I was proud of myself. I let myself go. I was happy with this, because the audience saw me as a real person, not a caricature. I often come off as very presentational, and tonight I think I did a nice job of not doing that.

At the end of my performance, I was very pleased. There were little minor mistakes I made; it was not perfect, but I felt very proud of myself that I did it. One thing I was proud of was the fact that I was able to live in the quiet moments on stage. I was able to stand on stage, not say a word and feel comfortable. My tendency as an actor is to make everything fast and constantly move and do something. There were moments where I simply sat in the chair, took a deep breath, did not say or do anything and felt so comfortable. This is a huge step for me!

Performance 2:

I told my friend, Sarah, who came to town to see my show both nights, that I will give a very different performance today. She was very surprised I told her this. I said it was because there will be a completely different audience here tonight. I can feel it; there will be a different energy and I will react to that. I was right! The audience on Friday was very good; they were small, did not react as much, but they were very engaged. Tonight's audience was pretty big and incredibly responsive. I did not know my show was funny until tonight. I could not get over where the audience was laughing. I thought I wrote about two or three funny moments in the show and that's it. I loved how responsive this audience was; it helped me live the role of Maria

Callas even more. I knew when I heard the loud applause for Sue's entrance that tonight was going to be a special night.

My main criticism of tonight's performance is that I stumbled over my words three times. This happened at the beginning, and I think it happened because I was speeding up and I was distracted by the audience's reactions. However, once I took deep breaths, slowed down, played to my consonants in my dialogue, I was fine. Next time I perform this show, I need to take deeper breaths at the beginning and slow down so I do not stumble over my words. I have a tendency to stumble sometimes when I am speaking, and I hate that about myself as an actor. I need to continue to work on this.

It was pure joy performing this show tonight. Words cannot express how thankful I was for this amazing experience I had. Tonight, I was still able to be vulnerable, which I was very proud of. I was afraid that with the size of the audience, I would revert back to some of my old habits. Sue and I were never as connected as we were tonight. I loved sharing the amazing music. I had fun. I was not stressed about performing the show. I felt confident. Again, I had an absolute blast. I truly felt I was in my element tonight. When the audience yelled "Brava" for the Tosca aria and gave me a standing ovation, it was a dream come true. I felt truly loved and supported. I was so worried the show would not work, or that it would only speak to a selective group of people. Tonight proved that the show speaks to many different people and I'm excited about that.

## CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

After extensive research and finishing this document, I am more aware of the importance of being an actor/singer in Musical Theatre and Opera. To be a successful singer in Musical Theatre and Opera, you must be able to sing your pieces with great vocal technique and always work towards telling the story the composer intended. I believe every vocal technique choice should aid the drama of the music.

Maria Callas is the perfect person to study when writing about the actor/singer. She is an incredibly important figure in opera, and she paved the way for opera singers today with her specific interpretations of iconic opera roles, her passion, and her dramatic talent. Callas had flaws in her voice, but she was not afraid to reveal the flaws for dramatic interpretation. Her idea of a “perfect” performance is when a singer can show the emotions in their voice that the composer asks for in the music.

I conducted research on Maria Callas to create a one-woman show that will portray the importance of the actor/singer and to show the honest, sympathetic artist Maria Callas was. To create my one-woman show, I have examined the life and work of Maria Callas, her process as an actor/singer, defined bel canto singing, discussed popular opera composers and analyzed their works, discussed my script writing, rehearsal and performance process. All the information I gathered furthered my understanding of Maria Callas and helped me write and perform an original one-woman show.

Maria Callas is someone I have admired since the age of 17. I was very inspired by her life, talents and vivacious personality. My initial inspiration for this project was Terrence McNally’s Tony Award Winning play, *Master Class*. Through my original show, *La Divina*:

*Maria Callas' Last Interview*, I want to show a compassionate representation of Maria Callas. I hope to convey Maria Callas as a brilliant artist and a human being, not a topic of negative media. I hope I am able to continue performing this play so I can tell many untold stories of Maria Callas. I hope people will have a more understanding and sympathetic view of Maria Callas; she was more than “La Divina”. She was an artist and a human being.

