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POETICS OF MUSICAL BAROQUE: AESTHETICS, PERFORMING TRADITIONS, INTERPETATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to identify performance strategies in contemporary musical culture that are related to the interpretation of ancient styles and genres as authentic examples of the cultural process in the age of globalization, based on the comprehension of the components of the poetics of the musical baroque. The research methodology is based on the cognitive, interpretive, historical and stylistic approaches necessary for a comprehensive study of this topic. The gender specificity of performance is highlighted. The author analyses iconic works (Dardano's aria "Pena tiranna" from Act II of the opera "Amadis of Gaula") and performances (the Sesto part from the

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opera “Julius Caesar” by G.F. Handel) in which the gender approach to the authentic “opera text” prevails; the role of the countertenor in contemporary art is characterized from the standpoint of historically informed performance. In connection with the great popularity and spread of the art of countertenors in the performance of ancient vocal music, the question of gender identification as a performance strategy has arisen, in the development of the concept of V.O. Gigolaeva. The conclusions outline the components of the performing poetics of the musical baroque era: the parity of vocal and instrumental thinking, sound imitation, improvisation on the contralto, and the performance of one's own cadences. The stylistic differences in the performance of Baroque music in terms of vibrato—an inherent quality and characteristic of the voice, and methods of colourful sound formation that provide unlimited possibilities for performance are indicated.

Keywords: Countertenor voice, instrumentalism, vocal flexibility, authentic performance strategy, gender ambivalence, interpretation.

BAROK MÜZİĞİN POETİĞİ: ESTETİK, İCRA GELENEKLERİ, YORUMLAMA

ÖZ

Makalenin amacı, müzikal barok poetikasının bileşenlerinin kavranmasına dayalı olarak, küreselleşme çağında kültürel sürecin otantik örnekleri olarak antik stillerin ve türlerin yorumlanmasıyla ilgili çağdaş müzik kültüründeki performans stratejilerini belirlemektir. Araştırma metodolojisi, bu konunun kapsamlı bir şekilde incelenmesi için gerekli olan bilişsel, yorumlayıcı, tarihsel ve stilistik yaklaşımlara dayanmaktadır. Performansın toplumsal cinsiyet özelliği vurgulanmaktadır. Yazar, otantik “opera metni ‘ne toplumsal cinsiyet yaklaşımının hâkim olduğu ikonik eserleri (Dardano'nun ‘Galyalı Amadis” operasının II. perdesinden “Pena tiranna” aryası) ve performansları (G.F. Handel'in “Julius Caesar” operasından Sesto bölümü) analiz eder; çağdaş sanatta kontrtenorun rolü, tarihsel olarak bilgilendirilmiş performans açısından karakterize edilir. Antik vokal müziğin icrasında kontrtenor sanatının büyük popülaritesi ve yayılmasıyla bağlantılı olarak, V.O. Gigolaeva'nın kavramının geliştirilmesinde bir performans stratejisi olarak cinsiyet kimliği sorunu ortaya çıkmıştır. Sonuçlar, vokal ve enstrümantal düşüncenin eşitliği, ses

taklidi, kontraltoda doğaçlama ve kişinin kendi kadanslarının sergilenmesi gibi müzikal barok döneminin performans poetikasının unsurlarını özetlemektedir.

Sesin içsel bir niteliği ve özelliği olan titreşim açısından Barok müziğin icrasındaki üslup farklılıkları ve icraya sınırsız olanaklar sağlayan renkli ses oluşturma yöntemleri belirtilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kontrtenor ses, enstrümantalizm, vokal esneklik, otantik performans stratejisi, toplumsal cinsiyet ikircikliliği, yorumlama.

INTRODUCTION

Baroque music, characterized by complex compositions and emotional expressiveness, is an important symbol of historical and cultural identity. In an era of globalization, the study of Baroque music allows contemporary society to recognize its creative depth and fundamental principles that have influenced Western musical traditions. The study of the Baroque era allows one to engage with historical aesthetic standards and understand artistic practices that still influence contemporary performance. A historical perspective helps to understand how music from many eras influences contemporary culture and positions Baroque music as a timeless source of inspiration.

Baroque music has special significance in the contemporary context, especially for musicians and listeners seeking authenticity and interpretive depth. The discipline of historically informed performance (HIP) revitalizes the authentic sound and essence of Baroque music by providing a distinctive method of musical expression that resonates with an international audience. For contemporary performers, Baroque music provides a significant repertoire for experimenting with interpretive techniques, exploring gender and performance dynamics, and making deep emotional connections with audiences. The study of Baroque music contributes to contemporary musical culture by bridging historical and contemporary elements, allowing performers to address an era that resonates with universal human experiences.

It is impossible to imagine the contemporary space of European art without performances of ancient music and works from the Baroque period. Every year, each festival presents a bright performance or concert: suffice it to mention the long-awaited project – Cecilia Bartoli's album *Farinelli*, where she adopts the image of a Baroque performer with a beard, the W. Christie's Les Arts Florissants project, which hosts the festival and launched an academy for young baroque music performers, launching the global career of Lea Desandre, and concerts by J. Savall and his Hespèrion XXI

ensemble. There was a noticeable increase in demand for performances of Baroque music in Ukraine before the war. This includes the staging of D. Bortnyansky's operas *Akil* and *Sokol* by the Lviv Opera Theatre, and the first intermission of the baroque opera *Dido and Aeneas* by G. Purcell by the Opera. UA project; a production of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* and a three-day masterclass by the famous baroque music performer Olga Pasichnyk (Dean and Knapp, 2009).

In the 21st century, the interpretation of Baroque works is still a hotly debated issue. Their nature concerns the gradual and continuous transformation of the laws of perception of music as a sound universe, which reflects socio-cultural, cognitive and psychodynamic changes in social consciousness at the level of the language of communication and the values of people's spiritual being. If the self-consciousness of European literature begins with Petrarch's sonnets, the Baroque in music cannot be personified in one type of creativity – here it is possible to recognize a creative synthesis of arts (Dugnani et al., 2023).

Having passed a long and complex path of development – from magical rites to prayer singing, in the Baroque period vocal music had already prepared the conditions for the birth of major conceptual forms (masses, oratorios, operas), which reflect a holistic picture of the world, where God is in the centre and numerous experiences of *homo cantor* in genres of both solo and polyphonic singing (madrigals, motets, chanson, quodlibet, lied) appear as meridians. The formation of vocal genres gave rise to a desire to find new means of sound expression and a variety of performance colours in the musical and theatrical practice of Western Europe (Melnyk, 2024; Sachok, 2023). In the course of the centuries-long evolution of the artistic synthesis of words, singing and dance, new ways of music-making emerged, groups of instruments (ensembles, orchestras) and even varieties of singing voices, in particular countertenors, which in the professional environment of today are primarily associated with ancient vocal music, are actively developing.

