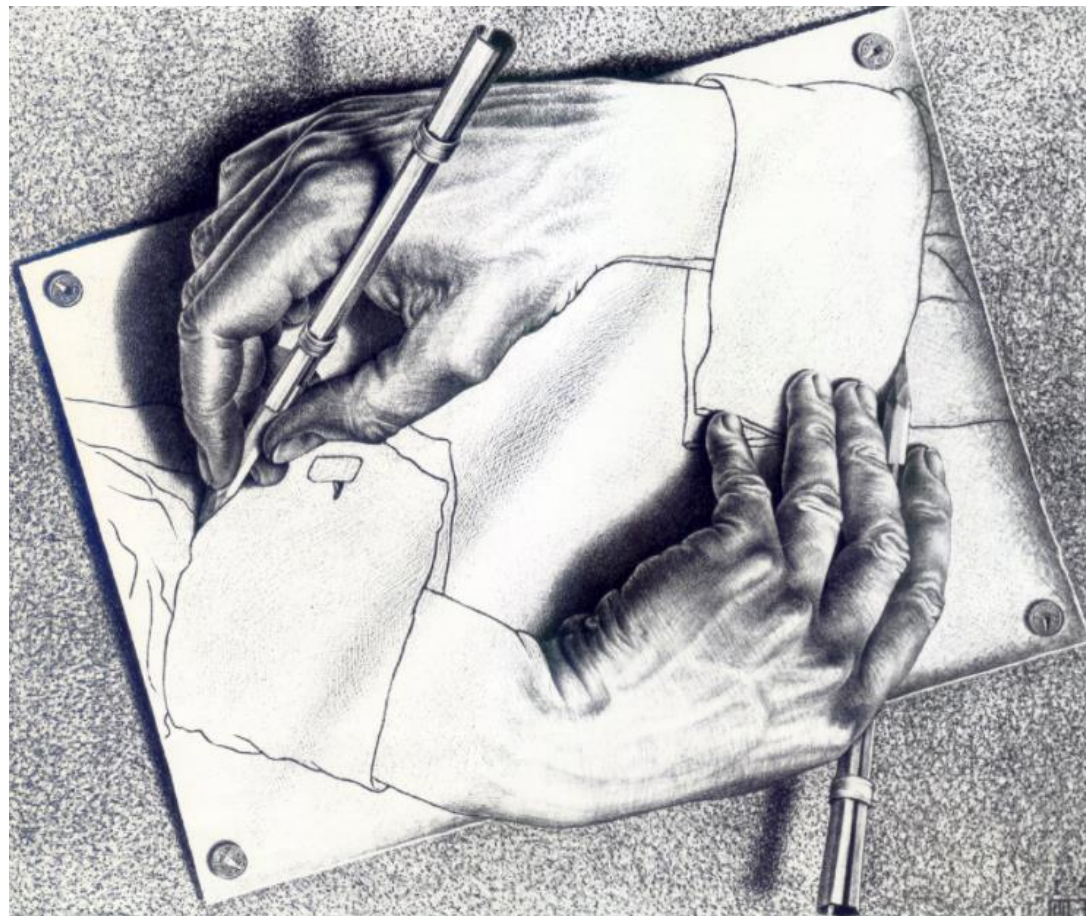


Talking with your hands

early spoken-word recordings as a guide to string portamento

Practice-led research, research-led practice



Auguste van Biene (1849-1913)



Adelina Patti (1843-1919)



Spoken intervals (Raymond, 1883): major and minor 2nds

- “The final inflection of a clause or sentence, rising or falling through the interval only of a semitone, is chiefly plaintive, and expresses melancholy, dejection and subdued grief or pathos. If the falling inflection descends through the interval of a tone (or a musical second), it conveys simply the logical completion of the meaning of a clause or sentence, but without any passion or feeling being expressed. If the inflection rises through the interval of a tone, it merely shows that the logical meaning of the clause or sentence is in progress of development, but conveys no emotion.”

