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VOICE CLASSIFICATION IN NON-CLASSICAL MUSIC AND VOICE TYPE

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Voice Classification in Non-Classical Music and Voice Type

Mr. Srinibasa Ghatuary*

Research Scholar

Abstract – The term non-established music is commonly used to depict music in jazz, pop, blues, soul, nation, people, and shake styles. In the USA Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM) is being utilized by some vocal teachers. Voice characterization frameworks and vocal sort terms were at first made with the end goal of grouping voices particularly inside traditional singing. As new styles of music built up, the mission for basic terms for vocalists all through these styles was looked for, bringing about a free utilization of the current established music hones. This indiscriminate and un-precise way to deal with contemporary voices has been continuing for quite a long time.

Voice arrangement is a device for artists, authors, settings, and audience members to classify vocal properties and to connect parts with voices. While valuable, voice grouping frameworks have been utilized too unbendingly, i.e. a house relegating an artist to a particular sort and just throwing him or her in parts they consider having a place with this category.[3] While choral artists are grouped into voice parts in view of their vocal range, solo artists are ordered into voice sorts construct more in light of their tessitura – where their voice feels most great for most of the time.

Keywords: Non-Classical Music, Voice Type

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INTRODUCTION

There are two general methodologies inside voice order: one for musical show vocalists and one for choral music parts. One of the significant contrasts in characterizing voices between these two is that choral music arranges voices totally upon vocal range, though in musical drama characterization frameworks numerous different variables are considered. In reality, tessitura (where the voice feels most good singing) and vocal timbre (the inborn nature of sound to the voice) are more critical variables than vocal range inside musical show order. Inside musical show there are a few frameworks being used including the German Fach framework, the Italian musical show convention, and French musical show custom.

A voice type is a particular human singing voice identified as having certain qualities or characteristics of vocal range, vocal weight, tessitura, vocal timbre, and vocal transition points (*passaggio*), such as breaks and lifts within the voice. Other considerations are physical characteristics, speech level, scientific testing, and vocal register. A singer's voice type is identified by a process known as voice classification, by which the human voice is evaluated and thereby designated into a particular voice type. The discipline of voice classification developed within European classical music and is not generally applicable to other

forms of singing. Voice classification is often used within opera to associate possible roles with potential voices. Several different voice classification systems are available to identify voice types, including the German *Fach* system and the choral music system among many others; no system is universally applied or accepted.

Voice classification in non-classical music

There is no authoritative system of **voice classification in non-classical music** as classical terms are used to describe not merely various vocal ranges, but specific vocal timbres unique to each range. These timbres are produced by classical training techniques with which most popular singers are not intimately familiar, and which even those that are do not universally employ.

Approaches to voice classification in classical music

There are two overall approaches within voice classification: one for opera vocalists and one for choral music parts. One of the major differences in classifying voices between these two is that choral music classifies voices entirely upon vocal range, whereas in opera classification systems many other factors are considered. Indeed, tessitura (where the

voice feels most comfortable singing) and vocal timbre (the innate quality of sound to the voice) are more important factors than vocal range within opera categorization. Within opera there are several systems in use including the German Fach system, the Italian opera tradition, and French opera tradition.^[3]

All of these approaches to voice classification use some of the same terminology which sometimes causes people to confuse them with each other. In the operatic systems there are six basic voice types and then several sub-types within each type. For women: soprano, mezzo-soprano, and contralto. For men: tenor, baritone, and bass.^[5] Within choral music there are only four categories for adult singers. First, for women: soprano and alto, and for men: tenor and bass.^[6] Within England, the term "male alto" is used to refer to a man who uses falsetto vocal production to sing in the alto section of a chorus. This practice is much less common outside of the UK where the term countertenor is more often applied. Countertenors are also widely employed within opera as solo vocalists. The term male alto is never used to refer to a solo vocalist. Children's voices, both male and female, are described as trebles, although the term boy soprano is widely used as well.

