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Part I: Introduction

Chapter 1: Phonetic Concepts



To sing well in Italian is a vital part of a classical singer's training, opening a gateway into a rich repertoire of songs and to the passionate world of opera. Because Italian is not our native language, learning to sing it well requires conscious control of many details of pronunciation that come automatically to native speakers. If we aim to sound like Italians, we have to know and understand what we are doing much better than a native does. That is why we need to learn certain concepts and vocabulary that are not needed for speaking our mother tongue.

Neapolitan Songs

Two popular songs that the whole world associates with Italy are songs that must be sung in Neapolitan, rather than standard Italian. Neapolitan uses many words that are not Italian, and words that are common to both may be pronounced quite differently. The most striking difference is that Neapolitan uses a neutral vowel, or schwa /ə/, which is unknown in Italian. Also closed and open E and O are used differently in Neapolitan than in Italian.

An article by Arthur Graham, "Singing the Neapolitan Song" (*The NATS Bulletin*, March/April 1984), contains general information and phonetic information about several Neapolitan songs. A Neapolitan actor, Claudio Giova, generously provided specific information about these two songs.

Funiculi-funiculà Track 60

Giuseppe Turco

Luigi Denza, 1880

Solo $E\flat$

1. A - ie - res - se - ra, oi' ne', me ne sa - gliet - te, _____
 /a:jerəs:sɛ:rɔine mə nə sa:ʎɛ:tə
 2. Ad - do' _____ 'stu co - re'n - gra - to chiu' di - spiet - to _____
 ad:do stu kɔ:rən gra:tə kju di:spjɛ:tə

$B\flat$ $E\flat$ *Tutti* $B\flat$ $E\flat$

— tu sa - ie ad - do'? _____ tu sa - ie ad - do'? _____
 tu sa:jad:do
 — far - me nun po'! _____ Far - me nun po'! _____
 fərmə nun pə

Solo Gm $D7$ Gm $D7$ Gm

Ad - do' _____ lo fuo - co co - ce, ma si fu - ie _____
 ad:do lo fwɔ:kə kɔ:tʃə ma si fu:jə

$D7$ Gm *Tutti* $D7$ Gm *Solo* $B\flat$

— Te las - sa sta! _____ Te las - sa sta! _____ E nun _____
 tə ləs:sə sta e nun

$F7$ $B\flat$ $F7$ $B\flat$ $F7$ $B\flat$

— te cor - re ap - pries - so, nun te stru - ie, _____ 'Ncie - lo a guar - da! _____
 tə kɔ:rɪp:prjes:sə nun tə stru:jə ntʃe:la gwarda

Tutti $F7$ $B\flat$ $B\flat7$

— 'Ncie-lo a guar - da! _____ Jam - mo jam - mo
 ntʃe:la gwarda jam:mə jam:mə