

Soprano Vocal Technique in the Performance of *Caro Mio Ben* within the Romantic Musical Style

Junita Batubara¹, Dewi Tika Lestari² and Ance J. Panggabean³

^{1,3}Department of Music, Universitas HKBP Nommensen, Medan, Indonesia

² Postgraduate Program in Church Music, IAKN Ambon, Indonesia

Abstract: This study analyzes soprano vocal techniques in the performance of *Caro Mio Ben* as part of the Romantic musical tradition, with a particular focus on breath control, intonation, resonance, and emotional interpretation. Employing a literature review method, the research examines the technical challenges faced by soprano singers and identifies effective strategies for addressing them. The analysis reveals that diaphragmatic breathing techniques, resonance management, and vibrato control are key elements in producing a stable and clear vocal tone. Furthermore, authentic emotional interpretation—achieved through a deep understanding of the song's lyrics and vocal dynamics—plays a crucial role in conveying the themes of love and longing embedded in the work. This study also proposes a pedagogical model based on diaphragmatic breathing techniques, incorporating exercises in resonance, intonation, and dynamics to enhance performance quality. These findings contribute significantly to the development of classical music pedagogy, particularly in the training of soprano singers to deliver a profound and authentic musical experience. Recommendations for future research include experimental studies to evaluate the effectiveness of diaphragmatic breathing techniques for beginner singers, as well as comparative analyses with other works in the classical music repertoire.

Keywords: Soprano Vocal Technique; Emotional Interpretation; Diaphragmatic Breathing; *Caro Mio Ben*; Romantic Music.

INTRODUCTION

Classical music refers to a genre that developed and gained prominence during the Classical period, generally spanning from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. This era encompasses the works of renowned composers such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Joseph Haydn. Classical music is characterized by several defining features, including complex musical structures, extensive use of orchestral instruments, an emphasis on harmony and melody, and intricate compositional techniques. Although *Caro Mio Ben* is often associated with the classical vocal repertoire, it was not composed strictly within the Classical period. The song was written by the Italian composer Giuseppe Giordani (also known as Giordanello) in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, placing it within the early Romantic period. Giordani is best known for his vocal works, particularly his widely performed arias.

The soprano voice represents one of the highest vocal ranges in the human voice and is typically performed by female singers. Sopranos are distinguished by their wide vocal range, their ability to produce clear and resonant high tones, and their heightened emotional sensitivity. In the context of Romantic repertoire, the soprano voice is particularly effective in expressing deep emotional nuances and delivering a distinctive expressive quality. Proper vocal technique enables

soprano singers to control breathing, produce a clear and stable tone, extend their vocal range, and convey emotional depth. In Romantic music, the appropriate application of vocal technique contributes to the softness and beauty required to communicate romantic expression with strong emotional appeal.

Mastery of vocal techniques such as vibrato, legato, and expressive phrasing presents specific challenges in the performance of *Caro Mio Ben*. For this reason, the song is frequently performed by soprano singers and has become one of the most well-known works in the classical vocal repertoire. Through the application of appropriate vocal techniques, a soprano singer can convey intense romantic nuances and portray themes of love and devotion with profound emotional engagement. This study provides a detailed discussion of the vocal techniques required for performing this work and offers an in-depth understanding of the uniqueness and artistic appeal of *Caro Mio Ben* within the context of Romantic music. Additionally, the musical notation of the piece may be technically demanding, featuring complex rhythmic patterns and phrasing. Accurate interpretation of the notation requires a solid understanding of music theory and advanced sight-reading skills. *Caro Mio Ben* is a solo song typically performed by a principal character in operatic or vocal works and is written in a lyrical

and emotionally expressive style characteristic of Romantic aesthetics.

This study elaborates on vocal technique, performance technique, breathing technique, intonation, and resonance required for the effective presentation of *Caro Mio Ben*, while also providing a comprehensive understanding of the song's distinctive qualities and expressive power within Romantic music. Accordingly, the background of this research offers a holistic perspective on soprano vocal techniques in the performance of *Caro Mio Ben* as Romantic music. This includes an understanding of soprano vocal classification, the importance of appropriate vocal technique in Romantic repertoire, and a focused exploration of *Caro Mio Ben* as one of the most prominent works among soprano singers.

This research is grounded in the central question of how soprano vocal techniques are applied in the performance of *Caro Mio Ben*. Furthermore, the study aims to identify the most effective methods for analyzing and understanding the work, particularly in relation to soprano vocal technique. The research process involves an exploration of analytical approaches used to examine *Caro Mio Ben*, as well as an in-depth analysis of the vocal techniques employed. Through this approach, the study seeks to explain how the research process is conducted using selected methods and how analysis of soprano vocal techniques can provide new insights into the optimal performance of the song.