APPENDIX: LA DIVINA SCRIPT



## Maria Callas' Last Interview

### *Media Sound Clip*

I am a woman and a serious artist and I would like so to be judged (“Maria Callas Quotes”). I am Maria Callas and this is my story

O Mio Babbino Caro- *Gianni Schicchi* Puccini

Only when I sing do I feel loved.

Why, hello, thank you for having Mr. Caloni, it's a privilege to be here. I am very fond of your radio program. Yes, very few people know this; they assume I was born in Greece. However, my parents moved to New York City three months before I was born.

[To the audience] I was born on December 2, 1923. My mother claims I was born on December 4 because she could not look at me until then; she was so disappointed I wasn't a boy. She continued not to pay attention to me for the majority of my early childhood. My sister, blonde haired, thin, beautiful, was the only daughter of the family. At the age of 5, my mother discovered I could sing. I was the chubby, awkward child of the family; there was no use for me, until my mother discovered I could sing. My mother, sister and I moved back to Greece when I was 13.

Oh, yes, my parents decided I would become a singer. My mother admired women like Shirley Temple, and she dreamt of glory. So, she didn't give me a chance. One should always let their children decide for themselves. She decided I had to become a singer and lied about my age to make me get in the conservatorie in Athens -- I was only 13. So, I told her, “Mother...” (I never called my mother “mom” -- back in the days you had to treat your parents with maximum respect. I never called her “mom”.) I told her, “Mother, if I manage to get a scholarship, I will keep studying music. But if I do not get it, I will stop and do something else.” And you see, I was so sure I was not going to get that scholarship, I was so certain about it, it seemed impossible to me...but year after year, they kept on granting me that scholarship, so I didn't have the choice; I had to keep studying music. (“Maria Callas”).

Did it bother me to become an opera singer and struggle for my independence? There was no way I could struggle, because back in the days you had to do what your parents wanted you to do. Back then, I was 13, what could I have done? Protesting? With the strong temperament my mother had? And what's more, at 13 I was already performing onstage; I got the scholarship, and I was a Prima Donna right away. (“Maria Callas”)

My family was very poor. So to make extra money, I would perform in many different venues around town. My first gig was for a rich Greek Captain having a lavish dinner party for his friends.

[Flashback]

Captian: mee-KROH koh-REE-tsee (little girl), your voice is heavenly. I am having a party for my friends on my boat. Have you ever been on a boat?

No.

Captian: Please do me the honor of singing at my party mee-KROH koh-REE-tsee (little girl). I must have your voice. You would be the perfect entertainment!

Yes! I'd love to!

[To the audience:] I was ecstatic! I serenaded the captain's guest with...

L'Amour Est Un Oiseau Rebelle *Carmen*-Bizet

*Bouquet of flowers and a doll thrown onstage to Maria.*

The Captain gave me my first doll. My mother never let me play with frivolous things like dolls. I was only allowed to read, play the piano and sing. I was always too mature for my age - and not very happy. I had no young friends. I wish I could go back to those days. If I could only live it all again, how I would play and enjoy other girls. What a fool I was ("Maria Callas Quotes").

I grew up in Greece during the 1940's with the German Occupation. The summer of 1941, the German Soldiers issued a "quiet ordinance" for the streets. I thought this was absurd, so I showed them a piece of my mind.

I moved my singing rehearsals to my balcony so the whole neighborhood could hear.

[Flashback]

*Maria sings scales at the piano on her balcony.*

I was able to gain food, protection and friends through this action. Specifically, an adorable Italian Soldier. He'd wait, outside my window, right around the time I would return from the Conservatorie. I would sing him his favorite arias in exchange for food and conversation. He was my first real friend.