However, performing culture as a component of the artistic time-space depends not only on the availability of voices and modern sound production technology. The true “measure” of musical communication for a contemporary listener is the sense of the historical style of the music that falls into the “optics” of the listener/viewer (Kim and Chung, 2023). The study of the issues of Baroque performance poetics in the system of modern presentations of its samples is a motivated and relevant request of the world science of vocal art. Its main vectors are the traditions of historically informed performance, their national variants and transformations (directorial strategies, staging

decisions), analysis of iconic performances and personalities, vocal roles in the context of renewed performance strategies.

Ting (2022) notes the versatility of Baroque arias. They combine texts; vocal performance and elements of dance (the French air de cour is a vivid example). They are also distinguished by certain cultural traditions peculiar to different countries. Thus, Italian Baroque aria reflects elements of the operatic style of the time. The German aria of the period under analysis embodies the key features of church singing, characteristic of cantatas and passions, and the French aria embodies the idea of a synthesis of vocal performance and dance.

Kliuchynska (2022) highlights the prospects of comprehending the style of interpretation of Baroque works through the study of theoretical treatises of this period. According to the expert, Baroque culture is a multifaceted phenomenon that embodies the traditions of secular and folk cultures. At the same time, elements of humour, irony, and hyperbole inherent in folk art traditions are reflected in the art of the aristocracy. Huzhva and Mykolaichuk (2019) study the leading principles of aesthetics and performance traditions of the Baroque period. In their opinion, mastering the methodological literature of the time addressed to vocalists in synthesis with the comprehension of the art of outstanding Baroque performers belonging to the present will create a foundation not only for preserving the unique creativity of the New Age, but also for its popularization among young performers. Xin (2022) explores the gender aspect of the interpreting Baroque arias, using the example of the Ariodante role from Handel's opera of the same name. The scholar notes its transformation from the original author's version to the exact opposite, and the effect that such "timbre modulations" have on the modern listener.

Rawson (2012) focuses on the local Baroque traditions of European countries, in particular the Czech Republic. Thus, the author notes the special role of the rural environment, in the context of which the musical creativity of Bohemian Baroque composers emerged and developed. Jasiński (2015) raises the issue of the significance of musical and rhetorical figures in the art of the Polish Baroque. They served as a source of embodiment of ideas and content of literary texts in music through special symbols (sound imitation, allegorical constructions). However, the key issues that need to be studied are: the role of instrumental accompaniment of singers in the context of Baroque music; stylistic features of performing Baroque vocal works; the art of countertenors as one of the brightest manifestations of the Baroque period.

The purpose of the article is to identify performance strategies in contemporary musical culture based on the analysis of Baroque poetics, which are related to the trends of interpreting ancient styles and genres as authentic examples of the cultural process in the age of globalization. The research objectives include:

1. Highlighting the fundamental principles of the performing poetics of the musical baroque period;
2. Analysis of certain iconic performances in which a gendered approach to reading an authentic “opera text” prevails;
3. Emphasizing the role of the countertenor in contemporary art from the perspective of historically informed performance.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

In selecting arias and operas for this study, the authors focused on compositions that exemplify both traditional and avant-garde methods of representing gender in Baroque music. These selections provide a solid foundation for the study of gender by employing roles that emphasize the ambiguity and fluidity characteristic of Baroque vocal performance style. By focusing on compositions in which male and female roles are performed by voices unrelated to their gender, such as countertenor roles originally intended for castrati or mezzo-soprano adaptations, these works contribute to a comprehensive analysis of how gender ambiguity affects listeners' interpretation and perception.

The selected compositions exhibit stylistic characteristics fundamental to baroque performance, such as ornamentation, vibrato, and vocal dexterity, particularly evident in parts that suggest gendered interpretations. By examining these elements, we can explore the intersection between past performance practices and contemporary notions of gender. The selected compositions serve as a foundation for understanding the technical demands and expressive possibilities of Baroque music, providing insight into the distinctive aesthetics of the era and enabling contemporary performers to navigate the interpretive intricacies of the music.

In the course of the study, both practical and theoretical methods were used. A practical method of understanding the problem of Baroque performance traditions is a qualitative analysis of the processes of their preservation and dissemination in the context of modernity by artists of different national cultures. Thus, a platform was established for studying aspects of the embodiment of

Baroque vocal music in the 21st century (performances by opera singers who possess the timbre that became most popular in the period of the 16th-18th centuries). Similarly, the embodiment of characteristic aspects of the ancient performance tradition by contemporary vocalists in the context of their creative activity was recorded.

The study also widely presents theoretical methods of mastering Baroque poetics, in particular, the characteristic features of performance and the use of unique timbres (countertenor and its varieties). Among them, we should mention such methods as analysis, comparison, and synthesis. These methods are based on a number of approaches: historical and cultural, psychological and physiological, cognitive and interpretive, and gender and performance.

With regard to the specifics of analysing the performance of baroque works, the author relies on the concept of “authentic performance strategy”. The choice of strategy is an important feature of the modern creative process: thanks to special communicative mechanisms, an interpreter is able to change the field of meanings in the text-work system. The strategy of reconstruction (authentic, HIP) is defined as the process of recreating the acoustic form of a work that corresponds to the sound image of a musical era that is remote in time (due to a set of chronotopic conditions of music-making: instrument, articulation, phrasing, dynamics) (Nikolayevskaya, 2020).

The methodological concept of a new understanding of the performance of Handel's music in the second half of the 20th century is also being applied. In particular, the methods of textual analysis are approved, which highlight the problem of the polyvariance of the surviving manuscripts and the positions of authentic performance, which increasingly spread to the staging decisions of Handel's operas (after 1950), the tradition when the authentic manner of their sounding is combined with a new concept of theatrical performance (since 1990). These methods help to identify and emphasize the fact that the staging trends of contemporary theatre are associated with overcoming the discreteness of Handel's opera, in which each character claims to be the protagonist (Cherkashina-Gubarenko, 2004).

The authors of the article used the gender-performance approach: they identified the gender specification in the analysis of performance (Gigolaeva, 2008). Thus, the research process involved the method of classifying gender types of vocal performance and the formulation of a model of gender-performance drama, which includes the following types of levels: “gender intonation; gender and timbre specificity; gender stability/mobility; gender and figurative modulation”. All

these methods and approaches are combined into a single, holistic system, which demonstrates the relevance and scope of the problem of performing Baroque vocal music in the context of modernity.

