

Falsettists Meet Castrati

In this paper I will argue for the existence of a narrative begun in the early modern period (1550-1800). It begins with a young, talented, male singer. He opposes gender stereotypes by singing in a high, girlish voice and looks effeminate. The combination of these factors yields a highly erotic and contradictory image. Based upon the sexual aesthetics and ideologies of the period in which we find the singer, certain questions about his youthfulness, sexual ambiguity, and mode of vocal production lead him into conscious or unconscious defense of his achieved status. A successful defense depends upon societies perceived belief that the singer appears virile. Usually this entails the ability to procreate. Success in the narrative suggests that the singer will have created a socio-culturally valid legacy rather than a passing phenomenon.

Before deconstructing the narrative, we must introduce the singers. Generally known by a single name, they are Prince, Jackson, Justin, and even Farinelli, and Caffarelli. Sometimes they go by titles like “King of Pop”, or “King of Singing”. In either case, their singular identity elicits images of a person greater than any mortal man.

Next, we must understand the physical creation of their sound. High voices in men whether sounding as falsetto or as a male soprano, are created by the extreme longitudinal stretching of the vocal folds, approximating the length and thickness of female folds. In fact, like young female singers, many times a chink is left open at the anterior end of the folds. This allows air to escape and creates the breathy tone in

the sound. The New Grove Online equates falsetto with ‘unnatural’, or stated differently, the singer is using a “false” voice.¹

Having assessed our characters, we can now construct the narrative. First, we associate the sound of these men with the sound of females. Wayne Koestenbaum asserts that, “the falsetto is part of the history of effeminacy.”² He continues by writing that, “one major reason voice has been marked as feminine is that the origins of its production are hidden from view”. The plainly visible Adam’s apple, which defines the male throat, disappears as he sings higher. The neck, then, looks female or genderless. Continuing this anatomical analogy, Koestenbaum points out that the larynx resembles the labia, furthering the association between women, invisible things, and the voice.³ Both the physiological creation of sound and perceived quality are inherently feminine.

Continuing on, these stars are uniquely sexual. As John Rosselli puts it, “We are used to the sexual feelings that popular singers can arouse; those least suitable as sexual objects may arouse the strongest feelings.”⁴ For both genders, men who sing like women, despite rejecting the natural masculine sound, are sexually potent. In addition to this, Roger Freitas tells us that; “the supposed foreignness of the castrato (high voiced male) sound precluded any connection to a recognizable

¹ V.E. Negus, *Falsetto*. Oxford Music Online: Grove Music Online, Nov. 2, 2008

² Wayne Koestenbaum. *The Queen’s Throat. Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*. New York: Vintage Books (1994), 164.

³ Wayne Koestenbaum. *The Queen’s Throat. Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*. New York: Vintage Books (1994), 159-160.

⁴ John Rosselli. *The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850*. Acta Musicologica 60, no. 2 (May-Aug., 1988), 176.

body.”⁵ Hence, these men are at once asexual, or unable to incite sexuality, but simultaneously “all sexual”, able to appeal to all genders. Writer Anne-Lise Francois adds, “Falsetto is so sexually powerful precisely because its alien and alienating effect is still heard at the most intimate level.”⁶ The vulnerability of these men, using the women’s voice, emits a raw sensuality and androgyny that both sexes feel.

Coupled with sensuality and androgyny, in this narrative, is youth. Young girl and boy voices sound like falsettos. The male soprano is created by castrating a prepubescent boy thus staving off secondary sexual development and preserving the youthful characteristic of the singer both physically and aurally. In both cases, critics and audiences laud the efforts of a youthful singer. They are also instantly compared to previous singers. Artist Justin Timberlake is referred to as a “virginal beau”, and his first solo album *Justified* “[with its] influences of Michael Jackson and Stevie Wonder...introduces us to a singer/songwriter who is mature beyond his 21 years.”⁷ Because the Western association between falsetto/high-singing and youth is strong such that some Indian youths in Great Britain are coached in chest-voice phonation so that they do not sound “oddly juvenile”.⁸ Eventually this connection pigeonholes many singers so that they feel a need to “mature”. This is the case in Michael Jackson’s lyrics in *Beat It*, “Don’t wanna be a boy, you wanna be a man” show this. This youth pitfall catalyzes the inevitable sexualizing of the high-voiced

⁵ Roger Freitas. *The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato*. *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 2 (Spring, 2003), 201

⁶ Anne-Lise Francois. *Fakin it/makin it: Falsetto’s Bid for Transcendence in the 1970s Disco Highs*. *Perspectives of New Music* 33, no. 1-2 (01, 1995), 445

⁷ Denise Boyd. *Justified*. (2002), accessed Nov. 24, 2008.