[Flashback]

Bello, what would you like to hear today?

Italian Soldier: Boheme, Bellissima

Boheme, again?

Italian Soldier: You understand the delicateness of Mimi. She is so lovely. The verismo! It reminds me of home. I miss the opera. Please, sing to me.

Okay

Mi chiamono Mimi *La Boheme* Puccini

His eyes would fill with tears, thinking of memories of home and the beauty, the verissimo of Puccini's music.

Probably the most important Puccini role I'll ever sing is Tosca. Tosca becomes a very important part of my career. Tosca was the first professional role I ever sang. But first I sang Tosca once to save my life. Tosca, begging for her lover's life, I was begging for mine. My mom, my sister and I agreed to protect wronged British Soldiers at our house for our family friend. We hid them in our canary room and had been rather successful. After 6 weeks, our friend came to get them. The next day, Italian Soldiers came pounding on our door, complaining they heard noise coming from the canary room. They searched the house looking for the men or evidence proving the men were at our house. There were letters on the floor of the canary room written to the British Soldiers that I attempted to hide with my foot.

[Sounds of people barging in a room]

[To the audience:] They entered the room. I stood there, guns pointed at me, scared out of my mind.

Vissi D'Arte *Tosca* Puccini

[To the audience:] They were so moved by my singing, they forgot about the British Soldiers and enjoyed the music. They came back the next day -- instead of pounding on the door, they knocked. This time they offered loaves of bread, salami, pasta and asked for more music.

Is it true? I sing like no one else? Well, I don't know, you see, the one who sings doesn't have the same perception than the one who is listening ("Maria Callas").

I do recognize my own voice among all others. I recognize the way I sing...it's not even the way I sing, it's the universe that I have that I bring along when I sing. It's like the way one walks or writes -- everybody has its own way, each of them is different. Every voice is unique, don't you think? Also, now even though I don't like my voice, I've become able to accept it and to be detached and objective about it so I can say, "Oh that was really well sung" or "it was nearly perfect" and I say nearly perfect because perfect doesn't exist. And I want my singing to be perfect. Let me tell you a story: a long time ago I was recording the three arias of *MacBeth*. When I arrived to record the arias, my voice was in really good shape; I was coming back from a

month of rest and I sung this aria perfectly. Or that's what I thought. So I went to the room where my colleague was and told him, "there's nothing bad you can say about this recording from a vocal point of view." He told me, "Okay, sit down, listen to the recording and tell me what you think." ("Maria Callas")

*[Play bad recording.]*

I was stunned. How could he say that? I was so sure the recording was perfect! So I listened to it; it was vocally perfect...but I had to do it all over again. I had forgotten the character's moods, her feelings, her perception. I had forgotten about that and sang a technically and perfect aria. It was perfection, but it was not good, not right! The composer asks for particular colors: dark, even acid sometimes; it's all in the music! And even when it's not written, it's like when you read a letter -- you have to read between the lines. Perfection isn't about reciting; it's about understanding the atmosphere and the thousands of colors that make an interpretation out of a music sheet. It's not only singing; it's interpreting ("Maria Callas").

Recitative of Vieni! T'affretta! – *Macbeth* Verdi

That is interpretation commanding. You must find the symbiosis between the acting and the singing. I looked up to great tragedians who performed Sophocles and Euripides plays.

Because it's not that easy, you know; it's recitar cantando, to make speech and singing become one, which is a lot harder. You must have the voice, but you also need to declaim, to tell a story ("Maria Callas").

Aria Proper of "Vieni t'affretta"

[To the audience:] At the beginning of my career, I was extremely overweight and having a difficult time landing the heroine roles. At the Conservatorie, instead of playing the leading heroine, I played roles like nuns, maids, or nurses. I was making a decent career for myself, but I wasn't superstar. A major stepping stone in my career was when I focused on my body and lost 60 pounds in a year. I then began to see myself as a believable leading lady. A Prima Donna.