Applying voice classification to non-classical singing

In non-classical singing, it is difficult to place voices within either system for two major reasons. First, these voice categorizations were made with the understanding that the singer would be using classical vocal technique. These specific techniques, through study and training, result in a particular kind of vocal production and vocal timbre for each voice type which is unique to classical music. This is particularly problematic when trying to apply the operatic terms, as the vocal types are more descriptive of vocal timbre and vocal facility than simple vocal range. For example, one category of voice in opera is a contralto, which is the lowest female voice in the operatic system. One of the qualifying characteristics of this voice is a deep and dark quality to the vocal sound. This quality is not entirely innate to the voice, but is developed through classical vocal training. So although a singer in another genre might have a range equivalent to a contralto, they would not have a similar sound.

"These differences in voice qualities are reflections on variation in the muscular, aerodynamic, and acoustical conditions in the larynx and in the vocal tract. The subglottal pressure, the driving force in phonation, needs to be adapted in accordance with the laryngeal conditions." In other words, the very act of singing consistently within one technique or another literally causes the voice to physically develop in different ways, and thus change the timbre of that particular voice.

Another example would be a coloratura soprano in opera. This is not only the highest female voice in opera, but also distinguished by its ability to do vocal acrobatic leaps, fast vocal runs and trills, and free movement within the highest part of the voice. A non-opera singer might be able to sing as high as a coloratura soprano, but they would not be able to do the vocal acrobatics of a coloratura soprano without classical technique and training. Therefore, the voice classification system in opera is not really applicable to singers in other genres.

A second problem in applying these systems is a question of range specification. This is particularly a problem when trying to apply the choral music system to the non-classical singer. The choral system was developed to delineate polyphonic structure and was not really intended to designate a vocal type to individual singers. In other words, choral music was designed to be broken down into four vocal sections and it is the sections themselves that are labeled soprano, alto, tenor, and bass and not the individual singers. For example, most women that sing the alto line in choirs would be considered mezzo-sopranos in opera due to their vocal timbre and their particular range resting somewhere in the middle between a soprano and contralto. A small portion of them, however, would most likely be contraltos. Therefore, one could say, "I am a mezzo-soprano singing the alto line", and the other "I am a contralto singing the alto line." They have two different ranges and sounds but they are singing the same part. This is important to understand, because it means that choral music isn't really about vocal type but about vocal range within a specific type of music: choral music. It is not uncommon for men with higher voices to sing the alto line or women with lower voices to sing the tenor line. It is, however, improper for a man to call himself an alto or a soprano, or a woman a tenor or bass. A woman who sings the tenor line is really a contralto when applied to the classical vocal type system, and a man who sings alto or soprano a countertenor or sopranist.

That being said, non-classical singers can adopt some of the terms from both systems, but not all of them, when classifying their voices. The six-part structure of the operatic system is much preferable to the four-part choral system for non-classical singers because it has three sets of vocal ranges instead of two to choose from. Most people's voices fall within the middle categories of mezzo-soprano for women and baritone for men. There are also a fair number of tenors and sopranos, but true basses and contraltos are rare.

The sub-categories in opera, however, should never be applied to a non-classical singer, for they are too closely associated with classical vocal technique. Words like lyric, dramatic, coloratura, and other defining qualities should never be applied to a non-classical singer. Also specific kinds of voices like soubrette and spin should not be used outside of classical singing. The main categories, however,

can be, as long as they refer solely to range. A non-classical singer could use the chart that follows.

Vocal categories and ranges for classical singers

The ranges given below are approximations and are not meant to be too rigidly applied.