RESULTS

In the history of vocal art, the Baroque era is characterized by the flourishing of performing schools, whose students were oriented towards the corresponding compositional style. The origins of the Baroque performing aesthetics should be sought in the music of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The role of instruments in accompanying the singing of minstrelsy, troubadours, and trouvères was limited to performing introductions, interludes and postludes, which formed a certain framework for the vocal part, making the works more rigorous and sophisticated. The vocal melody itself was often performed without accompaniment. At the end of the 16th century, this type of instrumental accompaniment was significantly expanded by the development of harmonic support for the vocal melody. In Baroque art, the vocal element played a huge role and was a model for instrumental performance and vice versa. According to the traditions and professional skills, a singer of that time had to have a clear, even sound filled with a soft timbre. In turn, the vocalist's sound production in some ways imitated the style of instrumentalists (flutists, violinists, gamblers, and chembalists). The stylistic vocal features of performing Baroque music differ from the usual sound of the voice, because vibration, which is an integral part and characteristic of the voice, is already a means of expression in Baroque. The method of sound production influenced the colouring, which was much richer in the Baroque era. Other important components of the Baroque performance poetics are sound imitation, improvisation on the contrapuntal, and the performance of one's own cadences. Researchers of the Baroque vocal style also point to the need for vigorous pronunciation of consonants, intonation of vowels, and the presence of “rhythmic decorations” (or *inegalite* – “unevenness”), the essence of which is to reproduce “uneven notes”. Rolland (1984) points out that in the time of G.F. Handel, singers decorated the melodies of his operas with *fioritas*, *melismas* and *cadenzas*; and therefore the first publishers of the composer's operas had to make a choice: either to omit them (which would distort the historical physiognomy of the text) or to restore them themselves. In other words, the *fiorituri* were not the fanciful simple virtuosity of the singers, as they are often imagined, but the fruit of a virtuosity that was deliberate and subordinate to the

overall style of the play; their purpose was to emphasize the expressiveness of the main melodic lines.

The vocal technique was focused on the purity of the instrumental sound. The parity of vocal and instrumental thinking is an aesthetic requirement of the time that should be taken into account by modern interpreters (Gonçalves, 2024). In this regard, it is worth paying attention to the following requirement of Baroque performance – vocal plasticity, which is reflected in complex ornamental decorations. Their nature is light-bearing: the vibration of the chanting of the main tones of the voice melody has a sound imitation of the energy of the voice itself, its tendency to vocalize during singing (its “gene” is in prayerfulness, addressing a higher power; hence the sacredness of singing among our ancestors). Another typical feature seems to be secondary to the melodic dominance in vocal music, but, in fact, it is a sign of the artistic combination of other types of creativity of the person who sings, it is an organic creation of bodily movement during singing – from dance! The metro-rhythmic flexibility and richness of the vocal melody of numerous villanelles, rondos, sarabandas, chacons will be passed on to the instrumental genres of the following historical styles as a “cultural memory”.

The fundamental indicator of the poetics of the Baroque period, which should really determine the strategy of researching a vocal work before its public interpretation, is the work's belonging to a national school. Italian influences on the formation of French musical theatre with its predominance of choreographic elements in the structure of the musical whole (opera-ballet); peculiarities of German vocal music born in the bowels of the genres of passion and sacred concert – all these historical prerequisites are imprinted in the linguistic and stylistic complexes and models of music by prominent representatives of the leading cultural centres of Western Europe. The performing poetics of baroque music is the art of the countertenor (Miranda Azzi et al., 2024). Contemporary practice in performing works from the late 17th to mid-18th centuries demonstrates gender ambivalence, which is widespread due to the replacement of parts written for castrati with countertenor or female voices.

In the light of the gender approach, it is worth paying attention, firstly, to the vocal technology, and secondly, to gender specificity in the interpretation of specific performers of opera roles. Gender elements in Baroque vocal music are crucial to historical accuracy and profoundly affect the emotional response of contemporary audiences. Exploring gender ambiguity in baroque performances-such as having male countertenors sing male roles or modifying roles for female

voices-adds layers of complexity and expression that resonate deeply with contemporary audiences. These interpretations challenge traditional gender conventions and encourage listeners to engage with the music outside of its historical context, cultivating a contemporary understanding of the fluidity and emotional depth of baroque music. By blurring gender distinctions, these performances highlight universal themes of identity and self-expression, allowing Baroque music to transcend time and evoke a deep emotional response from contemporary audiences.

The emergence of castrati was one of the consequences of the interaction between opera composing practice and performance as a New European institution. At the end of the 17th century, opera as a genre was developing rapidly; in these conditions, castrato singers began to enjoy great popularity. Their vocal technique was exceptional and unsurpassed, and ordinary male voices began to be pushed into the background. In the face of trends of the time, composers of the time wrote all the major roles for sopranos or mezzosopranos only. To characterize countertenor singing, its specificity, complexity, and unusualness in the context of the contemporary musical time-space, it is necessary to consider it through a combination of historical, physiological, cultural, and social aspects.

Countertenor is a type of male singing voice that can be equal in its vocal range and timbre to female voices: contralto, mezzo-soprano and soprano (Bermes, 2023). It is common in vocal practice to classify countertenors into two or three types. In the first classification, countertenors are divided into alto, mezzo-soprano and soprano varieties, and in the second – only into alto and soprano. This division is related to the physiological factors of a particular singer: the length and thickness of the vocal folds, endocrine hormonal characteristics, the degree of natural development of the falsetto register, range and timbral properties. It took a long time for researchers to study the peculiarities of the structure of the countertenor's vocal apparatus. This issue is still being studied, because countertenors differ from each other in physiological characteristics (methods and speed of vocal cord closure, differences in the timbre of the spoken and singing voice, lung volume, height).

The categorisation of countertenors is closely linked to the physiological attributes of their vocal apparatus, which significantly influences vocal range, timbre, and sound production capacities. Countertenors generally employ a refined falsetto register, depending on the margins of the vocal folds for sound production instead of complete closure, distinguishing their technique from conventional male vocalisation. Investigations on the vocal attributes of countertenors underscore

many anatomical elements, including the length and thickness of the vocal cords. Shorter, narrower vocal folds facilitate higher pitches, enabling countertenors to attain ranges comparable to female contralto, mezzo-soprano, and soprano voices. Lung capacity and control are essential for maintaining pitches and executing the vocal agility necessary for Baroque ornamentation, including trills and melismas. The ratio of lung capacity to vocal fold tension may influence a singer's capacity to sustain the bright, resonant timbre characteristic of countertenors. The physiological characteristics, coupled with targeted training in breath support and resonance management, enable countertenors to produce a distinctive, ethereal sound that is both rich and nimble, precisely matching the expressive requirements of Baroque vocal music.