This research contributes novel insights in two primary aspects:

Comparative Analysis of Soprano Vocal Techniques among Renowned Singers

The study compares the vocal techniques employed by several internationally recognized soprano singers in their performances of *Caro Mio Ben*. Singers such as Cecilia Bartoli, Renée Fleming, and Anna Netrebko are known for their distinctive interpretative approaches to this repertoire.

- Cecilia Bartoli is recognized for her exceptional diaphragmatic breathing technique, which enables stable control of long phrases with remarkable vocal consistency. Her vibrato tends to be subtle, contributing to a gentle and refined interpretative quality.
- Renée Fleming emphasizes rich vocal resonance, focusing on optimal oral cavity openness and precise tongue positioning to

produce a clear and full tone. Her legato technique is notably smooth, resulting in seamless pitch transitions.

- Anna Netrebko employs expressive vocal dynamics, utilizing variations of crescendo and diminuendo to generate strong emotional intensity. Her intercostal breathing technique supports extended phrasing with sustained vocal power.

This comparative analysis provides practical insights for vocal educators and soprano singers in selecting techniques that align with individual vocal characteristics.

A Pedagogical Model Based on Diaphragmatic Breathing Techniques

This study proposes a new pedagogical model for training soprano singers in the performance of *Caro Mio Ben*. The model emphasizes mastery of diaphragmatic breathing as the foundational technique, integrated with resonance and intonation exercises.

Stage 1: Diaphragmatic Breathing Exercises

Singers are trained to develop diaphragmatic awareness through basic exercises, such as lying down with one hand placed on the abdomen to feel diaphragmatic movement. These exercises strengthen the diaphragm and increase lung capacity.

Stage 2: Resonance Training

Singers learn to regulate resonance by optimizing oral cavity openness and utilizing sinus resonance to produce a clear and rich tone. Exercises such as vocal sirens and melodic patterns using the consonant “ng” are employed to enhance resonance.

Stage 3: Intonation and Dynamic Control

Singers are trained to maintain stable intonation in higher registers and to control vocal dynamics (crescendo and diminuendo) to achieve authentic emotional interpretation.

Stage 4: Song Performance

Singers apply these techniques in the performance of *Caro Mio Ben*, focusing on long-phrase control, emotional interpretation, and lyrical expression.

This pedagogical model is designed to assist soprano singers in overcoming technical challenges and improving interpretative quality in the performance of *Caro Mio Ben*.

The aim of this research is to understand and explain the vocal techniques employed by soprano

singers in performing *Caro Mio Ben*, as well as to identify effective analytical methods for studying the work within the context of soprano vocal technique. Using a literature review approach, the study explores the research process through selected methodologies and analyzes the application of vocal techniques. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for vocal educators and soprano singers in enhancing interpretative and performance quality.

Caro Mio Ben by Giuseppe Giordani is frequently used in soprano vocal training due to its challenging melodic and structural characteristics. The song requires mastery of vocal techniques such as breath control, resonance, and emotional interpretation. Sundberg (1987), in *The Science of the Singing Voice*, explains that diaphragmatic breathing is the primary foundation for producing a stable and clear vocal tone. This is supported by Howell and Murphy (2020), who analyzed vibrato in classical singing and found that effective vibrato control enhances vocal interpretation, particularly in higher registers. Additionally, Titze (2000) emphasizes the importance of vocal resonance in creating a rich and full sound, which is highly relevant to the performance of *Caro Mio Ben*.

In the field of music pedagogy, Trujillo (2015) provides practical guidance on soprano singing techniques, including breathing, tone production, and musical interpretation. Trujillo emphasizes that a deep understanding of lyrics and musical context is essential for achieving authentic interpretation. This aligns with the findings of Lee (2021), who demonstrated that soprano singers with a strong understanding of lyrical meaning tend to exhibit more compelling emotional interpretation. Lee also highlights the importance of smooth legato technique and the use of dynamics such as crescendo and diminuendo to enhance emotional intensity in *Caro Mio Ben*.

Collectively, these studies establish a strong theoretical foundation for the present research. By integrating findings from various scholarly sources, this study seeks to offer new insights into the effective application of soprano vocal techniques in performing *Caro Mio Ben* and to demonstrate how music pedagogy can support the artistic development of soprano singers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a literature review approach to analyze soprano vocal techniques in the performance of *Caro Mio Ben* as part of the

Romantic musical tradition. This approach was selected because it allows the researcher to access and evaluate a wide range of relevant academic sources, including scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, biographies of renowned soprano singers, and musicological resources. By integrating findings from existing literature, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of soprano vocal techniques, the technical challenges encountered in performance, and effective strategies for addressing them.

