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Songs for Lyric Tenor: An Analysis of Five Francesco Paolo Tosti songs

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ABSTRACT

Selecting diverse repertoire for the undergraduate lyric tenor can be a challenging process for instructors of this voice type. Francesco Paolo Tosti, a lyric tenor and composer, wrote songs that exemplify technical concepts that should be cultivated in the undergraduate lyric tenor voice. This guide will present five Tosti songs that address technical issues, which the lyric tenor must overcome to progress into more advanced repertoire.

Keywords: Tosti, Lyric Tenor, Performance Guide, Song Analysis, Vocal Performance.

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1. Introduction

The tenor voice is arguably the most unique, and challenging fach to teach. Richard Miller, one of our country's most highly regarded pedagogues, states in his book *Training Tenor Voices*, "Singing tenor is a challenge. It requires guts and intelligence. It also demands the best technical foundation a singer can get."²

In lessons, teachers' address proper posture, breath mechanics, optimal resonance, clarity of vowels, vowel modification, and overall expression. However, it is through the repertoire assigned to the singer that the instructor can best guide the application of these technical principals.

The inherent legato and frontal qualities of the Italian language are prominent reasons that voice teachers assign Italian repertoire to their students early in vocal development. Once early Italian songs are mastered, singing in Italian can be explored further.

Selecting repertoire for the undergraduate lyric tenor is a tedious process for instructors of this voice type. The undergraduate lyric tenor is still maturing at a rapid rate and his voice will face inconsistencies on a daily basis. It is the duty of the teacher to assign repertoire that will display and nurture the strengths of the singer while incorporating essential fundamental concepts of vowel modification and passaggio negotiation, in addition to the basics of breath mechanics and resonance.

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² Miller, Richard. *Training Tenor Voices*. p. x. New York: Schirmer Books, 1993.

This process will allow the tenor to develop confidence while instilling a solid technical foundation that will pave the way for more challenging repertoire in the future. Francesco Paolo Tosti, a lyric tenor and composer, wrote songs that exemplify technical concepts that should be cultivated in the undergraduate lyric tenor voice. His songs offer the undergraduate level tenor the opportunity to find a deeper connection to the Italian language after early Baroque and Classical Italian songs have been introduced and mastered.

2. Methodology

Tosti composed over 350 songs in Italian, the Neapolitan dialect, French, and English. An accomplished pianist and tenor, he was well informed as both a voice teacher and performer. Tosti's contemporaries and friends included Verdi, Puccini, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Boito, Melba, Tetrizzini, and Caruso.² This guide will suggest that his singing and teaching background, in addition to his circle of friends, may have greatly impacted his compositional style.

Tosti's gifts demonstrate perfectly crafted songs for the voice and display his understanding of the voice and its function. Carol Kimball describes his songs as displaying "intense emotionalism" and the definitive "Italian Song sound."³ This performance guide will address theoretical concepts, such as each song's formal structure, harmonic function, key areas, and accompaniment, as they relate to the singer's interpretation of the poetry.

When referencing the relationship between music and text, Donald Ivey notes that "the role of music as an aid to expression, or heightening the emotional or connotative implications of the poetry...the ways in which music can reflect or reinforce the surface of the poem."⁴ An exploration of the poetry, its translation, and its function as set harmonically by the poet will provide interpretive ideas for the performer.

Clifton Ware states, that "regarding the concept of vowel modification (*aggiustamento*), scientific and empirical evidence tends to support the concept." He further states, "Singers are at the mercy of the composer or lyricist, who dictates which vowels are to be sung on given pitches."⁵ Through an explanation of traditional tenor registers and registration breaks (*passaggi*), the tessitura of each individual song, and specific musical examples, appropriate vowel modifications are suggested from the basic IPA transcription. The vowel modification should achieve the healthiest balance, freest tone, and offer the easiest production to the singer.

3. Francesco Paolo Tosti

Francesco Paolo Tosti was born April 9, 1846 in Ortona, Italy - a small town in the Abruzzo region, just off the Adriatic Coast. As a child, Tosti studied violin and was accepted to the Naples Conservatory at the age of twelve. While at the Naples Conservatory, he studied composition from Giuseppe Saverio Mercadante, in addition to violin. Mercadante is credited for influencing Giuseppe Verdi's dramatic technique, predominantly through his melodic style and orchestration techniques. His influence on melodic style is apparent in Tosti's songs.