⁸ V.E. Negus, *Falsetto*. Oxford Music Online: Grove Music Online, Nov. 2, 2008

ale star. In order to maintain legitimacy in the public eye, he must exhibit traits of a fully virile adult male. He must convince his audience that he can copulate.

The coming case studies of male falsettists and sopranos will illuminate this constructed narrative. So far, the standing story is such: The high-voiced male singer is cast as an androgynous or effeminate youth whose abnormal and intriguing sexual position among Western societies' traditional standards catapults him into fame, yielding him supernatural status by way of name recognition and comparison to predecessors. I will further assert that in order to unequivocally legitimize his station, the artist must be perceived as able to procreate. For someone who is known for his "girly-boy" voice and atypical sexual orientation, this is a perplexing dichotomy to overcome. Earl Lind, author of *Autobiography of an Androgyne (1918)* wrote, "The voice is one of the chief criteria by which to determine abnormal sexuality."⁹ In the last four hundred years, falsettists and male sopranos have refuted or admitted to asexuality, homosexuality, sterility, and physical ineptitude, all of which would preclude them, by conventional standards, from fathering children. This ultimate test of masculinity is addressed or overlooked in all of the upcoming scenarios, leading to either the success or demise of the artist in question. The Castrati, progenitors of the Western high-voiced male singer, provide the roots of this narrative and conflict. An examination of successful and failed artists of the twentieth and twenty-first century follows.

⁹ Earl Lind. *Autobiography of an Androgyne*. Medico-legal journal (1918)

1. The Castrati

The castrati are the earliest documented Western high-voiced male singers. John Roselli, a lead scholar of castrati, hypothesized that, “a total of 120 or so castrati [existed] in the Rome of about 1650”.¹⁰ Of these male sopranos, three artists’ stories are forever intertwined: Bernacchi-“The King of Singers”, Farinelli-his successor, and Caffarelli-the competition. Castrati became so infamous that Pope Sixtus V wrote a letter stating, “Castrati unleashed the (natural) lasciviousness of woman...which offer an occasion for sins and scandals and make for the damnation of souls”.¹¹ They existed at the center of aristocratic social life, and very often played operatic heroes and lovers.¹² But how did these effeminate-voice sopranos achieve such high standing? Why were they so potent? Roselli wrote:

Males castrated before puberty had high pure voices, lacked secondary sexual characteristics such as facial and body hair, and early baldness,” writes Roselli who later continues, the castrati-thanks to an unbroken period of study from childhood...were best able to meet this new demand [for new vocal professionalism].¹³

Acknowledging the virtuosity of castrati answers the first question; however answering the second begs an examination of the aesthetics and ideology of the early modern period. We know a belief in a “one-sex” model existed. Musicologist Roger Freitas affirms “man to be the more perfect manifestation of the single body

¹⁰ John Roselli. *The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850*. *Acta Musicologica* 60, no. 2 (May-Aug., 1988), 157.

¹¹ Roger Freitas. *The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato*. *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 2 (Spring, 2003), 224.

¹² John Roselli. *The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850*. *Acta Musicologica* 60, no. 2 (May-Aug., 1988), 143.

¹³ John Roselli. *The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850*. *Acta Musicologica* 60, no. 2 (May-Aug., 1988), 145, 149.

that both men and women shared”.¹⁴ Castrating prepubescent boys, however, complicates this man above woman hierarchy by removing “maleness”, or potential virility from the boy. Freitas addresses this by offering that, “a man’s full heat (or innate potential energy for growth) was not thought to develop until adolescence...the castrato would have been viewed as equivalent to the boy...his surgery ensured that his vital heat...would remain at the less, markedly masculine level of youth”.¹⁵ The castrato did, however, grow into an adult boy. He possessed all the characteristics of a boy in the package of a man, but an adult nevertheless. At first glance, to the early modern person, the castrato existed asexually outside of the hierarchy.