In the XIV-XV centuries, the etymon for “countertenor” often coincided with the term “tenor”. Its role in music was initially functional; later the meaning of the word began to correspond to the type of male voice. From about 1450 until the 16th century, in polyphonic music, the term “countertenor” was divided into two types according to its function: a voice that was recorded below the tenor and called *contratenor bassus* – a lower voice that moved against the tenor (later more abbreviated as *bassus*). The second voice, similarly higher than the tenor, was called *contratenor altus*, which also moved against the tenor (later simply called *countertenor* or *altus*). When other voices were added to the cantus, altus, tenor, and bassus, they were often named according to their number, for example, quintus (fifth voice), sextus (sixth voice). It should be acknowledged that men who have a countertenor singing voice have a very complex sound production apparatus. With the help of a developed falsetto register, using only the edge of the vocal folds for the entire phonation time, they reproduce a strange sound that at first glance resembles a woman's voice.

There are claims that the confident use of high male voices in performance practice began in the 16th century and became widespread in various regions of Italy, England, Germany, and France. It is worth taking into account Ravens' (2014) suggestion that high male singing in Europe originated even earlier – in the late fifteenth century, within the Catholic Church, where such voices were entrusted with the performance of alto or soprano parts in motets and masses. The author writes: “...this is inevitable, since the Catholic Church was the mainstay of competent musical developments in the Middle Ages,” because, as it is known, at that time, strict customs prohibited female singing in the Catholic Church. From the beginning of its formation, such a voice has gone through a complex path of physiological evolution “from the modal voice, modal and falsetto

voices, and the main falsetto voice, which is nowadays denoted by the term 'countertenor'. This is partly due to changes in human physiology and partly due to fluctuations in pitch”.

In connection with the need to educate numerous singers with high voices to participate in church choirs, the practice of castrato singers was introduced to develop the technological capabilities of the singing voice and to bring it closer to the “angelic” sound. The first mention of them was made in the late 11th century in Muslim areas of Spain, where later, thanks to the amazing “angelic” sound of their voices, castrati were gradually involved in the Catholic Liturgy, and by the 16th century they had already developed and spread in the church and musical environment. Castrates were able to sing not only church music but also opera music, performing enchantingly on the theatre stage, which at that time, like the church, was banned for women. Among famous castrato singers, the most prominent were Farinelli, Caffarelli, Marchesi, and Pacchiarotti.

The history of the colouratura voice begins with the teaching of singing two semantic figures – trillo (modern trill) and tremola (modern tremolo). Their descriptions and characteristics are contained in any Renaissance or Baroque textbooks and music dictionaries. Every successful Renaissance and Baroque musician had to master the trill and tremolo, no matter whether he was a vocalist or an instrumentalist. In the context of the rapid and confident development of singers and the schools of singing themselves, the vocal technique of Bel Canto (beautiful singing) was born in Italy, which would later, in the XVIII-XIX centuries, become fundamental in the creation and performance of operatic masterpieces by such masters as V. Bellini, D. Donizetti, G. Rossini. In general, the singers of that time paid more attention to the virtuoso technical data of their voice than to acting. Subsequently, at the end of the century; the genre began to undergo dramatic changes, namely, theatrical (spectacular) turns. The aesthetic distance from the principles of male singing development (through castration), the development of theatre and European national vocal schools marked the formation of the falsetto voice—the 'countertenor'. It is important to understand that countertenors are actually perceived as followers of castrated singers, although they have different anatomical and technical singing techniques. The vocal art of the 20th century is represented by several generations of countertenors.

The “first generation” includes the British singer A. Deller, who is considered to be the first countertenor soloist of the 20th century, and the American R. Oberlin, who became very popular in the middle of the last century. These countertenors are known for their mastery of Bach cantatas and pre-Bach music. The outstanding English composer B. Britten was so enthusiastic about the

art of these singers that he wrote the role of Oberon especially for A. Deller he wrote the role of Oberon in the opera *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and for R. Oberlin – the role of Apollo in the opera *Death in Venice*. The conditional “second” generation, which came in the second half of the 20th century, is represented by the British singers J. Bowman, P. Esswood and the Belgian R. Jacobs. They firmly established the development of countertenor art as highly artistic and popular among the public. The “third generation” of singers is distinguished by a richer, softer and more varied timbre. Among them, the Englishman M. Chance and the German J. Kowalski, who is famous for his active recording of ancient music. American J. Gall, known for his performance style in the roles of operas by B. Britten, and G. Lesne, a specialist in performing not only Baroque but also early French music. This generation also includes singers D. Lee Ragin and D. Visse. The “fourth generation” is represented at the turn of the 20. - 21st centuries by such names as A. Scholl, L. Zazzo, B. Mehta, D. Daniels, D. Walker, B. Asawa. Their multinationality reflects the trend of spreading the Baroque countertenor tradition, which has gained momentum and gone far beyond the borders of Europe.

The development of the contemporary art of countertenors is primarily associated with directorial innovation in the field of musical theatre. Since the 1970s, opera productions have attracted much attention, with certain countertenors specially trained for the main roles. This added to the inherent uniqueness and authenticity of the performance, as well as the possibility of using new stage effects and roles. The tradition of men performing male roles, not women, was coming back into fashion, and this led to the gradual decline of the travesty role. The theatrical process went hand in hand with the popularization of chamber music, both ancient and contemporary: countertenors performed cantatas, masses, passions, and oratorios by J.S. Bach and G.F. Handel, sacred music by W.A. Mozart and classics of the second half of the 20th century by A. Schnittke and F. Glass.

The countertenors of the 21st century include two generations at once: the “fifth” and “sixth”. P. Jaroussky, D. Hansen, C. Ouatu, I. Davies, T. Wey, V. Barna-Sabadus – all of them demonstrate the expansion of performance traditions and a departure from stage standards. P. Jaroussky is considered to be the most popular countertenor of our time. He is most famous as a master of interpretation of operas by G.F. Handel, A. Vivaldi, and other Italian classics. It should be concluded that the tasks of a vocalist-interpreter of the Baroque repertoire are, firstly, to reproduce the historical accuracy and completeness of the artistic image. It is worth noting that the experience of preparatory practice of the singing voice with a specific “countertenor” sound is being actualized

in many music educational institutions of Ukraine. The first graduates of the solo singing departments were Oleh Riabets (Ukrainian National Tchaikovsky Academy of Music, Kyiv), Yurii Minenko (Odesa National Music Academy named after A.V. Nezhdanov), and Stanislav Kriuchkov (Kharkiv I.P. Kotlyarevsky National University of Arts).