After completing his violin studies in Naples, Tosti ventured to Rome. In Rome, Tosti became well known as a singing teacher – he possessed a lovely lyric tenor voice – and became a part of the most aristocratic society. He became the voice teacher to the court of Princess Margherita of Savoy, whom would later become the queen of Italy.

After spending more than five years in Rome, Tosti then moved to London. He became the singing teacher to Queen Victoria's children, and was responsible for all of her private vocal concerts. Tosti signed a contract and began what would become a very lucrative relationship with a publisher from Milan – Ricordi. Ricordi also resided in London during the same time.

In London, Tosti also served on the faculty at both the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music. In 1906, Tosti became a British citizen and was knighted by King Edward VII in 1908. In 1912, Tosti returned to Rome and spent the final years of his life in Italy. He died in his apartment in the Hotel Excelsior in Rome on December 2, 1916.

³ Francesco Paolo Tosti: 30 Songs, *High Voice*. (Milan: Ricordi, Distributed by Hal Leonard, 2002), 2.

⁴ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Style and Literature*. (Redmond, Washington: Pst... Inc., 1996, 2000), 363.

⁵ Donald Ivey, *Song: Anatomy, Imagery, and Styles*, (New York: The Free Press, 1970), ix.

4. Compositional style and influences

Tosti composed more than 350 songs in various languages, including Italian, French, English, and the Neapolitan dialect. His experience as a singer, voice teacher, violinist, and pianist greatly influenced his compositional style. He obtained a vast knowledge of vocal technique, which commanded the respect of Verdi who considered Tosti to be one of the greatest voice teachers of his day. Friends and colleagues of Tosti included the foremost operatic composers of the day, such as Puccini, Mascagni, Boito, and, of course, Verdi. Similarly, Tosti was well acquainted with renowned singers of the day.

The famous Australian soprano, Nellie Melba, and the great Italian tenor, Enrico Caruso, helped bring acclaim to Tosti's songs. Their programming of his songs on recitals, helped his works become known to a broad audience.⁶ Other notable singers that brought notoriety to Tosti's songs through recital programming were John McCormack, Luisa Tetrazzini, Beniamino Gigli, and Ezio Pinza.

Tosti's songs contain beautiful, singable melodies, often allowing for embellishment by the singer; hence their popularity amongst operatic singers. The vocal lines display Tosti's keen understanding of the mechanics of the voice. Likewise, the accompaniment in his songs displays his ability to imaginatively construct a song from its fundamental elements. Tosti was able to compose accompaniments that create evocative moods and fuse them with Italianate melodies that engage the listener and allow for freedom of expression by the singer. His songs are direct, well crafted, at times intense, and striking.

The influence of Neapolitan melodies and the finesse of bel canto vocal lines are apparent in Tosti's songs. In her book *Song: A Guide to Style & Literature*, Carol Kimball notes that "intense emotionalism color the songs of Paolo Tosti, whose song style defines for many the ultimate 'Italian song' sound - Italianate melody with a generous dash of Neapolitan popular song... he knew how to write engaging, flowing melodies that displayed the voice... they had an immediate appeal."⁷

The syllabic setting of the poetry within the confines of an almost always gorgeous melody is inherent to Tosti's Italian songs. In Francesco Santivale's biography on the composer, *The Song of a Life*, he explains that "Tosti's choice among contemporary Italian poets was determined not only by the musical potential of the lyrics, but [also] to a great extent by the literary themes and styles that would make the greatest impact on the general public, so that these verses reflected their ideals and aspirations."⁸

5. Song text and poetry

Much of the poetry that Tosti selected to set to music was intimately associated with the cultural and historical setting where he lived and worked early in his career.⁹ "Tosti's desire to keep up to date with the latest in both Italian and foreign poetry, his direct acquaintance with the poets, the sharing of ideas, experiences... enriched his work immensely. Tosti distinguished himself thanks to this felicitous combination of his natural gift for melody and his continual striving for a more cultured and refined style."¹⁰ However, "certain vocabulary and poetic themes," particularly love, continued to resurface in the poetry that was offered to composers by their publishers.¹¹

Tosti set poetry that was strophic in structure and consisted of verses that were heptasyllabic (seven syllables) to octosyllabic (eight syllables), enneasyllabic (nine syllables) or hendecasyllabic (eleven syllables).¹² This regularity in pattern throughout the poetry allows for smoothness of recitation, which encouraged Tosti's predominantly syllabic writing style. A syllabic setting maintains the natural rhythm of the poetry. However, this puts a great deal of responsibility on the interpreter of his songs to recreate the fluidity and natural rhythm of the poetry through legato singing.