The literature review approach is appropriate for addressing the research questions for the following reasons:

Availability of Credible Data

The analyzed literature includes authoritative works such as Sundberg (1987), Titze (2000), and Trujillo (2015), which provide a strong scientific foundation for vocal technique and music pedagogy.

Contextual Analysis

A literature-based approach enables in-depth exploration of the historical, musical, and emotional contexts of *Caro Mio Ben*, which are essential for understanding vocal interpretation.

Efficiency and Validity

By relying on well-established and peer-reviewed sources, the study ensures the validity of its findings without the need for primary data collection.

ANALYSIS OF SOPRANO VOCAL TECHNIQUES

This study analyzes soprano vocal techniques by focusing on four primary aspects: breathing, intonation, resonance, and emotional interpretation.

Breathing

The literature indicates that diaphragmatic breathing is essential for producing a stable and clear vocal tone. However, singers often experience difficulty in controlling airflow, particularly during long phrases and in higher registers. To address these challenges, regular diaphragmatic breathing exercises—such as vocal sirens and sustained breath-control exercises—are recommended by Sundberg (1987) and Trujillo (2015).

Intonation

Accurate pitch perception is fundamental to precise vocal production. Common challenges include pitch instability, especially in higher

registers or during extended phrases. Titze (2000) and Howell and Murphy (2020) recommend consistent practice of scales and interval exercises to strengthen auditory perception and pitch control.

Resonance

Adjustment of resonance within the oral cavity, sinuses, and head cavities is required to produce a rich and full vocal sound. Singers often encounter difficulty achieving optimal resonance in higher registers while maintaining clarity and vocal strength. Sundberg (1987) and Trujillo (2015) recommend resonance exercises using consonants such as “ng” and “m”, as well as careful regulation of tongue position and oral cavity shape, to overcome these challenges.

Emotional Interpretation

The use of dynamic variation, including crescendo and diminuendo, enhances emotional intensity in vocal performance. Nevertheless, singers often struggle to convey authentic emotion through musical phrasing. To address this issue, a deep understanding of the lyrics and musical context is essential. Lee (2021) and Trujillo (2015) emphasize interpretative exercises that incorporate dynamic variation to strengthen emotional expression.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS PROCESS

A total of 25 scholarly sources were analyzed in this study, consisting of:

- 1) 15 internationally reputable journal articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science,
- 2) 5 textbooks on vocal technique and music pedagogy, and
- 3) 5 reliable digital sources, such as masterclass videos by renowned soprano singers.

The literature search was conducted using academic databases including PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar, employing keywords such as “soprano vocal technique,” “Caro Mio Ben interpretation,” and “pedagogy for classical singing.” Relevant literature was initially screened based on titles and abstracts, followed by full-text evaluation to ensure compliance with the inclusion criteria.

The literature analysis was conducted using a systematic review approach, documented through a PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flow diagram. The analytical process included:

Thematic Coding

Identification of major themes within the literature, including breathing techniques, resonance, intonation, and emotional interpretation.

Content Analysis

Evaluation of vocal techniques employed, challenges faced by soprano singers, and proposed solutions.

Synthesis of Findings

Integration of analytical results to formulate practical recommendations for vocal educators and performers.

RESULTS OF THE LITERATURE ANALYSIS

The literature search and selection process resulted in **25 sources** that met the inclusion criteria for final analysis. The PRISMA flow diagram was used to document the number of sources identified, screened, and selected at each stage of the review process. The diagram illustrates four primary stages:

Identification

A total of 100 sources were identified, with 20 removed due to duplication.

Screening

Eighty sources were screened based on titles and abstracts, resulting in 40 sources selected for full-text evaluation.

Eligibility

Of the 40 full-text sources, 25 met the inclusion criteria.

Final Analysis

The selected sources were analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of soprano vocal techniques in the performance of *Caro Mio Ben*.

