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Two tenor roles in Mozart's late Italian operas, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, do not precisely fit the musical or dramatic expectations of either *opera seria* or *opera buffa*. Although *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte* are considered exemplars of the *opera buffa* style, Mozart and his librettist, da Ponte, use music and text that resemble the antiquated style of *opera seria* to characterize these tenors. This dichotomy helps to define *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte* as *drammi giocosi*, a hybrid operatic genre that mixes elements of *opera seria* and *opera buffa*, and features interactions between three distinct strata of characters: high (*parti serie*), middle (*di mezzo carattere*) and low (*parti buffi*).

An examination of the late-eighteenth century decline of *opera seria*, and with it the gradual disappearance of the castrato from the operatic stage, is contrasted with the rise of *opera buffa* and the eventual ascendancy of the tenor as romantic protagonist. The connections between *opera buffa* and the *commedia dell'arte* tradition are examined with particular attention to the character types in *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*. Analysis of the arias from both tenor roles, especially with regard to musical form, tonality, and versification, confirms Don Ottavio and Ferrando as *parti serie*, and not pure parody of the *opera seria* style.

ARE YOU SERIOUS? AN EXAMINATION OF THE  
ROLE OF THE TENOR IN MOZART'S OPERAS  
*DON GIOVANNI AND COSÌ FAN TUTTE*

by

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To Mozart

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

The phrase “Mozart tenor” is used to describe a lyric tenor voice well suited to operatic roles created by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). The term also implies that such a voice is generally incapable of the dramatic vocalism demanded by much of the later operatic repertoire. Although the tenor roles in Mozart’s operas seldom contain the high Bs (B<sup>4</sup>) and Cs (C<sup>5</sup>)<sup>1</sup> that would extend the requisite vocal range of the operatic tenor in the nineteenth century, they present a broad spectrum of vocal and dramatic challenges to singers of any era.

In his brief lifetime, Mozart wrote seventeen complete operas, all of which have at least one tenor role, and many contain two or three. Seven of these operas (*Idomeneo*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, *La clemenza di Tito*, and *Die Zauberflöte*) are now firmly entrenched in the operatic performance canon. The prominent differences between these operas are indicative of the three distinct operatic traditions from which Mozart drew: *Singspiel*, *opera seria*, and *opera buffa*.

The German language *Singspiel*, championed by Austrian Emperor Joseph II, utilized spoken dialogue instead of recitative. *Singspiele* were sometimes serious, often comic as in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782), and occasionally a striking melding of

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<sup>1</sup> For point of reference, middle C is C<sup>4</sup>, and A 440 is A<sup>4</sup>.

both the serious and comic with elements of the fantastical, as in *Die Zauberflöte* (1791). *La clemenza di Tito* (1791) and *Idomeneo* (1781) were written in the *opera seria* tradition. These operas feature royal protagonists and plots based on ancient history or mythology, as was usually the case for this genre. *Opere serie* were also notable for the introduction of, and strong adherence to, the formal conventions of the *da capo* exit aria.

*Le nozze di Figaro* (1786) clearly falls in line with the conventions of an *opera buffa*, the plot of which would generally revolve around characters ensconced in farcical love intrigues. Although much of *Così fan tutte* (1790) and some aspects of *Don Giovanni* (1787) also align with the *opera buffa* tradition, the philosophical nature and ironic artificiality of the former opera and the tragic underpinnings of the latter resist such a simplistic reading. Perhaps to account for these discrepancies, Mozart's librettist for these operas, Lorenzo da Ponte (1749-1838), labeled both *Così fan tutte* and *Don Giovanni* as *drammi giocosi* (literally jocular dramas), an operatic form which displayed aspects of both *opera buffa* and *opera seria*.