We also know, however, that men practiced pederasty during this period, preferring boy partners. According to Freitas, this was largely because a man, “whose existence revolved too much around women was considered in danger of losing his masculine nature and even physical strength.” As he puts it, “‘effeminate’ ...was considered rather a sign of too great a taste for women.”¹⁶ So neither wanting to slip in the male-female hierarchy, nor incur a stigma for associating with the bottom of the chain, men turned to boys. Boys’ vital heat had not yet developed, leaving them subordinate to the adult male, but neutral with regards to the ideological and physical repercussions of engaging in coitus with a female. Wendy Heller summarizes, “Boys are thus the ideal object for male love

¹⁴ Roger Freitas. *The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato*. *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 2 (Spring, 2003), 203.

¹⁵ Roger Freitas. *The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato*. *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 2 (Spring, 2003), 204.

¹⁶ Roger Freitas. *The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato*. *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 2 (Spring, 2003), 204-205.

because they are superior to women both spiritually and physically. And the particular pleasure of boys is that they offer the possibility of enjoying feminine beauty without the necessity of congress with a woman.”¹⁷ Unfortunately, all non-castrated boys grow up. The castrato, then, is “all sexual”. To men and each other, a male soprano affords all of the pleasures found in one lacking masculine virtues, someone appropriate to sleep with, without the messy problems of unwanted pregnancy or impending puberty. As an adult “male”, he can appeal to women sexually through his perceived place above them in the hierarchy, and platonically through his use of their soprano voice.

Let us now then examine how these naturally “unnatural” implications played out in the story of Bernacchi, Farinelli, and Cafarelli. In Francis Rogers’ view, we start with Bernacchi (1690-1756). Known as the “King of Singers” for his impeccable training, notice how his title places him in the top corporeal male spot in the “one sex” model. So renowned for his virtuosity, many young castrati sought to study with him- enter Farinelli (1705-1782). Farinelli’s debuted as a 17-year old sparing partner to a master trumpeter. Rogers recounts his collision with Bernacchi:

The event of the evening was a duo for the two *castrati*. Farinelli sang first, and in the manner of the time performed every vocal feat in his repertory. Then Bernacchi stepped forward and repeated without mistake or blemish every note that the younger man had sung, throwing in, for good measure, some vocal pyrotechnics of his own invention. The honors of the contest rested with Bernacchi, who graciously acceded to Farinelli’s request that he accept him as a pupil and impart to him some of the secrets of his wonderful art.

Farinelli grew to fame in the international arena, landing in Madrid for twenty-two years where he performed nightly for the ailing King Phillip who set his

¹⁷ Wendy Heller. *Chastity, Heroism, and Allure*. Ph.D. Brandeis University (1995).

yearly salary at \$15,000. The king's death, after some 36,000 performances, allowed him career advancement into the post of managing the court opera and advising the court in political and diplomatic matters. His story ends in Bologna where English musicologist Dr. Charles Burney finds him "living in luxury and ruminating regretfully on the glories of his past". Farinelli did not marry and he declared his nephew heir.

Of equal status, Caffarelli (1703-1783), who studied with Farinelli's first teacher, debuted in Rome in the role of a woman. Their teacher, Propora, after working with Caffarelli is known to have stated, "Go; I can teach you nothing more. You are already the best singer in Europe." Of Caffarelli, Rogers shares a character vignette.

Once, when in Paris, he sang for Louis XV, who, though usually indifferent to music, took so much pleasure in his singing that the next day he sent him a handsome snuffbox as a token of his royal approval. The singer examined the box, then tossed it contemptuously on the table, saying, "I have already a drawerful of snuff-box quite as handsome as that. The king might at least have sent me his picture." "But that," replied the messenger, "is an honor accorded to ambassadors only." "Indeed!" cried the singer, "but all the ambassadors in the world would not equal on Caffarelli!"