- Soprano: the highest female voice, being able to sing C₄ (middle C) to C₆ (high C), and possibly higher.
- Mezzo-soprano: a female voice between A₃ (A below middle C) and A₅ (two octaves above A₃).
- Contralto: the lowest female voice, F₃ (F below middle C) to E₅. Rare contraltos possess a range similar to the tenor.
- Tenor: the highest male voice, B₂ (2nd B below middle C) to A₄ (A above Middle C), and possibly higher.
- Baritone: a male voice, G₂ (two Gs below middle C) to F₄ (F above middle C).
- Bass: the lowest male voice, E₂ (two Es below middle C) to E₄ (the E above middle C).

Some men, in falsetto voice or as a result of certain rare physiological conditions, can sing in the same range as women. These do not fall into the female categories, instead called countertenors within classical music. Within contemporary music, however, the use of the term tenor for these male voices would be more appropriate.

Vocal pedagogical methods for contemporary commercial music

Teaching voice within non-classical music is an emerging field. Up to this point, voice teachers and voice research have been largely concentrated with classical methods of singing. However, new approaches and methods to teaching non-classical voice have recently emerged, such as the Complete Vocal Technique (CVT) by Catherine Sadolin at Complete Vocal Institute or Speech Level Singing (SLS) by Seth Riggs. Another examples is Jeannette LoVetri's method known as Somatic Voice work. It has really only been within the last few years that music conservatories and music programs within universities have begun to embrace these alternative methodologies suitable to other kinds of vocal music. As an example, the Dutch conservatories requires all vocal teachers to have undergone CVT training, and all Danish conservatory vocal teaching covers the CVT method. Likewise, LoVetri teaches the Somatic

Voicework method in the graduate vocal music department at Shenandoah University in the U.S.

World records and extremes of vocal range

- The highest vocal range in the world, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, is that of Georgia Brown; a Brazilian female singer who produces unusually high pitches using a whistle register. Her range extends eight octaves, from G₂ to G₁₀. Her highest pitch, the G₁₀, isn't technically classified as a note, but rather as a frequency; Brown verified the record pitch with Guinness World Records at Aqui Jazz Atelier Music School in São Paulo, Brazil, on 18 August 2004.
- Guinness lists the highest demanded note in the classical repertoire as G₆ in "Popoli di Tessaglia!", K. 316, a concert aria by W. A. Mozart, composed for Aloysia Weber. Though pitch standards were not fixed in the eighteenth century, this rare note is also heard in the operas Esclarmonde by Jules Massenet and Europa riconosciuta by Antonio Salieri. Europa riconosciuta also demands an F₆ from the roles of Europa and Semele several times. The highest note commonly called for is F₆, famously heard in the Queen of the Night's two arias "Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen" and "O zittre nicht, mein lieber Sohn" in Mozart's opera Die Zauberflöte.
- Several little-known works call for pitches higher than G₆. For example, the soprano Mado Robin, who was known for her exceptionally high voice, sang a number of compositions created especially to exploit her highest notes, reaching C₇. Robin also added a number of her top notes to other arias.
- The German soprano Erna Sack also reached C₇ and her vocal range is well documented.

Lowest note in a solo: Guinness lists the lowest demanded note in the classical repertoire as D₂ (almost two octaves below middle C) in Osmin's second aria in Mozart's Die Entführung aus dem Serail. Although Osmin's note is the lowest 'demanded' in the operatic repertoire, lower notes are frequently heard, both written and unwritten, and it is traditional for basses to interpolate a low C₂ in the duet "Ich gehe doch rate ich dir" in the same opera. Leonard Bernstein composed an optional B₁ (a minor third below D₂) in a bass aria in the opera house version of Candide. In a Russian piece combining solo and choral singing, Pavel

Chesnokov directs the bass soloist in "Do not deny me in my old age" to descend even lower, to G₁ or B \flat ₁, depending on the arrangement. In the symphonic repertoire, the bass soloist in Mahler's Eighth Symphony is asked to sing a C₂. In Paul Mealor's choral work, *De Profundis*, the bass soloist is asked to sing an E₁.