You have probably heard many translations for the word "Prima Donna" which are all probably wrong. I can ask you a question, Mister Caloni, what do you think 'Prima Donna' means? Well, I'll tell you. 'Prima Donna' is the leading role of an opera or of a play. 'Prima Donna' literally means 'the first woman,' the leading role. But being a Prima Donna is something I'm really proud of, because it means you've accomplished your mission, that you perform your role well...and that's something to be proud of! Because it's a whole; you have to be well-dressed, to look good, to feel good...that's how you get in your role! And that's why I condemn fat singers. I used to be fat back in the days, and believe me I wasn't feeling good at all. That's why I decided to lose weight; the public will enjoy it more if you're in shape when you portray a role like Violetta in *La Traviata*. And that's why the very first representation of *La Traviata* in Venice was a complete fiasco; the Prima Donna was too fat. When she began coughing in the

third act, the public was laughing! And that happened back in the days, the public already didn't find these women credible as performers. So, you see, it's a duty...it's your duty to resemble the character you're portraying onstage; you can't portray a beautiful young woman if you're enormous ("Maria Callas").

[To the audience:] Lenora from Verdi's *Il trovatore* is a prime example of a Prima Donna. She is trying to save her lover's life and willing to give her own for his. The drama...the passion...it's all in the music. As a Prima Donna, it is my job to serve the music. I must tell Lenora's story. I cannot simply rely on my voice; it's so much more than that.

Tu Vedrai-*Il trovatore*-Verdi

I think the essence of an artist is to never fool the public. What do I mean by that? I think my fans had a fondness for me because I gave them the truth in my interpretations, and the public recognizes that. I've never cheated; I've always tried to give the best of myself and to respect the composer in whatever role I would portray. And as time went by, the public respected me, and that's the only way you can judge a career through time ("Maria Callas").

And I am very demanding with myself and with others. And I believe whomever works with me has to give the best of himself. Oh and don't talk to me about rules, dear. Wherever I stay I make the goddamn rules ("Maria Callas Quotes"). I carry my vivacity, my life.

Of course, people always point me out for being loud, capricious. It's not being irritated; it's being alive. But I'll tell you, I have colleagues who are much more capricious than I am. Much more. And I wasn't capricious really. I was always demanding or requiring things for a performance...never for myself. I could have put on pretty costumes and go right onstage, make a triumph and leave. But I was always yelling to obtain more rehearsals, to get a better staging, I fought for the beauty of the show...I fought to get it as close to perfection as possible ("Maria Callas").

[To the audience:] Lucia. It was this role in Bellini's *La Sonnabula* that gave me the title of "La Divina" at La Scala. My husband, Giovanni Battista Meneghini, an Italian entrepreneur, became infatuated with my operatic interpretations when I was singing in Italy. He loved my voice. He was so focused on me becoming La Divina. He finally got his wish.

"To sing is an expression of your being, a being which is becoming" (Huffington).

Ah! Non credea mirati.- *La Sonnabula* Bellini

I have had a very successful operatic career, but my private life has not been so successful, Yes.

I became a bit too famous for my own good. And also I put men on a pedestal. For instance, my husband, he wanted so much that I be La Divina... he was taking things out on people. He was nothing special.

Well, what I mean is Baptista was a good person, I thought, my home family was not, well my mother and I were not well off, and I was alone and I felt this person really loved me. But...um...I'm afraid that he loved what I represented. It was a very unfortunate episode of my life.

How did I meet Aristotle Onasis? Ari saw me sing in Paris and eventually invited my husband and I to join him on his yacht, the *Christina*. We instantly fell in love. After the weekend, I ended my 10-year marriage to Baptista.

There was something about him, I can't explain, except, when I met Ari, so full of life, I became a different woman.