Analysis of the reproduction of performance poetics in contemporary practice (gender approach). Due to the great popularity and spread of the art of countertenors in the performance of ancient vocal music, the question of gender identification arises. This applies to some images that are ambivalent in themselves, as well as to the images of heroes, which can now be performed by both men and women, emphasizing different gender archetypes. For example, the part of Caesar from the opera *Julius Caesar* is written for a castrated singer in one version, while in another it is marked with a low male voice (Cumbow, 1985). In modern times, the main villain, Ptolomeus, can be sung by a tenor in one version and by both bass and countertenor in another; the same situation applies to the role of Curio. The same applies to the role of Sextus, which was intended for a lyric colouratura soprano in a travesty role, but now the arias from his part are part of the repertoire of countertenors. In fact, in a later version, Handel reworked Sextus' part for tenors, which was an unimaginable innovation at the time (when tenors were assigned mainly comic and minor roles). Sextus is a young man whose character is quite vivid and characteristic. Over the course of the opera, he undergoes a metamorphosis: From a vulnerable teenager (the first aria 'Svegliatevi nel core'), who gradually grows up (the next aria is full of calm confidence 'Cara speme, questo core') to a determined and confident hero (the arias 'L'aure che spira' from Act II, Scene 2, and 'La giustizia ha già sull'arco' from Act III, Scene 2). In classical productions, one can get a more traditionally interpreted character (in particular, in the version conducted by R. Jacobs on the Harmonia Mundi label), while modern productions highlight the character's versatility and emotional depth (version with M. Minkowski, 1990 version of *Le Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers*, directed by P. Sellars, L. Hunt Lieberson as Sextus). In the authors' view, the interpretation of the Sextus image is an example of gender stability.

Instead, an example of gender modulation is the interpretation of the image of Xerxes from the opera of the same name by G.F. Handel. The image of the famous historical character created by the composer has become controversial. At the premiere, the role of Xerxes was performed by the Italian Caffarelli, a student of N. Porpora, who is well known in Italy, London, Spain, Vienna, and France for his voice and colouratura. This approach of the composer added to the

misunderstandings of the public, because it did not fit well with the “image” of the tsar, and further interpretations only reinforced the differences. One of the most famous interpretations of the 20th century is the version of the La Scala theatre (1962, L. Alva in the title role). L. Alva's version represents the level when singers did not yet use ornamentation in the repetition of “da capo” arias. However, L. Alva's version is interpreted even more broadly than the image conceived by Handel. L. Alva presents, on the one hand, a typical role of an “ideal hero” in accordance with the genre laws of opera-seria, but he also draws a strong dramatic line: his hero is a little prim, but still capable of internal change.

One of the most interesting performances of the new generation is the English-language version staged at the English National Opera (1985, to mark the 300th anniversary of the birth of Johann Sebastian Handel). Xerxes is sung by A. Murray, an almost 'ideal' Baroque mezzo-soprano who embodies all the principles required for Baroque performance. The singer conveys all of a sudden changes in his mood (according to the plot twists and turns that the opera is so rich in). Another interpretation is the new Dresden performance of 2000, in which the role of Xerxes was performed by the American mezzo-soprano P. Rasmussen, who presents the image of the protagonist as a passionate, young man. Her ability to sing at very slow (the first arioso) and superfast tempos (the aria of “rage” from Act III) is particularly attractive, to nuance and sing with an ultra-quiet sound, which is especially evident in the love arias. In general, the whole performance is an example of a historically informed performance.

Later versions (for example, the Houston Grand Opera, 2009-2010) show a tendency to dynamize the operatic action and introduce modern elements (for example, statisticians reading newspapers). The production uses Heiner's English version in the style of the Garden of Delights. Xerxes was performed by one of the stars of baroque opera, S. Graham, the owner of technical singing and a warm tone of voice, who presented the protagonist as a gentle boy, pedalling the love connotations of his character. Another outstanding work is the performance of Handel's legacy by the modern, impeccable countertenor F. Fagioli. The performance of at least the Xerxes Arioso from his album for Deutsche Grammophon presents a new version – the image of Xerxes is presented as languid thanks to the colourful timbre, a subtle sense of fioritas (F. Fagioli has a rather wide amplitude). Importantly, the accompaniment is provided by an authentic ensemble of instruments from the Il pomo d'oro period. His Xerxes is a poet and a man who knows how to enjoy both nature and love, who knows how to admire, love, and forgive.

By comparing several performances of the role of Xerxes, it is possible to note the constant and the variable in its interpretation. Thus, the key for each of the performers is the embodiment of affects, or rather the semantic facets of one affect. This is realized at the level of tempo and rhythmic resolution, agogic, textual articulation and phrasing of melodic lines, and, of course, through improvisation in terms of ornamentation. In the later versions, each of the solutions in the use of Italian vocal ornamentation, not written in the text but provided for by tradition, shows that the performers are familiar with the vocal dictionaries of the Baroque period, the composer's operatic work and the long tradition of Italian vocal schools of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Despite the fact that all these versions certainly differ in terms of performance time, skill, dominant stylistic guidelines, as well as in the type, tessitura, and timbre of voices, they are united by the certainty of the stylistic approach to Handel's operas (Hogwood, 2007). The versatility of Handel's text allows the individual performance style of each of the interpreters to be realized. In each case, the timbre, ornamentation, expression (and its facets) are variable. From the point of view of gender specifics of the reproduction of the image of Xerxes, it is possible to point out a tendency towards a certain gender modulation: the performance by female voices is more masculine and colourful, the performance by countertenors presents a more poetic, lyrical ("female") image.

It is worth referring to the interpretation of Dardano's most famous aria "Pena tiranna" from Act II of *Amadis of Gaula*: here the image of a hero suffering from the inability to share love is presented. Gender identification in the performances is quite diverse. For example, the famous French travesty singer of baroque music N. Stutzmann positions masculinity. In the well-known version with conductor M. Minkowski and the Musicians of the Louvre (which has long been considered a reference), she wears a man's costume and sings expressively; her matte timbre seems to return the modern listener to the labyrinths of gender uncertainty of the soloist. Dardano, known for his light, delicate tone, is quite different: thanks to the mobility of his voice and the elegance of his sound, he appears to be more of a feminine character. And the Polish countertenor J.J. Orliński, who has a darker tone, presents a balance of masculine and feminine (which can be described as androgyny) in his interpretation of Dardano. The constant features of all the interpretations (without taking into account gender ambivalence) are a speech-articulated approach and recitative expression. The mobile nuances are expressed in the tempo (slower in the performance by J.J. Orliński, more lively in the version by N. Stutzmann), rhythm (the most acute dotted rhythm is in P. Jaroussky's version)

and ornamentation of the vocal line (mostly instrumental ornamentation – trillo, mordenti at the end of phrases and in cadences, improvisations in the Da capo section).