Caffarelli eventually purchased a property carrying the title "Duke of Santo Dorato". His life also ended without mention of wife or direct biological heir.¹⁸

In legend and in name, these three castrati are remembered as "larger than life", and more than just mortal men. Their detailed remembrance is testament to this. They provide a foundation by which to measure modern high-voiced singers.

¹⁸ Francis Rogers. *The Male Soprano*. *The Musical Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (Jul. 1919), 416-419

Unfortunately, we lack knowledge of the castrati's personal exploits within the aesthetics and ideologies of the early modern period. Many castrati allegedly had affairs with women, men, priests, popes, and royalty, but this remains conjecture and gossip. Roselli informs us that, "even when there were still castrati living those scholars who were interested in them were too embarrassed to ask searching questions."¹⁹ We can infer, then that people of that period were aware of the unique mystique of the castrated male singer, or as Freitas writes, "a renegade sensuality unbound by the rules of religion and society".²⁰ As the period ended, and castrati disappeared, societal embarrassment led to a cultural "sweeping under the rug" of how castrati came to be. Dr. Burney, according to Roselli, "reported that Italians are so much ashamed at the practice of making them [castrati] that every single city says it is not there [that they were made], but names some other place". Roselli concludes that, "Probably the most important cause [in the disappearance of castrati] was the gradual decline of Christian asceticism...falling membership of religious orders".²¹ So it is that as the belief in the "one sex" model waned, so too did the innate sexuality of the castrati. Perverse shame replaced amorous wonderment and the "all sexual" castrati faded as an abomination.

I contend, however, that another factor in their downfall was the perceived belief that castrati could not procreate. Freitas argues:

¹⁹ John Rosselli. *The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850*. *Acta Musicologica* 60, no. 2 (May-Aug., 1988), 143

²⁰ Roger Freitas. *The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato*. *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 2 (Spring, 2003), 225

²¹ John Rosselli. *The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850*. *Acta Musicologica* 60, no. 2 (May-Aug., 1988), 144, 179.

In my view, then, the castrato regularly played the amorous male lead in Italian baroque operas at least in part because his special sexual status-his boyish suspension between the poles of masculinity and femininity-was found alluring and wholly appropriate to men in love. He was an extravagant embodiment of the seductive boy and presumed devotee of sensuality. That he was also considered (probably rightly) to be sexually active, only added to his appeal.²²

Whether they actually could or could not bear children has no bearing. It is through perceived knowledge that Rossini admits people, “assume without giving evidence that castrati were capable of sexual intercourse though not of fathering children, a view current in the ancient world and in early modern Europe but rejected around 1936 by most medical opinion”.²³ Of our three singers, only Cafarelli has mention of descendents, but they are of “some family member’s”.²⁴ Pope Sixtus V in 1587 declared that, “as opposed to ‘true seed’, the castrati ‘pour out a certain liquid perhaps similar to semen, although by no means suitable to generation and the cause of matrimony”.²⁵ Because progeny is the ultimate goal in achieving an enduring legacy, the castrati failed in both theory and practice. No one believed they could produce descendents, and as a phenomenon they did not last.

2. Male Falsettists of Today

In modern day American popular music, our narrative appears in the stories of Michael Jackson, Prince, and Justin Timberlake. Unsurprisingly, the connection between these artists and castrati has received attention. Scholar Ken McLeod

²² Roger Freitas. *The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato*. *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 2 (Spring, 2003), 233.

²³ John Rosselli. *The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon, 1550-1850*. *Acta Musicologica* 60, no. 2 (May-Aug., 1988), 145

²⁴ Francis Rogers. *The Male Soprano*. *The Musical Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (Jul. 1919), 416-419.