Mr. Onasis and I, we had a wonderful life and I don't regret any bit of it. I do regret when I stopped singing. I worked less and less because evidently he didn't like me to sing. From 1960-1963, I sang very rarely. I would perform for a couple of exclusive concerts here and there. He did not care for operatic singing. If a person is in love, he doesn't want to see you on stage...that is comprehensible.

[To the Audience:] After much pleading and begging, I made my return to the operatic stage at the MET, in the role of "Tosca". Tosca gave me the comeback that I desperately needed.

[Flashback]

*Maria makes the sign of the cross. Maria stands up from her chair walking down stage towards the audience.*

Vissi D'Arte-Tosca-Puccini

*VO: Loud applause and cheering. Maria takes a bow.*

[To the audience:] I received some glowing reviews for my performance. Unfortunately, they were over-shadowed by the paparazzi discussing my personal life. Discussion of my love affair with the famous Aristotle Onasis, business tycoon, the "two Greeks" read the headlines. Many people did not care about me as an artist, but for who I was sleeping with. I became exactly what Ari wanted, a trophy, and I didn't care. I loved him. I became a different woman when I was with him.

Anyway, while I was dating Onasis, the press was constantly attacking me. However, my true fans did not care about that. My true fans cared about me as an artist; a singer/actress.

I believe people are not to be taken in anymore. In a certain way...I say in a certain way because the press gave me celebrity too...I've been a victim of the press who said I was living the life of obscene luxury. Young journalists write whatever nonsense about Prima Donnas. But Prima Donnas have to be respected, because they've been through a lot of sacrifices, a lot of studying,

and not in luxury, but in tiny dark rooms reading music sheets for hours trying to understand what the composer wanted, what you have to do with the music, the classes, the notes, the voice...believe me, it's really hard work. That's why I'm very, very proud to be a Prima Donna ("Maria Callas").

Either people love me too much or they really hate me. It's kind of a compliment, but as an artist I would have preferred to go onstage relaxed to do my job instead of feeling all that breathtaking pressure around me. are they expecting from me...I'm only a human being...I'm doing my best...("Maria Callas").

[To the audience:] I found out Ari was marrying the American first lady, Jackie Kennedy, by reading a press release the day before the wedding. I gave everything for you. Everything. First I lost my figure, then I lost my voice and then I lost Onasis ("Maria Callas Quotes").

But Mr. Onasis is still a friend.

No, he didn't leave me... he didn't go. We had just decided that I would resume my own life.

I would be happy to see him happy under any circumstance.

You think I'm in love with Mr. Onasis? I think in some way both of us are probably still in love, because we led a beautiful life together. We both understand each other, but in a certain stage, love becomes different. But, you see, if I was brought to the state that I left him, that deep core, you would discover I didn't really love him. I had a husband and I had a lover, and that's it.

Many people cannot help but compare my personal life to the one's of Greek Tragedies. However, the difference between ancient Greeks and me is that I don't cry on tragedies until they happen, and if they do happen, I don't cry on the tragedies; I cope with them. So, uh...let's hope for the best.

Thank you for having me, Mr. Caloni

[To the audience:] This concludes my interview. I don't search anymore. I'm at peace with myself, and I accept myself as I am with my limits...with my advantages. I have made the proper decisions...I have made mistakes. I have held a poker face when things have gone sour, which is something everyone should do. Oh, I have held a poker face many times. I consider myself a very lucky person. From nothing, with no favors asked, I have become what the public has made me become which is extremely rare.

The pains in my life have only helped me serve the music better. Music is born from misery, it's a suffering. Great composers, great musicians, have always had tragedies in their lives. There are many examples: Mozart, Beethoven, or even Verdi...they've been through great tragedies, and, God, they died poor and everything! It seems music, as every major art, like literature was born from distress or from poverty; from pain ("Maria Callas").

When music fails to agree to the ear, to soothe the ear and the heart and the senses, then it has missed the point (“Maria Callas Quotes”).

Only when I sing, do I feel loved.

Casta Diva-Norma-Bellini

*Media Sound Clip*



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