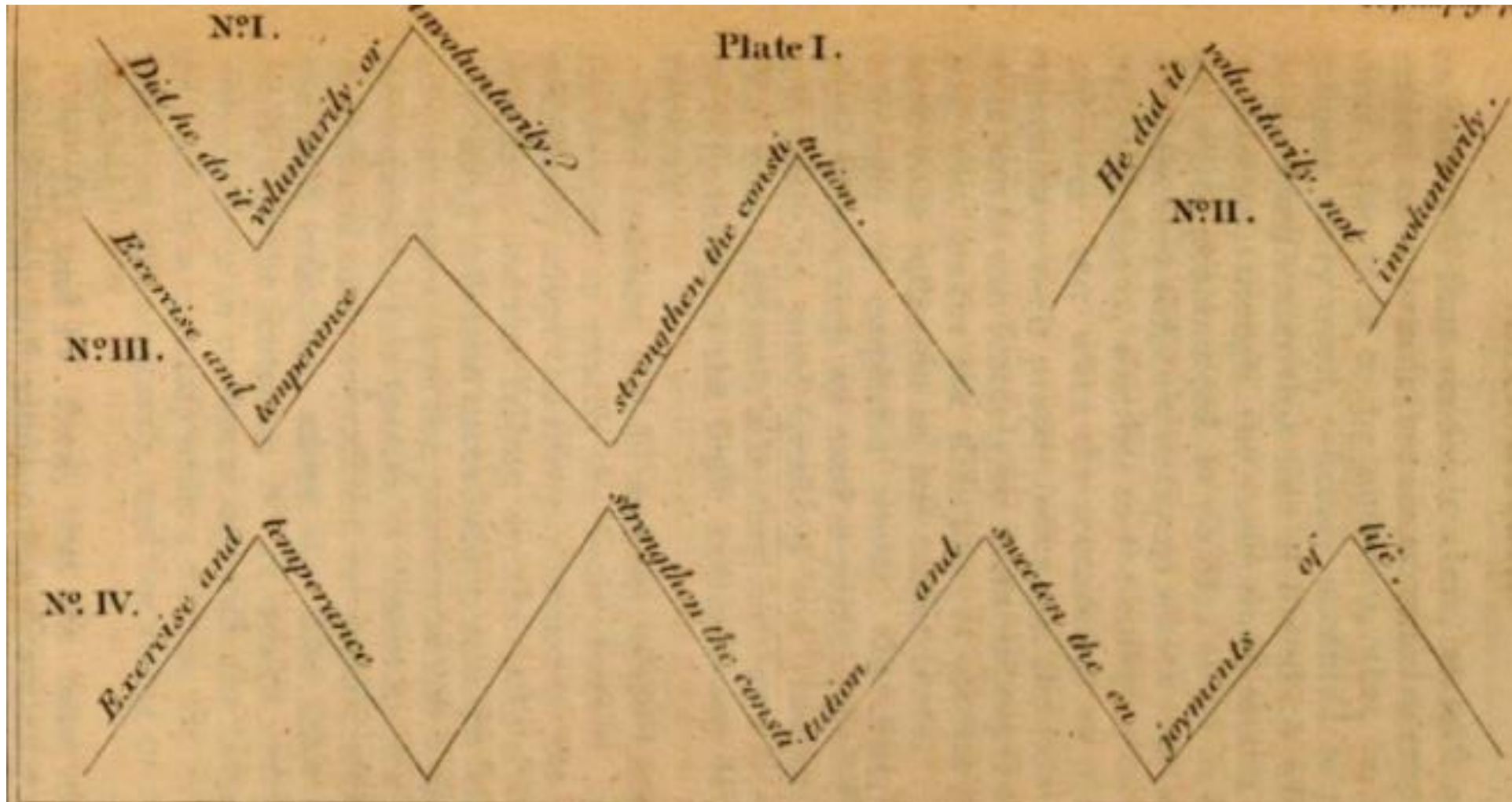
Spoken intervals: rising and falling minor 3rds

- “If the rising inflection is carried through the interval of a tone and a half (or in music a minor third), the inflection becomes strongly plaintive, and characterizes all pathetic appeals; whilst, if the inflection falls to the same extent, it marks all assertions with an air of grief and lamentation.”