²⁵ Roger Freitas. *The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato*. *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 2 (Spring, 2003), 230.

asserts, “Rock music, however, has witnessed an equal fascination [to opera] with high-register male vocalists such as Michael Jackson whose star status, effeminate appearance and falsetto voice appear to mimic conventions previously only observed in baroque castrati such as Farinelli.”²⁶ Already we see the profile partially fulfilled. Today’s popular music is, in fact an ideal medium for this narrative to unfold. Marybeth Hamilton tells us, “The blues has been suffused with sexual role-play, with sexual conflicts, boasts, and complaints.”²⁷ Soul and Disco, Anne-Lise Francois says, is built on, “the falsetto voice’s homelessness with respect to either gender”, and continues, “Its artifice is inseparable from a presumption to heights, and a reaching beyond one’s natural limits.”²⁸ Even renowned music critic Stephen Holden admits, “The use of the ‘feminine’ falsetto by male soul singers is, of course, an accepted R&B convention. A lover in the thrall of passion expresses his adoration by ritualistically assuming a feminine vulnerability.”²⁹

The new story begins with Michael Jackson, crowned, “The King of Pop”. As youngest brother in the Jackson 5, Michael debuted as a boy. Questions of his talent rarely arise. Christopher Connelly exemplifies this stating that we hear, “what might be pop music’s most spectacular instrument: Michael Jackson’s voice.”³⁰ Jackson also maintains a youthful, “Peter Pan” status complete with the Neverland Ranch.

²⁶ Ken McLeod. *Bohemian Rhapsodies: Operatic Influences on Rock Music*. Popular Music, Vol.2 20, no. 2 (May, 2001), 190.

²⁷ Marybeth Hamilton. *Sexual Politics and African-American Music; Or, Placing Little Richard in History*. History Workshop Journal no. 46 (Autumn, 1998), 164.

²⁸ Anne-Lise Francois. *Fakin it/makin it: Falsetto’s Bid for Transcendence in the 1970s Disco Highs*. Perspectives of New Music 33, no. 1-2 (01, 1995), 443.

²⁹ Stephen Holden. *Being with You*. 1981, accessed November 2, 2008.

³⁰ Christopher Connelly. *Thriller*. 1983, accessed November 2, 2008.

Doubts arise, however, in his ability to convince audiences that he can procreate, that he is ultimately masculine. Stories of his sexual perversions and ambiguities have laced his career. Whether through allegations of pederasty, or grand comparisons between Michael and his sister Janet, we are lead to believe that Michael cannot achieve a legitimate heterosexual relationship. The king cannot produce an heir.

Unsuccessfully, Michael attempted to correct this image. He wrote lyrics that inferred his virility such as, "Don't wanna be a boy, you wanna be a man", and "She says I am the one, but the kid is not my son"-*Beat It* and *Billy Jean*. He used the dance floor as a place to show moves, like the crotch grab, and wear costumes, like a glove to display his crotch, a fedora, sports-knee pads, suits, and bullet harnesses, all of which signify masculinity. He also married Lisa-Marie Presley, daughter of male icon Elvis Presley, with whom he made a son. He precariously displayed his son to the people in a highly publicized event. At the presumed end of his career, Michael Jackson questionably succeeded in fulfilling the entire narrative. He did so through irrefutable evidence rather than public perception. We cannot deny his child's existence, but do we really believe it all?

Shortly after Michael's transition into a solo artist, Prince emerges with what Holden calls, "the most thrilling R&B falsetto since Smokey Robinson, but this nineteen ear-old...*Wunderkind* is his own writer-producer and one man band...The biggest difference between Robinson and Prince is the latter' blatant sexuality".³¹ He

³¹ Stephen Holden. *Prince*. 1980, accessed November 2, 2008.

writes in a later review, “ Prince’s first three records were so erotically self-absorbed that they suggested the reveries of a licentious young libertine”.³²

Facing the same potential issues as predecessor Michael Jackson, Prince decided to proactively address the challenge. On his CD Dirty Mind reviewer Ken Tucker notes, “Here, Prince lets it all hang out: the cover photography depicts our hero, smoothly attired in a trench coat and black bikini briefs, staring soberly into the camera.”³³ He made similarly sexual covers for Lovesong and Prince. The singer also used lyrics to convey his innate virility. The song *Head* boasted, “You wouldn’t have stopped but I came on your wedding gown”. In *I Wanna Be Your Lover* he sings, “I wanna be the only one you come for”. Furthermore, he transitioned his name into the “Love Symbol”, a combination of the masculine and feminine signs. Prince openly acknowledged the issue in *Controversy* singing, “Am I black or white, am I straight or gay? People call me rude; I wish we all were nude. I wish there was no black or white, I wish there were no rules”. Recently Prince has returned to his name, joined the Jehovah’s witnesses, and is still producing records. He is twice divorced and has no living children. Lasting rumors of bisexuality and effeminacy delay his achievement in fulfilling our narrative.