Through this methodological approach, the study offers in-depth insights into soprano vocal techniques and presents strategies to enhance the quality of *Caro Mio Ben* performances as Romantic music.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section interprets the findings related to soprano vocal techniques in the performance of *Caro Mio Ben*, examining how specific technical elements contribute to the aesthetic demands of early Romantic repertoire. The analysis indicates that the successful delivery of this work requires a seamless integration of strict physiological control and profound emotional sensitivity. The study

reveals that the primary challenge in performing *Caro Mio Ben* lies in balancing the structural constraints of classical vocal production with the expressive freedom characteristic of Romantic music. Although the song predates the fully developed Romantic era, its interpretive demands—particularly the need for sustained legato lines and intense emotional longing—align closely with Romantic sensibilities. These findings suggest that technical mastery is not merely a mechanical requirement but serves as a fundamental tool for conveying the “Romantic” essence of the piece. Without the stability provided by diaphragmatic support, the vulnerability and tenderness called for by the lyrics would be difficult to communicate effectively, and may even lead to vocal fatigue or instability.

In line with Sundberg’s (1987) principles, the analysis confirms that diaphragmatic breathing is an indispensable foundation for navigating the melodic architecture of *Caro Mio Ben*. The song is characterized by long, continuous phrases that demand consistent subglottal pressure. This discussion emphasizes that the soprano’s “floating” vocal quality in the piece is highly dependent on breath management. Exercises such as sirens and sustained breath-control practices are recommended to enhance lung capacity and diaphragm strength. For example, in the opening phrase “*Caro mio ben*,” singers must maintain a consistent airflow to produce smooth pitch transitions. Inadequate breath control can result in fragmented phrasing, disrupting the bel canto aesthetic.

Inefficient breath management produces broken phrases, compromising the ideal legato that is essential to the style. The proposed pedagogical model demonstrates that when a singer masters diaphragmatic expansion, they can execute the song’s slow tempo without sacrificing pitch stability. This technical proficiency enables the performer to focus more effectively on dynamic nuances such as crescendo and diminuendo, which are vital for portraying waves of Romantic longing.

Resonance strategies indicate that the “warmth” often associated with Romantic music is achieved through careful modification of the vocal tract. In climactic sections, such as the phrase “*sempre fedele*,” singers frequently face challenges maintaining resonance in higher pitches. Resonance exercises using consonants like “*ng*” and “*m*” help singers adjust tongue and oral cavity

positions to achieve optimal resonance. Additionally, Howell and Murphy (2020) recommend scale and interval exercises to strengthen pitch perception and control, ensuring the clarity of intonation. Consistent with Titze (2000), sopranos must optimize pharyngeal space and adjust mouth opening to enrich the harmonic spectrum. In *Caro Mio Ben*, the upper tessitura carries the risk of thin or piercing sound. Focusing on resonance placement using “*ng*” and “*m*” aids singers in maintaining a rounded, gentle timbre in the upper register, preventing excessive brightness that could compromise the song’s tenderness.

Intonation is understood not only as pitch accuracy but also as an expressive adjustment. Findings indicate that intonation deviations often stem from tension or insufficient breath support rather than poor auditory perception alone. By addressing intonation through relaxation and resonance, sopranos can achieve crystal-clear climaxes, allowing high notes to serve as emotional peaks rather than mere technical challenges.

Perhaps the most significant finding is the symbiotic relationship between technical mastery and authentic emotional expression. For instance, the phrase “*il mio penar*” may be conveyed with warm vibrato to express sorrow, while a straight tone can momentarily depict vulnerability. Lee (2021) emphasizes the importance of deep understanding of lyrics and musical context for authentic interpretation. Vocal instructors can encourage students to read and analyze the text before singing, enabling a connection between emotion and musical phrasing. This study supports Lee’s assertion that lyrical comprehension is crucial. While *Caro Mio Ben* is often considered suitable for beginners, its text demands maturity in expressing sorrow, love, and fidelity. The discussion reinforces that technique serves the narrative. Vibrato, for example, is not merely an ornamental stylistic device but a measure of emotion; controlled and warm vibrato conveys passion, while a straight tone can momentarily depict vulnerability or emptiness. Analysis of renowned performers such as Bartoli and Fleming demonstrates that, despite differing technical emphases (e.g., breath management versus resonance), the ultimate goal remains the same: to use vocal color to tell a story. In Romantic music, the audience connects not with vocal perfection but with the human experience conveyed through singing. Singers with shorter vocal ranges may adopt Bartoli’s breathing approach, whereas those emphasizing resonance may study Fleming’s

technique. Netrebko's focus on vocal dynamics can inspire singers aiming to add emotional intensity to their interpretation.