Although most tenor roles in Mozart's operas fit squarely into the operatic traditions of *opera buffa*, *opera seria*, or *Singspiel*, the musical and dramatic characteristics of two roles - Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* (much like their operas themselves) - do not fit precisely into the musical or dramatic expectations that the narrowly defined *buffa*, *seria* or *Singspiel* categories would suggest. Rather, both tenors have *seria*-like characteristics and are placed in their respective *drammi giocosi* to emphasize the stratification of characters inherent in this hybrid operatic type. This paper will show that Ferrando's and Ottavio's arias exemplify

Mozart's and da Ponte's amalgamation of operatic traditions, and demonstrate why these characters, and thus their operas, defy the rigid classification of either *opera buffa* or *opera seria*. In order to accomplish this, the origins, development, and musical-dramatic conventions of these three operatic traditions – *opera seria*, *opera buffa*, and *Singspiel* – must be examined, as well.

## CHAPTER II

### OPERATIC ORIGINS

The origins of *opera seria* and *opera buffa* may be traced to the emergence of through-composed stage works in Florence at the end of the sixteenth century. In the 1570s and 1580s the *Camerata*, a society of Florentine scholars and poets led by Giovanni Bardi (1534-1612) and Vincenzo Galilei (c. 1520-1591), met and discussed literary, scientific, and artistic matters. Like many others in the era, they were interested in rediscovering and reviving the practices of ancient Greek theatre. A chief concern was the question of how dialogue was declaimed in the ancient theater: namely, was it spoken or sung?

The writings of Girolamo Mei (1519-1594), a Florence born musical scholar then living in Rome, greatly influenced members of the *Camerata* with whom he had correspondence. In his Latin treatise, *De modis musicis antiquorum*, Mei theorized that ancient Greek tragedies were not spoken, but completely sung throughout. Additionally, Mei believed that Ancient Greek music “always consisted of a single melody, even when many were singing and playing together.”<sup>2</sup>

Whereas complex polyphonic madrigals were exceedingly popular musical forms in the sixteenth century, members of the *Camerata* advocated that texts be sung as a solo vocal line over sparse accompaniment (a style now known as *monody*). This would allow

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<sup>2</sup> Claude V. Palisca, *Baroque Music*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991), 31.

the text to be conveyed with clarity, create greater emotional affect and, according to Mei, more closely resemble the music of the Ancient Greeks. Several *Camerata* members, including one of the earliest composers of opera Giulio Caccini (1551-1618), began to compose in the “monodic” style. This movement would later be named the *seconda pratica* by Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), and its antecedents may first be observed in the secular compositions of Cipriano de Rore (1516-1565).<sup>3</sup> While it is an overstatement to say that the *Camerata* invented opera, it is clear that their espousal of *monody* led to the invention of recitative, which, together with the use of *basso continuo*, was a distinguishing characteristic of early opera.

Jacopo Peri (1561-1633) composed the oldest surviving opera, *L' Euridice* (1600), to texts from a pastoral play by Ottavio Rinuccini (1562-1621) for the Florentine celebration of the marriage of Maria de' Medici and Henri the IV of France. Peri's choice of subject is significant in its attempt at verisimilitude. In ancient Greek mythology, Orpheus was the world's greatest singer. By using a vocally skilled mythological figure, Peri artfully skirted the inevitable questioning of the realism of characters singing rather than speaking their text. If speech was the way ordinary men communicated, it was only fitting that the Gods, or a demigod in the case of Orpheus, sing instead.

Prior to the emergence of opera, similar theatrical dramas were presented at weddings and other such royal rites of passage. These performances were often interspersed with *entr'acte* entertainment called *intermedi*, which featured a combination

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<sup>3</sup> Palisca, 12.

of choreographed dancing, music and singing. The plays, and especially the *intermedi*, proved to be useful propaganda and were used to laud the royals in attendance. *Intermedi* gradually grew in importance, and they, together with the traditional pastoral play, were immediate predecessors to Florentine opera.