6 Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Style & Literature*, 363.

7 Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Style & Literature*, 363

8 Francesco Santivale, *The Song of a Life: Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846-1916)*, (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 75.

9 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 75.

10 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 76.

11 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 169.

12 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 169.

6. Exploring the repertoire

During the exploration of repertoire, I will address the following within each song: Pedagogical Observations; Accompaniment; Phrasing and Articulation; Vocal Challenges and Benefits; as well as Poetry/Text. I will also suggest a recommendation on classification, or skill level, of the undergraduate lyric tenor. The classifications are: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced levels. But, first, let's review some pedagogical terminology: Tessitura, Passaggio, and Vowel Modification.

6.1 Tessitura, Passaggio, and Vowel Modification

The range of most lyric tenors is from C₃ to C₅. The term tessitura refers to the portion of the music in which most of the pitches of the melody lie.¹³ Richard Miller defines lyric tenor as one that “can sing much of the standard opera literature. He must have a beautiful vocal timbre and be able readily to sustain a high tessitura.”¹⁴ Every voice type is made up of different registers; however, it is the blending and navigation of these registers in the lyric tenor that can significantly impact the upper register, which is arguably the most important aspect of his voice.

Miller says the term *passaggi*, meaning passageway in Italian, refers to a “pivotal point” in the vocal register.¹⁵ These “pivotal points” are transition points, also known as breaks, in the tenor voice. In the tenor voice we refer to these *passaggi* as the *primo passaggio*, or first transition point, occurring at D₄; the *secondo passaggio*, or second transition point, occurring at G₄ (NAN PLAYS PITCH); and the area between D₄ and G₄ as the *zona di passaggio*, or transition area.¹⁶

The act of seamlessly navigating between these registers in the most “efficient” manner, to achieve the most consistent tone, is described as registration.¹⁷ The primary objective of the classically trained tenor is to make the *passaggi* areas undetectable. It is by way of *aggiustamento*, or vowel adjustment, that the singer is able to best negotiate between registers.¹⁸

Vowel Modification is the “gradual adjustment of vowels during the ascent of the scale so as to produce uniform timbre, resulting in an evenly registered voice.”¹⁹ Richard Miller also refers to vowel modification by its Italian name, *aggiustamento*. He defines *aggiustamento* as “vowel modification in singing; a method for achieving an even scale throughout the registers of the singing voice, associated with the historic Italian school.”²⁰ Now, let's look at the songs.

7. Aprile

7.1 Pedagogical observations

Tosti sets *Aprile* firmly in the key of C major with a 6/8 time signature. The range in this piece spans one octave, G₃, just below middle C, up to G₄, just above middle C. The tessitura lies between G₃ and E₄, just below and in the *primo passaggio*. The vowels utilized in the *passaggio* in this piece are: [a], [ɛ], [e], [i], [o]. Finally, the recommended classification for the undergraduate lyric tenor is: Intermediate level.

7.2 Analysis and interpretation

The piano writing utilizes an arpeggiated accompaniment, which supports the singer harmonically and tonally. However, the vocal line is independent of the accompaniment. The fluid and legato accompaniment does not support the singer rhythmically, so the singer must command a strong sense of rhythmic accuracy and pulse in this song. Tosti indicates specific tempi changes. These tempi changes occur at climactic moments within the piece, both dramatically and textually.

The vocal phrases are consistently 2-bar phrases and the articulation is syllabic. Therefore, the singer must fully understand legato line, which will propel rhythmic energy forward throughout each phrase. An overall sense of forward motion is necessary in this piece by both pianist and singer to accurately depict the mood - themes of spring and love.