With regard to ornamentation, one should distinguish between performance strategies: in the version by N. Stutzmann's version shows a certain dynamics from moderate melismatics to numerous exclamation in the reprise. The same dramaturgy of ornamentation is in the performance of J.J. Orliński (finale-centredness, gradual addition of expression). P. Jaroussky chooses a more “wavy” strategy, distributing melismatics evenly. However, despite all the differences, ornaments work to emphasize the gradations of the hero's affective state, to enhance the psychological depth of his experiences.

Diverse interpretations of the Baroque style in non-Western European cultures provide distinct viewpoints that enhance Baroque performance art by integrating local traditions with classical Baroque components. In Japan, Baroque music is frequently executed with a focus on restraint and precision, mirroring traditional Japanese aesthetics, including “ma” (the notion of negative space) and sophisticated, controlled movements. This interpretation affects the performing manner, introducing a distinctive purity and minimalism that contrasts with the more expressive vibrato and ornamentation commonly observed in Western versions. The Japanese interpretation of Baroque performance frequently prioritises tonal purity and meticulous pacing, thereby gently transforming the emotional context of the music and providing a reflective experience consistent with Japanese cultural principles.

In Latin America, Baroque music has evolved a unique style enriched by the region's rhythmic and lyrical traditions. The Latin American Baroque, influenced by cultural syncretism, incorporates indigenous and African elements into conventional Baroque styles. This yields vivid interpretations characterised by syncopated rhythms, dynamic dancing styles, and a rich, resonant sound that diverges from European traditions. By incorporating these components, Latin American Baroque artists infuse the music with distinctive energy, augmenting its expressive range and cultivating a performance style that profoundly resonates with local audiences. The various cultural reinterpretations of Baroque music not only maintain the style's authenticity but also invigorate it, showcasing the adaptability and universality of Baroque music across multiple cultural contexts. This amalgamation of tradition and invention enables Baroque music to progress while maintaining its essence, rendering it pertinent and accessible to a wider international audience.

Technological advances like Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) are revolutionising the authenticity and interpretation of Baroque music by augmenting interactivity and immersion in performance environments. Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technology allow listeners to engage with Baroque performances in historically authentic settings, emulating the acoustics and atmosphere of Baroque-era concert halls or churches. This immersive setting cultivates a profound "sense of presence," enabling viewers to perceive themselves as genuinely situated in the location where the music was initially performed. Research on VR-assisted performances indicates that the augmented feeling of spatial and auditory realism might intensify emotional involvement and facilitate a deeper connection between listeners and the music, together with its historical background.

Furthermore, these technologies affect the interpretation of Baroque music by enhancing the potential for performer-audience engagement. AR overlays enable audiences to access supplementary information, such as historical annotations or interpretative insights, in real time during a performance, so enhancing their comprehension of the stylistic characteristics of Baroque music. This interactivity converts the conventional concert experience into a more instructive and interactive affair, allowing viewers to engage with the music on both intellectual and emotional levels. By integrating historical authenticity with current innovation, VR and AR provide novel methods for engaging with Baroque music, rendering it accessible and significant for modern audiences.

DISCUSSION

If comparing the research positions on understanding the specifics of Baroque thinking in the plane of musical creativity, it is possible to see a clear change in the musicological paradigm. Thus, the historiographical approach was most relevant until the mid-20th century and was based on textual works focused on the practical component of the art of singing. Related historical-stylistic and historical-typological approaches are associated with an understanding of the aesthetics and poetics of the Baroque period, in particular, the genre of opera and its varieties.

Thanks to the first stage of accumulating theoretical empiricism, the transition of quantity into a new quality is coming, namely: in the second half of the 20th century, socio-cultural prerequisites were established for the renaissance of the old singing school (Italian, French) as a new phenomenon—historically informed performance (HIP). To understand the essence of this

performance strategy, it is worth considering the treatises of Mancini (2017) on the practice of performing figurations. The main positions of historical performance are contained in the study of Harnoncourt (1995). Brittain's (1996) work is a detailed guide to Baroque ornamentation (based on the works of G.F. Handel), a kind of manual that provides the principles of vocal ornamentation of the Italian Baroque and examples of Handel's own ornamentation of selected arias. Thus, the performance specificity is the subject of special attention of both researchers and practitioners of baroque singing.

Scientific research into Baroque works featuring countertenors is quite exclusive. Among the most valuable are the monographs by Barbier (1998), Braithwaite (2020) and Ravens (2014), which examine the main historical and stylistic stages of the development of countertenor performance, samples of Baroque vocal and instrumental music. The emphasis is placed on the recognition of castrato singers as impeccable examples of Bel Canto singing technique. The study of Govorukhina (2018) pedals the idea of a direct connection between the revival of interest in this type of singing voice and Baroque culture as "...an object of stylization and a sign of stylistic pluralism of the performing arts of the first third of the 20th century. It is not surprising that at the time of the revival of interest in countertenors, vocal music of the Baroque period acquires the status of a fundamental component of the modern system of vocal schools in many Western European countries". It is fair to say that many examples of "...operatic and oratorio works of the Baroque period and some works of the first half of the 19th century are rightly considered to be the privilege of countertenors". The art of countertenors was originally linked to the interest of the public in opera (de Almeida Ribeiro, 2023). An essential point in the revival of falsetto singing is the problem of the ratio of male and female voices in opera Govorukhina (2017). Thus, in the Neapolitan opera school of the early Baroque period, there was a principle of comparing two performers by gender in the middle of a performance – *prima donna* and *primo uomo* (a female singer and a castrated singer). After castration was abandoned, high roles in operas were performed by women who had been barred from churches and theatres. Voices, both male and female, began to develop by expanding the range "up" and "down". Women began to sing high male roles, resulting in the emergence of a special vocal and stage role in operas – the *travesti*. Prokopov (2019) pays special attention to such aspects as tempo, rhythmic pattern, and strokes when performing vocal music by J.S. Bach and G.F. Handel. Taking into account J.S. Bach's interpretation of the voice as an instrument and

striving to preserve its resources, the specialist explores the issues of intonation and interpretation techniques (diction, articulation, breathing, timbre) necessary for vocalists.

The instrumentalism of the European Bel Canto culture, which is returning to the creative practice of the 21st century, means exceptional technical skill of the voice, but one cannot but mention a fundamental change in the psychology of the singer's personality. Gone are the possessors of the angelic voice, who from childhood were aware of their mission of divine connection and humanity. Thus, the singer was determined in his profession to be a carrier of a perfect instrument that accommodates his body (Bermes, 2023). The projection of the special qualities of castrati singing led to the aesthetics of violin and, to some extent, flute playing. Therefore, in the Italian tradition, these instruments are the main ones in the singer's voice training. Given the flourishing of director's interpretations of baroque operas (within the framework of specialized festivals and taking into account the role of academies that teach the basics of performing ancient music, which contributes to the education of a new generation of professionals), the importance of the gender-performance analysis proposed in this study is becoming more relevant. Its meaning is to create a cognitive model that reproduces the influence of composite vocal roles (gender invariant) on the performance process of today (gender constancy/modulation) through the expression of certain parameters of the art of singing (gender intonation, gender, and timbre specificity) (Xin, 2022).