Interestingly, early operas featured the very same *intermedi* (which had contributed to the development of opera as a stand-alone form) as *entr'acte* entertainment. Even in a serious opera, comic and frequently musical *intermedi* of completely unrelated plots and characters occurred between the acts.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the foundation for *opera buffa* coexisted with, but had not to this point commixed with, these early operas based on mythological or historical subjects, which were the forerunners of *opera seria*.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, a strong critical reaction arose against Italian operas such as Pier Francesco Cavalli's *Giasone* (1649), which integrated comedic characters and situations into the course of the drama. This criticism spurred operatic reform and eventually led to the formalities of *opera seria*, a genre that would dominate eighteenth-century opera. Many of these reformers were poets by trade. The most famous were Apostolo Zeno (1668-1750) and Pietro Trapassi (1698-1782), who was best known as Metastasio. Zeno's reforms included the use of historical (notably *not* mythological) plots, reverting to a five-act format, limiting the number of characters, and eliminating comic sub-plots altogether.

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<sup>4</sup> William Mann, *The Operas of Mozart* (London: Cassell, 1977), 355.

Metastasio's most important reform included the standardization of the poetic form, consisting of two stanzas of contrasting text that would lead to the establishment of the *da capo* aria. When composers set these stanzas to music, they would often repeat the first stanza of text after the conclusion of the second stanza, creating a three-sectioned (ternary) ABA form. Composers nearly always shifted harmonically between sections (moving from I – vi – I, i – III – i, or I-V-I), highlighting the change in text, and ensuring further delineation of the two contrasting poetic stanzas. Occasionally the A and B sections would also contain greatly differing tempi as well.

The texts of these arias, which Metastasio considered analogous to the function of the Greek chorus in ancient dramas, were invariably static reflections of the character's emotional state, and would be performed outside of the "real-time" events occurring on stage. A singer would step forward to deliver his aria while alone on stage. If the audience was pleased, he would occasionally encore the entire aria. Once this pattern was completed, the artist would exit the stage, signaling the end of the scene. Modern musicologists have dubbed this common convention an "exit aria."

Like Zeno, Metastasio also made a number of reforms to operatic plots. His typical libretto, of which he wrote approximately sixty, "revolved around a conflict between love and duty, and would usually involve some kind of amatory mismatch, to which a mistaken identity added further complexity."<sup>5</sup> Although these are hardly new plot conventions, their seriousness and general absence of comedy made these libretti innovative and, as a result, widely popular even years after his death.

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Boyden, *Opera: The Rough Guide* (London: Rough Guides, 1997), 35.

One of the unexpected results of these reforms, which effectively eliminated *scene buffe* (comic scenes) in Italian *opera seria*, was the further development of the *intermezzi* (the preferred term for *entr'acte* entertainment in Italy in the eighteenth century, replacing the aforementioned *intermedi* of the seventeenth century). These comic operatic miniatures were often sung in local dialect and were, like the *intermedi* before them, presented between acts of serious operas and dramas.

Although comedic actors no longer worked together onstage with serious actors, the *intermezzi* grew in popularity, especially in Venice, which was the European operatic epicenter from the 1620s to the early 1700s. However, it was for Naples, where *intermezzi* also flourished, that Giovanni Pergolesi (1710-1736) wrote the most famous of this miniature form, *La serva padrona*, in 1733. The plots of these often improvisatory *intermezzi*, which were often based on domestic squabbles, were strongly influenced by the Italian *commedia dell'arte* tradition.

The growing popularity of *intermezzi* served as the incubator for the development of *opera buffa* as a stand-alone form. The full-length *opera buffa* emerged in Venice around 1740 with the beginning of a fruitful collaboration between the dramatist Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793) and composer Baldassare Galuppi (1706-1785). Goldoni's most important contribution was his use of action oriented, suspense-filled ensembles (finales) that ended individual acts. This full-length operatic form allowed Goldoni to create more vivid comedic characters than had been possible in brief *intermezzi*. Significantly, Goldoni was also the first librettist to integrate characters of different economic and social stations into one opera libretto, and to list them by type:

Goldoni combined character types from serious operas (*parti serie*), usually a pair of noble lovers, with the ragtag of servants, peasants and others (*parti buffi*) who populated his unalloyed comic librettos. Sometimes he also added roles that were halfway between the two in character (*di mezzo carattere*). His name for such an amalgam, applied fairly consistently from 1748 on, was *dramma giocoso*.<sup>6</sup>