- Lowest note for a choir: Mahler's Resurrection Symphony and Eighth Symphony (bar 1457 in the "Chorus mysticus") and Rachmaninoff's Vespers require B \flat ₁. Frederik Magle's symphonic suite *Cantabile* and Zoltán Kodály's *Psalmus hungaricus* both require A₁. In Russian choirs the oktavists traditionally sing an octave below the bass part, down to G₁. Kheruvinskaya pesn (Song of Cherubim) by Krzysztof Penderecki includes a written F₁ in its last chord, though the note itself is seldom performed.
- The Guinness record for the largest vocal range is held by Tim Storms, and spans ten octaves.

VOICE TYPE

Voice grouping is an instrument for artists, authors, settings, and audience members to classify vocal properties and to connect parts with voices. While valuable, voice grouping frameworks have been utilized too unbendingly, i.e. a house doling out an artist to a particular sort and just throwing him or her in parts they consider having a place with this category. While choral artists are characterized into voice parts in light of their vocal range, solo artists are ordered into voice sorts construct more in light of their tessitura – where their voice feels most good for most of the time.

An artist will pick a collection that suits his or her instrument. A few vocalists, for example, Enrico Caruso, Rosa Ponselle, Joan Sutherland, Maria Callas, Ewa Podleś, or Plácido Domingo have voices that enable them to sing parts from a wide assortment of sorts; a few artists, for example, Shirley Verrett or Grace Bumbry change sort and even voice part finished their vocations; and a few artists, for example, Leonie Rysanek have voices that lower with age, making them burn through sorts over their professions. A few parts too are difficult to order, having exceptionally unordinary vocal prerequisites; Mozart composed a considerable lot of his parts for particular artists who regularly had noteworthy voices, and some of Verdi's initial works make extraordinary requests on his artists.

Number of voice types

Many different voice types are used in vocal pedagogy in a variety of voice classification systems. Most of these types, however, are grouped into seven

major voice categories that are, for the most part, acknowledged across the major voice classification systems. Women are typically divided into three groups: soprano, mezzo-soprano, and alto. Men are usually divided into four groups: countertenor, tenor, baritone, and bass. Some women fall into the tenor or baritone groups, while men identified as countertenors can be grouped as contralto, mezzo-soprano, or soprano. When considering the pre-pubescent voice, an eighth term, treble, is applied. Within each of these major categories, subcategories identify specific vocal qualities such as coloratura facility and vocal weight to differentiate between voices. The vocal range of classical performance covers about five octaves, from a low G₁ (in scientific pitch notation) to a high G₆. Any individual's voice can perform over a range of one and a half to more than two octaves. Vocal ranges are grouped into overlapping types that each span about two octaves. Many singers fall between groups and can perform some parts in either type.

FEMALE VOICES

Soprano

Soprano range: The soprano is the highest singing voice. The typical soprano voice lies between C₄ (middle C) and C₆ (*high C*). The low extreme for sopranos is roughly A₃ (just below middle C). Most soprano roles do not extend above C₆ although there are several standard soprano roles that call for D₆. At the highest extreme, some coloratura soprano roles may reach to F₆ (the F above *high C*).

Mezzo-soprano

Mezzo-soprano range: The mezzo-soprano is the middle-range voice type for females. The mezzo-soprano voice lies between the soprano voice and contralto voice, over-lapping both of them. The typical range of this voice is between A₃ (the A below middle C) to A₅ (two octaves higher). In the lower and upper extremes, some mezzo-sopranos may extend down to F₃ (the F below middle C) and as high as C₆ (*high C*).

Contralto

Contralto range: The contralto voice is the lowest female voice. A true operatic contralto is rare,^[9] so much so that often roles intended for contralto are performed by mezzo-sopranos. The typical contralto range lies between F₃ (the F below middle C) to F₅ (the second F above middle C). In the lower and upper extremes some contralto voices can sing from D₃ (the D below middle C) to B \flat ₅ (the second B-flat above), one whole step short of the soprano *high C*.