13 Miller, Training Tenor, 159.

14 Miller, Training Tenor, 159.

15 Miller, Training Tenor, 158.

16 Miller, Training Tenor, 7.

17 Ware, Basics of Pedagogy, 281.

18 Miller, Training Tenor, 39.

19 Miller, Training Tenor, 161.

20 Miller, Training Tenor, 155.

The challenges presented in this piece are the required rhythmic and melodic accuracy of the singer, without having the aid of vocal doubling in the accompaniment. Also, the syllabically set text may interrupt the vowel-to-vowel connection of the Italian language, contradicting Tosti's suggestion of "molto legato". Tosti's choice of text in the singer's zona di passaggio was deliberate. He carefully crafted the melodic line with the poetry so that the vowels of the text in the singer's zona di passaggio, [o], [i], [e], are excellent vowel choices. Conversely, the singer must pay close attention to [ɛ] and [a] so that they do not spread, causing unbalanced registration and resonance. Richard Miller suggests that the singer modify [ɛ] to [e] and [a] to [ɔ].²¹ These vowel adjustments encourage a narrowing and heightening of their more open neighbors, which will facilitate ease of vocal production, as well as balanced registration and resonance. Furthermore, the suggested modifications aim to focus the tone and vowels to prevent spreading.²²

This song was composed in October of 1882 in Milan, but not published by Ricordi until 1884. The overall mood of the song is joyful as the poetry depicts themes of spring and love. The light-hearted theme lends itself to being easily accessible for a young tenor. However, the tessitura of this piece is high, so the singer must be able to sustain the higher tessitura without fatigue. The singer should feel comfortable negotiating the secondo passaggio, as the climax of the piece is a sustained G₄, which occurs twice; however, Tosti selected an [ɛ] vowel for this moment, which should work well for most lyric tenors. A tenor with a lighter, more agile voice, should feel at home with this piece.

When referencing the poet, Rocco Emanuele Pagliara, Santivale says, "Many musicians composed romanze and songs to his verses, and the publication of several collections of his poems was aimed mainly at divulging texts created expressly to be set to music."²³ Pagliara served as a diligent collaborator to the publisher Ricordi because of his expertise in writing verses for music; his texts were "charming" and "original".²⁴ Tosti set sixteen of Pagliara's poems to song. Now, the poetic translation of *Aprile*:

Poetic Translation: Don't you smell in the air
 the permeating scent of spring?
 Don't you hear in your soul
 the sound of a new charming voice?
 It is April! It is the season of love!
 Ah! Come, O my dear, the fields in bloom!
 It is April! Your feet will walk among the violets,
 you will wear on your heart roses and bluebells,
 and the white butterflies
 will flutter around your black hair.
 It is April! It is the season of love!
 Ah! Come, O my dear, the fields in bloom!²⁵

8. Non t'amo più

8.1 Pedagogical observations

Non t'amo più modulates between E minor and E major with a 4/4 time signature. The range spans over an octave from D₃ to F#₄. The tessitura lies between G₃ and E₄. Tosti utilizes all 7 Italian vowels in this piece: [a], [ɛ], [e], [i], [ɔ], [o], [u]. The recommended classification is: Intermediate level.

8.2 Analysis and interpretation

The accompaniment in this song is chordal and repetitive in the minor key sections. The singer is supported harmonically, but the voice line is not doubled exactly – the top note of each chord doubles the singer. This gesture elegantly supports the singer. In an 1885 musical review, *Non t'amo più* is described as a "very successful composition in which those characteristic octaves in the voice and

²¹ Miller, *Training Tenor*, 41.

²² Russell A. Hammar, *Singing: An Extension of Speech*, (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1978), 88.

²³ Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 146.

²⁴ Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 142.

²⁵ Jonathan Retzlaff. *Exploring Art Song Lyrics: Translation and Pronunciation of the Italian, German, and French Repertoire*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), Google Books, 71.

accompaniment express as we so often find in Tosti, a surge of uncontrollable passion.”²⁶ Tosti creates intensity by altering the quarter note pattern to an eighth note chordal pattern as the singer moves into the major key area. Also, contrasting the chordal pattern, Tosti includes a one to two measure motive, which takes place between phrases of the singer. The motive rises by whole step, enhancing the tension and intensity of the minor tonal area before moving into the major tonal area. Specific tempi and expressive markings are indicated in this song. Equally notable are the dynamic markings of *messa di voce* throughout, which the singer can echo in his phrases.

