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**"Beyond the Camera's Gaze:
Recovering the Experience of Beverly Sills as Anna Bolena"**

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**TRACKING SILLS' INTENTIONS AND PERFORMANCE
EXCERPT FROM NO. 16: SCENA ED ARIA FINALE**

At the top of this number's opening page, Sills writes "Young Young Young." She colors her voice to sound youthful and vulnerable.

As the scene opens, Anna is delirious. Above her first phrase, Sills marks "happy" (**m. 9**).

Anna:

Piangete voi?

Donde tal pianto?

È questo giorno di nozze.

Il Re m'aspetta . . .

è acceso, infiorato l'altar.

Datemi tosto

il mio candido ammanto;*

Under the phrase "il mio candido ammanto" (Give me quickly my white robe), Sills pencils in "show veil on head" (**mm. 26-27**).¹

*We hear an audience member's "oh" as a descending sigh (**m. 27**) in the short two eighth-note rest between "ammanto" and Anna's next line.

il crin m'ornate del mio serto di rose.

Continuing the hallucination, Sills mimes situating her head ornament as she sings "il crin m'ornate del mio serto di rose" (adorn my hair with my crown of roses), above which she writes "hair play" (**m. 27-28**).

Above the instrumental interlude in **mm. 30-33**, Sills marks "dance turn back to audience."

Che Percy non lo sappia;

Above this phrase, "Che Percy non lo sappia" (That Percy knows nothing about it), Sills scribbles in and circles in blue ink "conspiratorialy" [sic] (**m. 34**).

il Re l'impose.

¹ Throughout, I borrow William Ashbrook's translation of the *Anna Bolena* libretto (1973: n.p.).

Coro:

O memoria funesta!

Sills pencils in over several measures of the flute's melody, which enters at **m. 39**, "voice speaking to her" (**mm. 40-41**).²

Anna:

Oh! . . . chi si duole?

Her singing of "Oh", with its descending portamento, echoes the grieving voice that she alone hears (**m. 44**).

Per her marking "slow" (**m. 44**), Sills delivers the rest of the phrase "che si duole?" (who is grieving?) slowly and somberly.

Chi parlò di Percy? . . .

In another abrupt mood change, she interjects "Chi parlò di Percy?" (Who spoke of Percy) with terrific urgency. Sills notes the word "urgent" above **m. 50**.

Ch'io non lo vegga; ch'io m'asconda a'suoi sguardi.

In big, elongated letters that spread across three measures (**mm. 51-53**), Sills scribes "frantic," which aptly describes her performance of "Chio non lo vegga; ch'io n'asconda a' suoi sguardi" (Let me not see him; let me hide myself from his gaze).

At the end of **m. 54**, her stage direction is to "see Percy up steps."

È vano. . .

Ei viene. . . ei m'accusa. . .

"E' vano . . . Ei viene . . . ei m'accusa" (It's useless . . . He comes . . . he accuses me): with the panicked delivery of each of these lines, her terror becomes increasingly palpable. Pressed nearly to the limit, Sills' Anna covers her ears (noted above, **m. 61**) in a desperate effort to escape the sound of Percy's curses and accusations.

ei mi sgrida. . .

Ah! mi sgrida, mi accusa.

In **m. 66**, where Donizetti marks Anna's scream, Ah!, to come on a "G" above the staff, Sills sings a high B-flat for two full measures. She releases the scream first through a quick descent to the "G", and finally, through a slightly more protracted descending portamento in a musical gesture of defeat.

Ah! mi perdona, mi perdona . . .

² While Romani's libretto registers Anna's auditory delusions from the start of the number, based on Sills' score markings, this is the first instance in which she acts out hearing them. I cannot help but wonder if Capobianco chose to play on the association of the flute with madness and hallucination, which has become part of *Lucia di Lammermoor*'s performance tradition, in making this Bolena's first visible indication of hearing voices.

Exhausted, Sills' Anna draws her breath per her marking above **m. 68** (between "Ah!" and "Mi"). Sounding utterly overcome, she begs for forgiveness: "Mi perdona, mi perdona . . ." (**mm. 68-70**).³

Beneath the rests before her next phrase, Sills' scribes "kneel & fall" (**m. 70**).

infelice son io.

It's not until the next measure (**m. 71**)—just before the third syllable in "in-fe-li-ce son io" (I am unhappy)—that we hear her knees slam onto the stage floor. With the thud of her physical collapse, I feel the manic energy that has driven Sills through the previous forty-nine seconds rush from her body.⁴

Toglimi a questa miseria estrema. . .

Broken, she sings this plaintive phrase on her knees with her head down (per her penciled instruction above **m. 73**): "Toglimi a questa miseria estrema" (Take me away from this utter misery).

Tu sorridi?. . . Oh gioja!

With Donizetti's Allegro tempo change at **m. 76**, Sills' Anna rises as she sees Percy standing before her. Once again we have the clipped delivery of lines alternating with pensive legato passages. Sills writes "up" before both clipped "Tu sorridi?" (Are you smiling?) phrases.

non fia, non fia che qui deserta

While she doesn't write "head down" over this legato phrase, the "up" indication above "Tu sorridi?" in **m. 85** suggests her alteration between these stances.

io moja, no . . . no . . . no . . . no.

Tu sorridi? Percy?

O gioja! . . . oh gioja! . . .

Finally, the schizophrenic struggle ends (temporarily) with her ecstatic octave leap to a high C on "Oh gio-!" (Oh joy!) (**mm. 89-90**). Only after five seconds does Sills begin her retreat from the high C to "-ja" (as in, "gio-ja") through a deliberate and sublime two-octave, chromatic descent.

With the introduction to the cantabile "Al dolce guidami" section, Sills mimes an embrace (marked as "hug" above **m. 90**). She then turns to stage left and offers her hand to Percy. She begins her melancholy "Al dolce guidami" singing directly to Percy, whose image to this point in the scene is still only a product of Anna's delirium.

³ "Presto" appears in the score above the second half of the first iteration of "do-na" and the "mi" in m. 69. A rallentando is marked for the second half of m. 69. However, Sills sings this entire phrase slowly per her penciled-in marking above "mi per" on the last beat of m. 68.

⁴ I experience this particular arc as extending from "Chi parlò di Percy?" (mm. 50) through to her crash to the floor in m. 71.