Spoken intervals: major 3rds and larger

- “If the voice rises through an interval of two tones (or a major third), it expresses strongly doubt, appeal and inquiry, and if it falls in the same degree it conveys strong assertion. When the voice rises through the greater intervals of the musical fifth, or, still more, the interval of the octave, it expresses earnest appeal, wonder, amazement, and exclamation; while if it falls through these intervals it expresses the strongest conviction, command, reprehension, hate, and all the sterner passions.”

Pitch inflection in earlier elocution (Walker, 1799)



More localised sliding (J. Weaver, 1846)

When the Queen says to Hamlet,

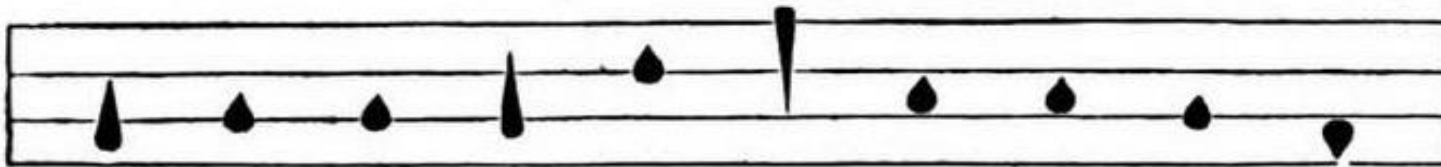
If it be, (that is, if death be the common lot,)
Why seems it so particular with thee?

Hamlet replies—

Seems, Madam, nay it *is*! I know not seems.

The intonation of the last line, may be delineated thus,

Seems, / Ma-dam, nay / it is \! I know not seems.



The downward fifth on 'is,' represents most perfectly the positive affirmation and surprise of the speaker, at the misconception of his real state. The solemn feeling of the

Van Biene speaks!



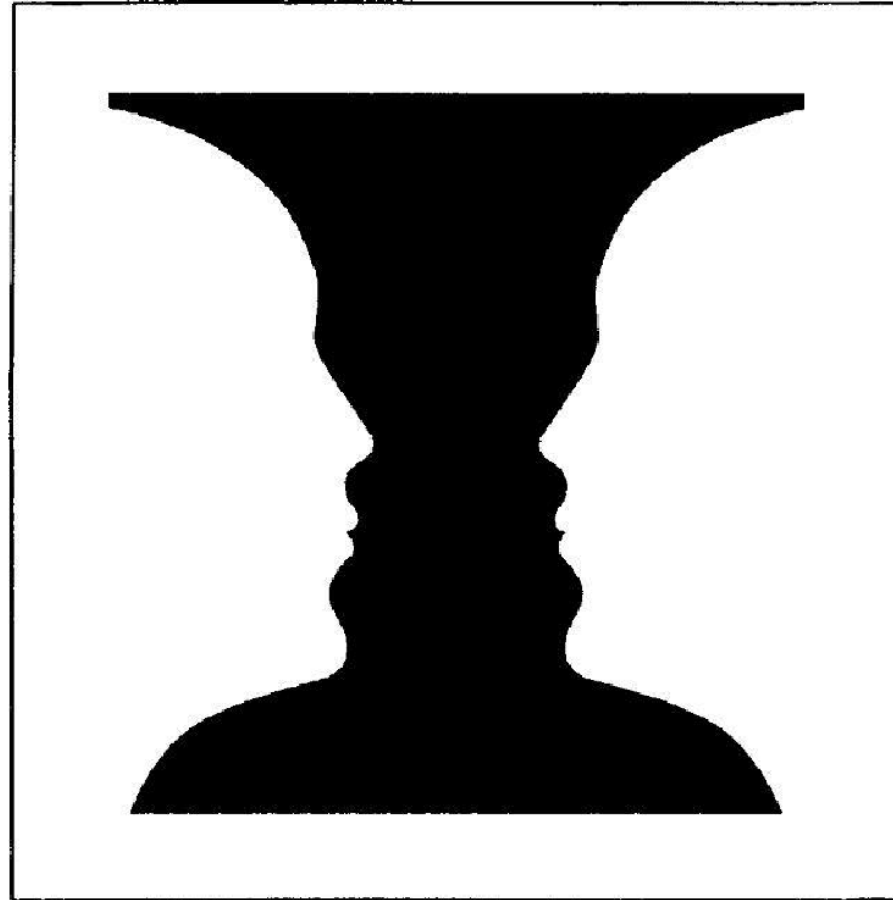
Patti speaks!