The vocal phrases are mostly two measures in length. Throughout this piece, Tosti indicates a *messa di voce*, or a gradual crescendo and decrescendo. This works to benefit the singer within the syllabic writing of the phrases. There are many opportunities for rubato in this piece as well, allowing for expressive and dramatic interpretation by the singer. Tosti does a wonderful job of setting syllabic text fused with a striking melody that, with his use of harmony and major vs. minor tonality shifts, brilliantly portrays the emotional poetry.

Due to the octave doubling between piano and voice, this piece is melodically more accessible to a younger undergraduate tenor, than some of Tosti’s other pieces. Though the leaps of fourths and thirds into the *zona di passaggio* could be problematic. Furthermore, attention to vowel alignment is necessary in phrases of the *secondo passaggio*, where the singer must negotiate between closed and open vowels. For example, on the phrase “a te non penso”, the singer moves from an open vowel [a] on D4 to [e]-[o]-[ɛ] “te non penso”, all on F#4, before resolving on the [o] vowel of “penso” on E3. The singer must be careful not to over-open the vowels in the *passaggio* area in order to not fatigue himself. A more vertical vowel modification in place of the [a] vowel, like [ʌ] or [ɔ] would be ideal for the singer. Additionally, the closed nature, high placement, and frontal position of the [e] vowel on “te” should work well for the tenor, if he does not spread his embrasure, causing an imbalance in registration. The closed nature of the [e] vowel to the [o] vowel on “te non” should facilitate the narrow/vertical alignment necessary for maneuvering in the *passaggio*. However, the [ɛ] vowel on “penso” has the danger of producing a harsh tone quality if the tenor is not able to find the verticality in the [ɛ] vowel. Finally, the “Puccini-esque” melody throughout the vocal line encourages expressive singing.

The singers’ emotions in this text, “torn between romantic memories, promises, dreams of eternal love, the end of passion and disillusion,” are depicted well by Tosti. Santivale states, “the typical square-cut periods, consisting of two musically identical four-bar phrases, which are easily adapted to the hendecasyllabic quatrains of the poem (the device most commonly used by composers of romanze, including Tosti), are less predictable thanks to the variations in the melodic and the harmonic passages.”²⁷ He further asserts, “a melodic and harmonic arc corresponds musically to this rapid succession of situations: one ascending, on the words ‘una catena dileguante in ciel’, and one descending, on the words, ‘perché l’anima tua fatta è gel’, the latter lunging the soul, once light and dreamy, into a cold, hard reality.”²⁸ The major tonal area follows, “in which a livelier and richer piano part accompanies a more relaxed melodic development.”²⁹

The poet, Carmelo Errico crafted his own late-romantic style, which was extremely appealing to Tosti and his verses were appealing to the public as well, prompting Tosti’s enthusiasm. His texts dealt with nostalgic, idealized, and familiar topics. Errico’s innate manner of rhyming stanza settings made his verses easy to set to music.³⁰ The text of *Non t’amo più* depicts “restraint that barely conceals its yearning, as well as expressed pain and resignation. Even when the words rise to a peak of bitterness, the tone is more tender and nostalgic than bitter.” *Non t’amo più*:

Poetic Translation: Do you still remember the day that we met;
 do you still remember your promises?
 Madly in love, I followed you, we loved each other,
 and near you I dreamed, madly in love.
 Happily, I dreamed of caresses and kisses,
 in a chain vanishing in the sky.

26 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 132.

27 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 134.

28 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 134.

29 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 134.

30 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 127-128.

But your words were lies,
because your heart is made of ice.
Do you still remember?
Now my faith, my desire immense,
my dream of love, is no longer in you:
I do not seek your kisses, I do not think of you;
I dream of another ideal; I do not love you anymore.
In the days that we spent together,
I scattered flowers along your path.
You were to my heart, the only hope,
you were to my mind, the only thought.
You have seen me plead, turn pale,
you have seen me crying before you:
just to satisfy a single wish of yours,
I would have given my blood and my faith.
Now my faith, my desire immense,
my dream of love, is no longer in you:
I do not seek your kisses, I do not think of you;
I dream of another ideal; I do not love you anymore.³¹

9. Preghiera

9.1 Pedagogical observations

Preghiera is set in the key of D major and 4/4 time signature. Like *Non t'amo più*, the range is from D₃ to F#₄, however, the tessitura lies lower, D₃ to F#₄. Tosti only uses 4 of the 7 Italian vowels: [a], [e], [i], [o]. The recommended classifications are: Beginner and Intermediate levels.