Contralto tessitura: The contralto voice has the lowest tessitura of the female voices. In current operatic practice, female singers with very low vocal tessituras are often included among mezzo-sopranos.

Contralto subtypes: Contraltos are often broken down into three subcategories: coloratura contralto, lyric contralto, and dramatic contralto. A soprano sfogato is a contralto who has an extended high range reaching the soprano *high C*.

MALE VOICES

Countertenor

Countertenor range: The countertenor is the highest male voice. Many countertenor singers perform roles originally written for a castrato in baroque operas. Except for a few very rare voices (such as the American male soprano Michael Maniaci or singers with a disorder such as Kallmann syndrome), singers called countertenors generally sing in the falsetto register, sometimes using their modal voice for the lowest notes. Historically, there is much evidence that the countertenor, in England at least, also designated a very high tenor voice, the equivalent of the French *haute-contre*. Until about 1830, all male voices used some falsetto-type voice production in their upper range. Countertenor voices span a broad range, covering C4 to C6 (some as high as F6) to a range just above tenor covering D3 to about D5.

Countertenor subtypes: Countertenors are often broken down into three subcategories: sopranist or "male soprano", the *haute-contre*, and the castrato. The last actual castrato singer, Alessandro Moreschi, died in 1922.

Tenor

Tenor range: The tenor is the highest male voice within the modal register. The typical tenor voice lies between C3 (one octave below middle C) to C5 (one octave above middle C). The low extreme for tenors is roughly B \flat 2 (the second B-flat below middle C). At the highest extreme, some tenors can sing up to F5 (the second F above middle C).

Tenor tessitura: The tessitura of the tenor voice lies above the baritone voice and below the countertenor voice. The *leggerotenor* has the highest tessitura of all the tenor subtypes.

Tenor subtypes: Tenors are often divided into different subcategories based on range, vocal color or timbre, the weight of the voice, and dexterity of the voice. Tenors are often broken down into seven subcategories: *tenore contraltino*, *leggero tenor* or *tenore di grazia*, lyric tenor, spinto tenor or *tenore spinto*, dramatic tenor, heldentenor, and baritenor. Famous tenors include Enrico Caruso, Juan Diego Flórez, Alfredo Kraus, and Luciano Pavarotti.

Baritone

Baritone range: The vocal range of the baritone lies between the bass and tenor ranges, overlapping both of them. The typical baritone range is from A2 (the second A below middle C) to A4 (the A above middle C). A baritone's range might extend down to F2 or up to C5. The baritone voice type is the most common male voice.

Baritone tessitura: Although this voice overlaps both the tenor and bass voices, the tessitura of the baritone is lower than that of the tenor and higher than that of the bass.

Baritone subtypes: Baritones are often divided into different subcategories based on range, vocal color or timbre, the weight of the voice, and dexterity of the voice. Baritones are often broken down into nine subcategories: baryton-Martin, lyric baritone, bel canto or coloratura baritone, *kavalierbariton*, *heldenbaritone*, Verdi baritone, dramatic baritone, *baryton-noble*, and bass-baritone.

Bass

Bass range: The bass is the lowest male voice. The bass voice has the lowest tessitura of all the voices. The typical bass range lies between E2 (the second E below middle C) to E4 (the E above middle C). In the lower and upper extremes of the bass voice, some basses can sing from C2 (two octaves below middle C) to G4 (the G above middle C).

Bass subtypes: Basses are often divided into different subcategories based on range, vocal color or timbre, the weight of the voice, and dexterity of the voice. Basses are often broken down into six subcategories: basso profondo, basso buffo, bel canto bass, basso cantante, dramatic bass, and bass-baritone.

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Corresponding Author

Mr. Srinibasa Ghatuary*

Research Scholar

E-Mail – bitmquery@gmail.com