Prose vs poetry c1900

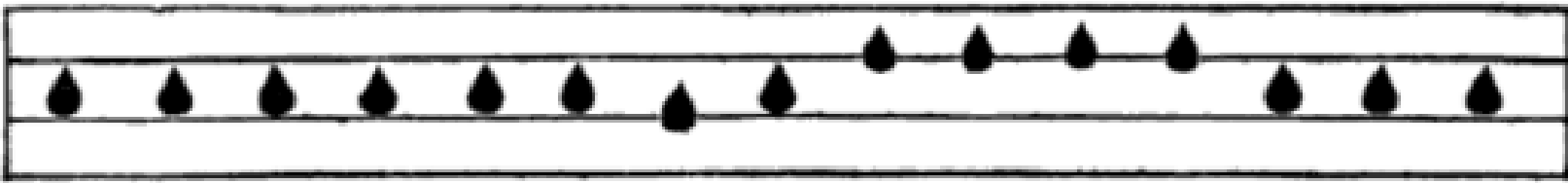
- Sir Kenneth Barnes reciting Lord Byron's "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" <https://sounds.bl.uk/Arts-literature-and-performance/Early-spoken-word-recordings/024M-1CL0005043XX-0200V0>
- Prof. A. Lloyd James reciting Joseph Addison's "Sir Roger de Coverley at Home" <https://sounds.bl.uk/Arts-literature-and-performance/Early-spoken-word-recordings/024M-1CL0005041XX-0200V0>

Declamatory style = suppressed slides??



The solemn monotone (Weaver, 1843)

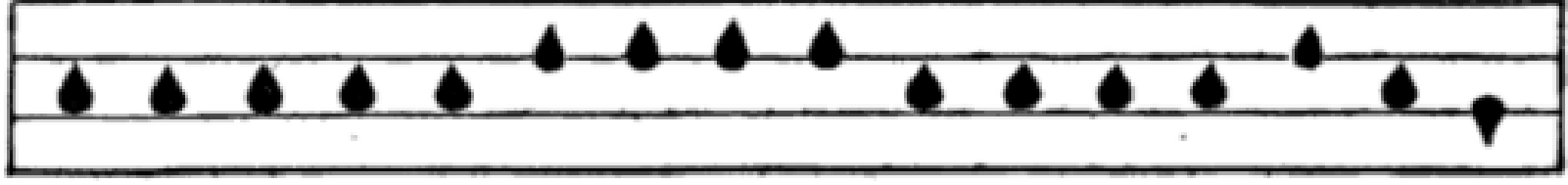
High on a throne of roy - al state, which far out-shone the wealth of



Or - mus, and of Ind; Or where the gor-geous East, with rich-est hand



Showers on her kings bar - bar - ic pearl and gold, Sa - tan ex - al - ted sat.



Church solemnity (Steele, 1779)

But if this essay be not sufficient to prove what the *melody of speech* is, let us, in the next place, endeavour to shew *what it is not*.

It is not like the proclamation of a parish-clerk announcing the psalm,



Let us sing to the praise and glory of God!

where the whole sentence is in one tone, without any change of acute or grave.

Church solemnity (Sheridan, 1762)

The following verse is generally pronounced in a manner equally faulty.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Poetic solemnity (Walker, 1799)

“[...] the more colloquial and familiar the language, provided it is earnest and emphatical, the more perceptible the inflexions are; and the more elevated and poetical, the less so.”

Declamation vs conversation



“He gave out the melodic line very beautifully with the thumb or little finger - not declaiming it, but putting it very clearly and elegantly.”

--Fanny Davies on Brahms' playing in the slow movement of his C Minor Trio