9.2 Analysis and interpretation

The accompaniment is chordal and the harmonies are straight forward, with few modulations. However, Tosti writes a beautiful melody in the piano introduction that elegantly moves from the top voice in the accompaniment to the lowest voice. At times, the bass voice in the accompaniment doubles the voice line, offering energy and enhancing the expressiveness of it. Tosti incorporates: *messa di voce*, *accent marks*, *sentito*, *ritard*, *a tempo*, and dynamic markings that vary from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*.

The vocal phrases are two measures throughout. The “melodic line rises and grows in intensity, culminating in the most profoundly felt lines of the poem and concludes with a coda, which underlines the despair of the poet, with a final invocation ‘Signor, pietà’ (Lord, have mercy!), repeated again and again.”³² The articulation is largely syllabic, however, the slow tempo makes the language more accessible for young tenors and offers the opportunity to display sustained singing. Most of the movement in the vocal line is step-wise, however, there are leaps of thirds and fourths. Tosti writes leaps of fifths at dramatic moments and rises by whole step through the *passaggio* at the climax of the piece.

The tessitura of this piece lies in the middle and low voice for the tenor. When Tosti writes in the *zona di passaggio* and upper part of the voice, it is at dramatic moments within the poem. With the exception of the [a] vowel, all of the *passaggio* pitches are on closed vowels. The climax of the piece will probably offer the greatest challenge because the pitches are D₄, E₄, and F#₄, however, the diction can facilitate a freedom of vocal production because of the closed vowels, the enya, and glide that the diction requires (Signor, pietà! [si:n'jo:r pje'ta]). The singer should explore modifying the [a] of “pieta” to the neutral vowel of [ʌ] because of its placement on F#₄ in the *secondo passaggio*.

³¹ Retzlaff, *Exploring Art Song*, 78.

³² Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 108.

Preghiera obtains beautiful text and has influences of Schubert and Gounod.³³ Tosti is able to write a beautiful, yet simple melody that builds in intensity to accurately convey the torment of the text, which is difficult to achieve in a strophic song. This piece allows for both sensitive and expressive singing.

Giuseppe Giusti was a Tuscan poet and author of many political and social satires. He also wrote many poems with themes of love and Petrarchan inspiration that became popular due to the romantic idealists of the nineteenth century. Published in 1880, Tosti set Giusti's poem "Alla mente confusa" to music and entitled it "Preghiera".³⁴ Tosti did not set many of Giusti's poems to music; however, the *Lombardia* described "Preghiera" as "one of the most heart-felt and moving lyrics ever to spring from a poet's heart..."³⁵ "Preghiera" has a direct and somber tone. The verses represent the emotions of Giusti, who was slowly dying from tuberculosis.³⁶

Preghiera:

Poetic Translation: To my confused mind
 by doubt and sorrow
 lend assistance, oh my Lord,
 with the light of faith.
 Lift from me the weight
 that presses it into the mud:
 I sigh and I weep for you,
 I entrust myself to you.
 You know that my life
 is consumed little by little
 like wax by a flame,
 like the snow in the sun.
 From my soul, which yearns
 to shelter itself in your arms,
 break, Lord, the bond
 that prevents it from taking flight.
 Lord, have mercy!³⁷

10. La serenata

10.1 Pedagogical observations

Set in F major, the range in *La Serenata* spans just over an octave from E₃ to F₄. The tessitura lies from A₃ to E₄. Tosti uses five Italian vowels in the *passaggio*: [a], [e], [i], [o], [u]. The recommended classification is: Intermediate level.

10.2 Analysis and interpretation

The accompaniment displays arpeggiated figures representative of the rapid movement of fingers on the strings of a guitar throughout the entirety of the piece.³⁸ During the piano introduction and interludes, the accompaniment incorporates the vocal melody. However, Tosti does not have the accompaniment double the singer. The singer is fully supported harmonically throughout. Dynamic markings are not specified, with the exception of *piano* and *pianissimo*. However, *crescendos* and *decrescendos* are indicated.

The vocal phrases are two measures in length throughout. The verses are mostly syllabic, however, Tosti does allow for many places where lyrical singing can be displayed. There are several instances where the singer can sustain one vowel sound for the duration of the note value. There are also moments for staccato singing on the text "Vola". This will encourage agility and avoid the breath

³³ Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 105.