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the research strategy for studying the performance specifics of the Baroque singing art has changed, which is still relevant today. In particular, it is proposed to distinguish between three rather clear trends in the interpretation of ancient music by vocalists of the 21st century. The first of them is associated with the existence of quite different, bold arrangements of musical material, which is evidence of a stylistically free approach to understanding and interpreting Baroque music. The second tendency includes performing interpretations of Baroque music from the standpoint of classicism and romanticism. This is due to the fact that a modern performer is brought up mainly on musical texts of subsequent eras – on texts that already have a fixed composer's intention. In this regard, the performer, following the instructions of the masters of the Baroque era, moves further and further away from the stylistic adequacy of the reproduction. The third tendency is to adhere to the authentic style of performance, up to the revival of the acoustic sound of ancient instruments. It can be called “authentic restoration” (Nikolayevskaya, 2017; Kalashnyk et al., 2020). While for old masters the use of artistic and expressive means was a matter of course and natural, in modern conditions such

techniques need to be mastered. Thus, a stylistically adequate interpretation of the text is possible only if one has in-depth knowledge of the traditions, principles, and techniques of the Baroque historical period. At the same time, the revival of these performing traditions and ideals should be based on a correct understanding of the principles used by the old masters, but not on a literal “copying” of their manner. This tendency is strengthened by the transcription (notation) of recordings by contemporary vocalists-interpreters of baroque music.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary art is undergoing a process of reform and innovation, caused primarily by the tendency to return to authentic forms of musical performance. Among them is an appeal to the vast reservoir of Baroque music and its performance poetics. The levers of Baroque poetics are the parity of vocal and instrumental sound, vocal plasticity (as the ability to improvise, to filter sound, to “inegalis” and to reflect mental and bodily movements), gender uncertainty (associated with the aesthetics of sensuality, as expressed in the theory of affect). The present time is marked by the desire to restore improvised ornamentation. The resurgence of Baroque performance practices, particularly the reinstatement of spontaneous ornamentation, is both a historical pursuit and a dynamic modern creative practice that encourages nuanced interpretation. Concrete instances, such as the ornamentation techniques employed in the rendition of Dardano’s aria “Pena tiranna” by N. Stutzmann, J. Orliński, and P. Jaroussky, illustrate how contemporary vocalists embody Baroque authenticity. The response of each performer to ornaments such as trills, mordents, and cadenzas exemplifies their interpretation of the emotional subtleties of Dardano’s character, demonstrating how ornamentation enhances the depth and complexity of Baroque vocal expression.

The portrayal of Sesto in Handel’s *Julius Caesar* has been portrayed by many vocalists with an awareness of historical context and modern talent. Various versions of Sesto's arias illustrate how ornamentation and vocal timbre convey the character's emotional progression, transitioning from vulnerability to steadfast heroism. Artists like as F. Fagioli and P. Jaroussky show the contemporary countertenor's function in Baroque music, employing ornamentation to convey complex emotional states. These examples demonstrate how modern artists utilise historically informed performance strategies to produce compelling and relevant interpretations of Baroque music that connect with contemporary audiences, thereby maintaining and enhancing the expressive capacity of this timeless style.

One of the unique performing phenomena of the XX-XXI centuries was the art of countertenors, which complicated the gender parameters of performance. When analysing the historical genesis of this type of singing voice in terms of continuity and demand for the voice-role, the principle of the “arch system” reveals the principle of the 'arch system': 'falsetto singers' – castrato singers – 20th-century countertenors – 21st-century countertenors. On the one hand, the development of new national vocal schools of the 20th century (USA, England), on the other hand, the socio-cultural demand for ancient music led to the actualization of Baroque art and, in particular, the culture of countertenor singing. Performance and concert practice have a very developed format. In the context of the globalization of interests, the growing awareness of the public, and the search by singers, conductors, instrumentalists, and opera directors for new forms of performance presentation of the art of past eras as part of modern history, countertenor singing is gaining popularity and professional excellence as it further develops historically informed performance in a new format. The gender-interpretive approach to its study outlines the vector of renewal of musicology in the 21st century.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Barok dönem icrasının poetikasının, farklı ülkelerin konser ve tiyatro ortamlarındaki örneklerinin çağdaş sunumları temelinde incelenmesi, dünya ses sanatları biliminin acil talebidir. Çalışma, Barok dönemi vokal performansının karmaşık dünyasına dalarak, bu dönemin şarkı söyleme

sanatının benzersiz özelliklerini araştırıyor. Barok operada vokal ve enstrümantal öğeler arasındaki etkileşimi, kontrtenorların ortaya çıkışını ve önemini ve cinsiyet kimliğinin karmaşık sorununu ele alıyor. Yazar, Barok müziğinin doğru yorumlanması ve icrası için tarihsel ve kültürel bağlamın anlaşılmasının önemini vurgulamaktadır. Tarihsel temelli performans geleneklerinin (TTE) teşhisi; bunların değişimleri ve dönüşümleri (yönetmenlik stratejileri, sahneleme kararları); güncellenmiş performans stratejileri bağlamında vokal partiler; ve ikonik performansların ve kişiliklerin analizi. Makalenin amacı, küreselleşme çağında kültürel sürecin özgün örnekleri olarak antik stil ve türlerin yorumlanmasına ilişkin çağdaş müzik kültüründeki performans stratejilerini, barok müzik şiirinin bileşenlerinin anlaşılması temelinde belirlemektir. Araştırmanın metodolojisi, bu konunun kapsamlı bir şekilde incelenmesi için gerekli olan bilişsel, yorumlayıcı, tarihsel ve üslupsal yaklaşımlara dayanmaktadır. Yazar ayrıca yorumcunun metin-eser sisteminde anlam alanını değiştirebilmesi nedeniyle "gerçek icra stratejisi"ne de güvenmektedir. Çalışmanın önemli bir unsuru da ilgili dönemin müzik formunun yeniden üretilmesinde kendini gösteren yeniden inşa stratejisidir. Performansın cinsiyete özgü olduğu da vurgulanıyor. Bütün bunlar barok performansının modern gerçekliklerde yeniden düşünülmesine katkıda bulundu. Yazar, otantik "opera metnine" cinsiyetçi bir yaklaşımın hakim olduğu ikonik eserleri (Dardano'nun "Amadis of Gaul" operasının II. Perdesindeki "Pena tiranna" aryası) ve performansları (G.F. Handel'in "Julius Caesar" operasındaki Sesto partisi) analiz ediyor; çağdaş sanatta kontrtenorun rolü, tarihsel olarak bilinçli performans bakış açısından karakterize ediliyor. Vokal ve enstrümantal düşüncenin korelasyonunun dönemin estetik bir gereksinimi olduğu ve bu bağlamda barok icranın bir sonraki gereksinimi olan vokal plastisiteye dikkat çekmek gerektiği unutulmamalıdır. Antik vokal müziğin icrasında kontrtenor sanatının büyük popülaritesi ve yaygınlaşması nedeniyle, V.O. Gigolayeva'nın konseptinin geliştirilmesinde, bir performans stratejisi olarak cinsiyet kimliği sorunu ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca yazarlar, belirli bir ulusal okula ait olup olmadığını araştırdılar: Fransız müzik okulunun oluşumunda İtalyan etkileri, Alman vokal müziği. Örneğin, güzel bir ton ve virtüöz süslemelerle karakterize edilen Bel Canto olarak bilinen İtalyan vokal tekniği Barok dönemde ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu teknik 18. ve 19. yüzyılın büyük opera sanatçılarının temellerini oluşturmuştur. Yazarlar ayrıca şarkı sesinin akustiği ve fizyolojisi üzerine yapılan çalışmalarını rapor ediyorlar. "Kontrtenor" etimolojisi ile "tenor" terimi arasındaki farkları açıklıyorlar. Ayrıca koloratur sesinin tarihine de dikkat çekiliyor.