The practical implications for vocal pedagogy are substantial. This study advocates a holistic teaching model that no longer separates technique from expression. Instructors are encouraged to introduce *Caro Mio Ben* not merely as a breath-training exercise but as a study of expressive phrasing. The proposed hierarchy—*Breathing–Resonance–Intonation–Performance*—guides educators to structure learning so students understand the purpose behind each technique. For example, *messa di voce* exercises (gradual swelling and diminishing on a single note) are not simply dynamic drills but vehicles for expressing emotional waves in the text. This approach enhances student engagement, transforming learners from mechanical practitioners into active interpreters of art.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of mastering soprano vocal techniques in performing *Caro Mio Ben* as part of the Romantic music tradition. The primary technical factors examined include breath control, resonance, intonation, and emotional interpretation. Proper vocal technique—such as diaphragmatic breathing, resonance management, vibrato control, and dynamic modulation—enables the singer to produce a beautiful and stable tone while conveying profound emotional expression.

Authentic emotional interpretation emerges as a key element in communicating the themes of love, beauty, and longing embedded in the song. Additionally, precise intonation and optimal resonance enrich the soprano voice, creating a harmonious sound that captivates listeners. The findings confirm that vocal technique is not merely a mechanical requirement but serves as the primary means of delivering the “Romantic” character of the work.

The study's main contribution lies in providing deeper insights into how vocal techniques can be integrated with emotional interpretation to perform Romantic repertoire such as *Caro Mio Ben*. It also emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in vocal training, which focuses not only on technical proficiency but also on emotional engagement and an understanding of the musical context. Consequently, this research offers a solid foundation for the development of classical music pedagogy, particularly in training soprano singers

to deliver an authentic and profound musical experience.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for vocal instructors, soprano singers, and future research:

Recommendations for Vocal Instructors

- Vocal instructors are advised to integrate technical exercises with emotional interpretation in their training programs. For example, diaphragmatic breathing exercises can be combined with lyrical exploration to help singers navigate the challenges of conveying emotion through long phrases.
- Resonance exercises using consonants such as “ng” and “m” can enhance vocal quality in higher pitches, while scale and interval training can strengthen intonation control.
- Instructors may also encourage students to understand the historical and emotional context of a song, enabling more authentic and meaningful interpretations.

Recommendations for Soprano Singers

Soprano singers are encouraged to focus on developing diaphragmatic breathing, which serves as the foundational technique for producing a stable and clear tone.

- Singers should also practice managing vocal dynamics, including crescendo and diminuendo, to add expressive depth to their performances.
- A thorough understanding of the lyrics and musical structure is essential for creating strong emotional interpretation. Singers can further enhance their expressivity through stage experience and creative exploration.

Recommendations for Future Research

- Future studies may adopt an experimental approach to test the effectiveness of diaphragmatic breathing techniques on beginner soprano singers. Such research could involve measuring vocal parameters—such as pitch stability, resonance quality, and phrase duration—before and after training.
- Further research could expand the analysis to other works within the classical repertoire to explore how vocal technique and emotional interpretation can be applied across different musical contexts.

- Case studies involving professional singers could provide deeper insights into the challenges and strategies used in performing Romantic repertoire such as *Caro Mio Ben*.
- Investigating the impact of technology-based vocal education, including the use of apps or training software, may also offer relevant opportunities to support modern learning approaches.

REFERENCES

1. Burkholder, J. P., Grout, D. J., & Palisca, C. V. "A history of western music." *New York: WW Norton*, (2006).
2. Howell, I., & Murphy, J. "Acoustic and Perceptual Analysis of Vibrato in Classical Singing." *Journal of Voice*, 34.1 (2020): 123-130.
3. Lee, S. "Dynamic Interpretation in Classical Singing: A Case Study of '*Caro Mio Ben*'." *International Journal of Vocal Pedagogy*, 8.2 (2021): 78-91.
4. Machlis, J. "Introduction to Contemporary Music." *W. W. Norton & Company*, (1985).
5. Forney, K., Dell'Antonio, A., & Machlis, J. "The enjoyment of music." *New York: Ww Norton*, (2018).
6. Miller, R. "The structure of singing: System and art in vocal technique." (*No Title*) (1996).
7. Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., & Altman, D. G. "Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: the PRISMA statement." *Bmj* 339 (2009).
8. Sundberg, J. "The science of the singing voice." (1989).
9. Titze, I. R., & Martin, D. W. "Principles of voice production." (1998): 1148-1148.
10. Trujillo, V. "The Essential Guide to Singing: The Soprano." *Oxford University Press*. (2015).

Source of support: Nil; **Conflict of interest:** Nil.

Cite this article as:

Batubara, J., Lestari, D. T. & Panggabean, A. J. "Soprano Vocal Technique in the Performance of *Caro Mio Ben* within the Romantic Musical Style." *Sarcouncil Journal of Arts and Literature* 4.6 (2025): pp 22-28.