

Hiller: Vocal Performance and Ornamentation, 1780

(Translated by Suzanne Beicken)

§4

No matter how many ideas the singer has, he should not leave anything to chance. Therefore he should pay attention to the following rules:⁶

1. Cadenzas must not appear too frequently and must also not be too long. Actually, no breath should be taken in between; thus, as a result of this rule, it is not permitted to last longer than the singer's breath allows. This rule cannot be kept without exception, simply because the very different strengths and weaknesses of the chest and other random circumstances allow sometimes more, sometimes less, and at times all too little expansion. And yet an idea that is supposed to be complete and of some importance needs such expansion. Thus, if the singer has to breathe it can only be done with speed and on those notes which do not disrupt the continuity.

2. At all times, the cadenza must be based upon the pervading character and the chief affect of the aria. A cadenza consisting of numerous slurred notes would be just as much out of place in a fiery aria as one put together of wild runs would be in a slow aria. In order to make a cadenza suit the aria, a few beautiful places from the aria itself should be utilized, and, if possible, inserted with skill into the cadenza.

3. Identical figures should not be repeated too often. Rather, different figures must be combined and interchanged so that they appear more similar to a skillful combination of single independent phrases than to a regular arioso melody. For this reason, one is not permitted to follow the meter strictly although one takes the tempo of the aria somewhat as a measure and must not sing a cadenza allegro in an adagio and vice versa – not sing an adagio cadenza in an allegro movement.

4. The more unexpected material that can be introduced in a cadenza, the more beautiful it is. All kinds of figures, runs, leaps, triplets, and so on may be used there. We shall soon investigate more closely how they are introduced and what they are based upon.

⁶ For the following rules, Hiller relies mainly upon Agricola's instructions. See Tosi/Agricola, *Anleitung*, pp. 203f.; Baird, *Introduction*, pp. 210f.