Tartışmaya dayanarak, Barok dönemi şarkı söyleme sanatının performans özelliklerini incelemeye yönelik araştırma stratejisinin değiştiği sonucuna varmak mümkündür. Özellikle 21. yüzyıl vokalistlerinin antik müziği yorumlamasında üç oldukça net yönelim özetleniyor. Bunlardan ilki, Barok müziğini anlama ve yorumlamada özgür bir yaklaşımı ortaya koyan, müzikal materyalin atipik düzenlemeleriyle ilgilidir. İkinci eğilim ise, bestecinin yoruma koyduğu niyetle bağlantılı olan, Barok müziğinin klasisizm ve romantizm bakış açısıyla yorumlanmasıdır. Üçüncü eğilim, otantik icra tarzına bağlı kalmaktır. Daha önceleri sanatsal ve ifade araçlarının kullanımı yaygın ve doğal iken, günümüz koşullarında bu tür teknikler ustalık, derin bilgi ve ulusal okulların içsel özellikleriyle barok müzik döneminin anlaşılmasını gerektirmektedir. Değerli bir çağdaş sanatçının önemli bir özelliği, sanatsal bir imgenin tarihsel bütünlüğünü ve özgünlüğünü modern süslemelerle yeniden üretebilme yeteneğidir.

Sonuçlar, barok müzik döneminin icra şiirinin özelliklerini özetlemektedir: vokal ve enstrümantal düşüncenin eşitliği, ses taklidi, kontraltoda doğaçlama ve kişinin kendi kadanslarını icra etmesi. Barok müzik icrasında, sesin içsel bir niteliği ve karakteristiği olan titreşim açısından üslup farklılıkları ve icraya sınırsız olanaklar sağlayan renkli ses oluşturma yöntemleri belirtilmektedir. Çağdaş sanat, büyük ölçüde otantik müzik performans uygulamalarına olan ilginin yeniden canlanmasıyla yönlendirilen önemli bir dönüşümden geçiyor. Bu hareket, özellikle Barok müziğe ve onun ayırt edici performans estetiğine olan yenilenen takdirle belirginleşiyor. Barok performans tekniklerinin yeniden canlandırılması yalnızca tarihi bir yeniden canlandırma çalışması değil, aynı zamanda modern sanatsal ifadeyi geçmişten öğelerle aşlayan, zengin bir ses ve yorum dokusu yaratan dinamik bir süreçtir.

Barok estetiğinin merkezinde vokal ve enstrümantal unsurlar arasındaki denge kavramı yer alır. Sesin sıklıkla öncelik kazandığı sonraki dönemlerin aksine, Barok müzik vokal ve enstrümantal seslerin uyumlu bir şekilde bütünleşmesini aradı. Vokal esneklik, Barok performans pratiğinin yeniden ilgi gören bir diğer önemli yönüdür. Barok vokal performansı, ses aracılığıyla zihinsel ve bedensel hareketleri yansıtmaya yeteneğini vurgulayarak müzik ve dinleyici arasında içgüdüsel bir bağlantı yaratmıştır. Modern vokalistler bu teknikleri giderek daha fazla araştırıyor, vokal yeteneklerinin sınırlarını zorluyor ve performanslarının ifade yelpazesini genişletiyor. Barok müzikteki cinsiyet belirsizliği kavramı, çağdaş bağlamımızda özellikle ilgi çekicidir. Performansın bu yönü, modern yorumlara karmaşıklık katmanları ekler. Hem icracıları hem de izleyicileri, müzikal ifadedeki geleneksel cinsiyet kavramlarını yeniden gözden geçirmeye davet eder.

Çağdaş Barok performansındaki en heyecan verici trendlerden biri doğaçlama süslemelerin yeniden canlandırılmasıdır. Barok müziğin ayrılmaz bir parçası olan ancak sonraki dönemlerde büyük ölçüde kaybolan bu uygulama yeniden keşfediliyor ve performanslara yeniden entegre ediliyor. Bu süreç, çağdaş Barok uzmanları tarafından kayıtların titizlikle incelenmesi ve transkripsiyonuyla destekleniyor ve süsleme doğaçlama sanatına dair değerli içgörüler sağlıyor. Barok repertuarında uzmanlaşmış modern vokalistler için zorluk, hassas bir denge kurmaktır. Barok döneminin stilistik normlarına ve geleneklerine bağlı kalırken, modern vokal tekniklerinden yararlanırken tarihi gerçekliği yeniden yaratmaya çabalamalıdır. Bu yalnızca teknik beceri değil, aynı zamanda derin tarihsel bilgi ve yorumlama duyarlılığı da gerektirir.

Küreselleşen dünyamızda, dinleyicilerin giderek daha bilgili ve seçici hale geldiği bir ortamda, kontrtenor sesi, büyüleyen ve merak uyandıran benzersiz bir ses sunar. Vokal performansında geleneksel cinsiyet normlarına meydan okur ve Barok döneminin ses dünyasına doğrudan bir bağlantı sağlar. Şarkıcılar, şefler, enstrümantalistler ve opera yönetmenleri tarihi eserleri sunmanın yenilikçi yollarını aramaya devam ederken, kontrtenor şarkı söylemek geçmişin müziğini yeniden hayal etmek için güçlü bir araç haline geldi.