³⁴ Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 105-106.

³⁵ Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 105.

³⁶ Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 107.

³⁷ Robert C. Melzi, *The Bantam New College Italian & English Dictionary*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1976).

³⁸ Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 165.

from locking, while maintaining the mood of the piece. There is a leap of a sixth that occurs, though most of the leaps are confined to thirds and fourths, both ascending and descending.

This piece allows for expressive singing and should be fun for the tenor to perform. The singer's first entrance is on the text "Vola" and on F4 to C4. However, the closed vowel [o] is an excellent decision by Tosti because of the entrance in the upper *passaggio*. In fact, all of the *passaggio* vowels are closed, with the exception of [a] on the word "vola". To avoid vowel spreading and carrying up vocal weight in the *passaggio*, the singer should explore modifying the [a] vowel to [ɔ], however, [ʌ] would work as well. The "characteristic vocalization on the exclamation "Ah!" recurs, first with the leap of the sixth (A3 to F4) followed by a triplet figure on the text "la" in the *passaggio*. This is an opportunity to address *appoggio* and vowel modification. The greatest challenge in this piece is maintaining a legato line within the syllabic text and various leaps throughout.

Carol Kimball describes this song as, "a passionate (somewhat extroverted) serenade".³⁹ It "continues to be one of Tosti's most popular" songs, probably because of its' memorable and beautiful vocal line that expressively shines over the guitar-like accompaniment.⁴⁰

This poem was published in 1887 in a collection entitled *Le Occidentali*, by poet Giovanni Alfredo Cesareo. However, Tosti only used four of the nine stanzas "for reasons of good taste and propriety", avoiding the "mischievous elements".⁴¹ Tosti chose to make this serenade less sensual and simply a declaration of love. Cesareo utilized several formal devices to "achieve symmetry and balance."⁴² Tosti is not able to reflect the "sense of proportion created by the poet" in the "structure of the music."⁴³ The pattern from the music that emerges is a traditional one of "three symmetrical periods, each falling into two phrases – one of statement and one of response."⁴⁴

Poetic Translation: Fly, O serenade:
 my dear is alone
 with her beautiful head lost in
 dreams between the sheets:
 O, serenade, fly.
 The moon is shining brightly,
 silence extends its wings,
 and behind the veils of the dark alcove,
 the lamp burns:
 brightly the moon shines.
 Fly, O serenade:
 my dear is alone,
 but smiling, still
 half asleep,
 she has returned between her sheets:
 O, serenade, fly.
 The waves dream on the shore,
 and the wind in the branches;
 and for my kisses, a nest is still refused by
 a blond lady.
 On the shore the waves dream.
 Fly, O serenade, fly.⁴⁵

39 Kimball, *Song*, 363.

40 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 165.

41 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 161-62.

42 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 163.

43 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 163.

44 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 163.

45 Retzlaff, *Exploring Art Song*, 75-76.

11. Ideale

11.1 Pedagogical observations

Ideale is set in A major and indicates a 4/4 time signature. The range spans just over an octave from E₃ to F#₄. The tessitura lies between A₃ and E₄. Tosti utilizes the same 5 vowels in the *passaggio* as *La Serenata*: [a], [e], [i], [o], [u]. The recommended classification is: Intermediate to Advanced levels.

11.2 Analysis and interpretation

Accompaniment: The accompaniment in this piece is chordal with a melody that gradually rises and falls in the left-hand during the introduction. Also occurring during the interlude between the first and second verse, as well as during the postlude. This piece incorporates phrases of a triplet pattern in the accompaniment placed against the voice line written in duple time. This innovative accompaniment technique that Tosti employed represents a significant move in his compositional style.⁴⁶ The accompaniment supports the singer tonally, but does not ever double the vocal line. The singer must maintain the rhythmic integrity of the vocal line independently from the piano. However, the pianist must play sensitively as Tosti indicates very specific expressive markings for both the singer and pianist throughout.