Our search for the right man continues with two new falsettists. Justin Timberlake, former front man of boy-band **NSYNC*, has released two solo albums. Reviewer Stephen Thomas Erlewine comments, “If Michael Jackson was the touchstone for Justified, Prince provides the cornerstone of FutureSex/LoveSounds”. He continues by writing, “Timberlake’s obsession with sex

³² Stephen Holden. *Controversy*. 1982, accessed November 2, 2008.

³³ Ken Tucker. *Dirty Mind*. 1981, accessed November 2, 2008.

does indeed recall Prince's carnivorous carnality of the early '80's...like any young man with a complex about his maturity, he wants to prove that he's an adult now".³⁴ The story already in full swing, he has been linked with high profile women like Britney Spears and Cameron Diaz, and his latest CD includes track titles like *SexyBack*, *Sexy Ladies/Let me talk to you*, and *Damn Girl*. The CD art includes pictures of him wearing a fedora, and shots where his eyes are covered with a black bar normally reserved for covering genitalia. Less than thirty years of age, Justin still has time to prove himself to the public. Achieving success depends on his ability to produce an heir. I will close with Jim Farber's introduction of the second falsettist, dated August 5th, 2008:

R&B has finally found a great, young falsetto. While lots of the genre's newer male singers make pit stops at that girly range, none has parked and lingered there as comfortably as Lloyd. The one-named singer luxuriates in his high octaves, providing a lofty atmosphere for his silken tone...Add that sweet voice to classically androgynous looks and it's a small wonder Lloyd has become one of the most squealed-over stars of the current R&B teen-pop crop...The singer has also upped the ante with his character. While the last CD kept things at puppy love, now he's a full-on horndog. In "Sex Education", he gushes about trying to "get an A" in the subject. Elsewhere, he promises to "Party All Over Your Body".³⁵

As discussed and shown, a hundreds year old profiling of high-voiced male singing stars exists. They are youthful, or perceived to be youthful, sexual, effeminate or androgynous, and vocally talented and unique. The unseen, critical requirement is the artist's ability to procreate. Western culture is littered with stories, real and fiction, about Kings and other men who could not create an heir. In all of these tales, success or failure depends upon achieving this goal. As we have

³⁴ Stephen Thomas Erlewine. *FutureSex/LoveSounds*. 2006, accessed November 24, 2008.

³⁵ Jim Farber. *Lloyd is R&B's new true falsetto*. 2008, accessed November 2, 2008.

seen in the case of high-voiced male singers, this ends in failure more often than not. We are currently witnessing the utilization of this profile to consciously or unconsciously mold an artist into a man most likely to meet the goal.

By uncovering this narrative, we uncover many questions. What new role does race play in the singer's fate? Marybeth Hamilton insists, "Black performers have had to do battle with white stereotypes of black hyper sexuality, constructed out of desire, envy, and fear, as in the bisexual rumors in Prince and asexuality of Michael Jackson."³⁶ Similarly, how did the sexual revolution of the twentieth century affect our perceptions of male singers? Moreover, does the ease of individuals and couples to have babies, by conventional means or otherwise, alter the final profile point? It is also apparent that there is a time gap between instances of high-voice male stars. Are there documented cases of these singers between the 18th and 20th centuries? If not, what were the changes that lead to their prolonged absence and reemergence?

Clearly more research is needed to answer all of these questions. More certain, however, is that the parallels between castrati of the early modern period and falsettists of the 21st century share more than fame and fortune. As it occurred to the castrati, will we gradually dismiss our singing stars as a perverse and shameful chapter in our story, or have we evolved in our perceptions of masculinity such that procreation no longer need be paramount to success?

³⁶ Marybeth Hamilton. *Sexual Politics and African-American Music; Or, Placing Little Richard in History*. History Workshop Journal no. 46 (Autumn 1998), 174.