The singer enters with a recitative-like phrase that develops into a distinct melody, which builds to a dramatic climax at the end of the piece. The song varies between two and one measure phrases and the singer must fully embrace the *rubato* throughout. The vocal line is similar to opera arias during the late nineteenth. The vocal melody rises and falls, emphasizes half-steps, and frequently employs intervals of a third, fourth, or fifth. The tessitura is mostly in the middle voice, requiring legato line amongst syllabic writing, by the singer. This song offers the singer the opportunity to display sensitive and expressive singing.⁴⁷

Tosti has set text in a manner that offers the singer closed pre-*passaggio* vowels throughout, encouraging a more focused tone and narrow vowel alignment. In addition, many of the *secondo passaggio* vowels are closed and incorporate a [j] glide preceding an open vowel, which will encourage frontal/palatal singing, indicative of the Italian language. For example, on the text ['pjɛ:na], occurring at F₄, F#₄, and [sɛm'bjante], occurring at E₄. Aside from the attention to detail regarding expression and *tempi* changes, the most challenging negotiation is the [a] vowel, which occurs at the climax of the piece. The open vowel occurs at F#₄ and is preceded by a closed [o] vowel. The text dictates a flipped [r] occur before the closed [o] vowel, which will encourage a relaxed and forward tongue position. However, for the [a] vowel to align with the preceding [o] vowel, the singer should modify the [a] vowel. Appropriate modifications are [a] to [ʌ] and [a] to [ɔ]. However, one might choose to open the preceding [o] to [ɔ] and maintain the same vowel by modifying [a] to [ɔ]. This decision will be relative to the needs of the singer.

This song was published in 1882 and is one of Tosti's most beloved songs. The poetry describes an ideal that does not materialize, offering the singer and listener the opportunity to decide whether his personal ideal is a "person, love, or poetry".⁴⁸ The mood in this piece varies between "ecstatic" and "sensual". The accompaniment sets an almost ethereal mood for the singer. "Ideale" "displays all of the characteristics we associate with Tosti - dreamy sentimentality, smooth, caressing phrases, pleasing melody, and a delicate melancholy. He preferred to make his emotional expression lyrical and on relatively small scale, rather than dramatic. The lines are flowing and rich, occasionally rising in yearning, but mostly in the rich middle registers of the voice."⁴⁹

The verses of "Ideale" are taken from a collection of lyrics called *Convolvoli* by Carmelo Errico. These texts were extremely popular among the social and cultural middle-class because of their "delicate lyricism".⁵⁰ Errico's poetry is described as "idyllic" because "it expresses delicate sentiments, little repercussions of external things on the poet's soul".⁵¹ "Errico writes what he feels; he wraps his

46 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 131.

47 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 131.

48 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 131.

49 "Ideale, for voice & piano", accessed February 20, 2016, <http://www.allmusic.com/composition/Ideale-for-voice-piano-orchestra>.

50 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 129.

51 Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 129.

gentle thoughts in musical stanzas indeed worthy of inspiring Tosti's elegant melodies: he is a melancholic poet."⁵² The translations of *Ideale*:

Poetic Translation: I followed you like a rainbow of peace
across the paths of the sky:
I followed you like a friendly torch
in the veil of the night.
And I sensed you in the light, and the air,
in the perfume of the flowers;
and the lonely room was full
of you and your splendor.
Enraptured by you, by the sound of your voice,
for a long time I dreamed;
and earth's every anxiety, every trial,
in that moment, I forgot.
Return, dear ideal, return for a moment to
smile on me again,
and in your face will shine for me
a new dawn.⁵³

12 Conclusion

The uniqueness of the lyric tenor voice and its' frequent inconsistencies during the undergraduate years make it challenging and sometimes frustrating for both instructor and singer. It is the responsibility of the teacher to guide the singer on establishing a consistent technique, while enabling their strengths. Additionally, repertoire assigned to the undergraduate lyric tenor should be carefully selected and serve a pedagogical purpose or goal.

It is apparent that Francesco Paolo Tosti's songs are valuable assets to the voice studio. Not only for their beauty and charm, but also for the pedagogical value that they offer to the singer. Although these five pieces offer a variety of pedagogical challenges and benefits, the basic concepts of posture, breath mechanics (*appoggio*), and resonance (*chiaroscuro*) should be facilitated as well. In addition, after the fundamental pedagogical principals have been instilled, the challenge of consistently navigating the *zona di passaggio*, and the necessity of vowel modification, in the lyric tenor is of crucial importance.

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⁵² Santivale, *Song of a Life*, 130.

⁵³ Retzlaff, *Exploring Art Song*, 74.

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