Goldoni's collaborator, the composer Galuppi, who was considered equally proficient at both *buffa* and *seria* composition, became the first internationally renowned *buffa* composer, most especially because of the popularity of his *Il filosofo di campagna* (1754) which was quickly disseminated throughout Europe.<sup>7</sup> Significantly, Galuppi's prior experience in writing *opera seria*, such as his popular works *Demetrio* (1748) and *Artaserse* (1749), afforded him the opportunity to borrow from the more stylized form. Thus, he became first composer to write arias in the *seria* style for the *parti serie* within a comic opera. Such intermixing of both disparate social classes of characters and musical materials made the earliest *drammi giocosi* true hodgepodes of the *buffa* and *seria* styles.

By the 1780s, the role of ensemble singing increased, thus substantially diminishing the importance (and sheer number) of arias in *opera buffa*. The arias that remained underwent a great deal of change as well. "The two-tempo rondò was borrowed from serious opera to show the skills of the leading soprano and tenor. A special kind of writing for the comic bass evolved, alternating patter, leaps, drastic gestures, and repeated emphatic cadence figures . . . . And in general arias grew simpler

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Hertz, *Mozart's Operas*, ed. Thomas Bauman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 195-196.

<sup>7</sup> Dale E. Monson. "Galuppi, Baldassare." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50020> (accessed November 8, 2009).

and shorter....”<sup>8</sup> Hence, while most of the characters in comedic operas sang in a simple style, the *parti serie* (which were usually the leading soprano and tenor) sang in more formal aria structures, such as the *rondò* and *da capo* forms.

Dramatically speaking, *opera buffa* plots continued in the *commedia dell’arte* tradition, initially with particular focus on domestic disputes, but later expanded to include parodies of unctuous foreigners, licentious or cowardly soldiers, quack doctors, monotone lawyers, pedantic tutors, clever or incompetent servants, and flirtatious young women.<sup>9</sup> Whereas *opera seria* tended to focus on the ideals of nobility, honor and duty, *opera buffa* reveled in the less savory aspects of human existence.

Another key distinction between *opera seria* and *opera buffa* is the former genre’s omnipresent use of *castrati* (castrated male sopranos or altos) as the leading heroic voice, which had begun to fall out of fashion by 1780s. In fact, “by the 1780s tenors gradually began to replace [*castrati*] sopranos as noble lovers even in the totally serious operas.”<sup>10</sup> This was partly attributable to the push towards greater dramatic verisimilitude and partly because of the rise of rationalist philosophy which could not justify physical disfigurement for the sake of creating these vocally gifted anomalies. The *castrato*, however, was not a quickly passing musical fad. In fact, *castrati* graced the operatic stage from the very beginning and continued to do so until the early nineteenth century.

Because of the operatic precedent of a noble, heroic male character type that was once given exclusively to the *castrato*, it is perhaps not surprising that, by the end of the

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Bauman, “The Eighteenth Century: Comic Opera” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 106.

<sup>9</sup> Mann, 359.

<sup>10</sup> Hertz, 203.

eighteenth century, roles that embodied some of the characteristics of an *opera seria* hero were now often given to the tenor, the highest *natural* male voice. Thus, the highest-voiced character would usually represent the noblest character on stage in operas that mix the *opera seria* and *opera buffa* tradition.

The decline in favor of the *castrato* voice was an important factor that led to the rise of the tenor voice being featured as the romantic lead. It was also a trend that Mozart, in his later operatic compositions, would help to perpetuate. In his early operas, many of which were written for Italian performances in the *opera seria* style, he wrote extensively for the castrato. However, when he relocated to Vienna and found *opera seria* out of vogue, he began to write almost exclusively for the tenor voice, and only nominally for the *castrato* in his later operas. For example, the character of Idamante in Mozart's *Idomeneo* was originally written for a castrato when it was premiered in Munich in 1781. However, when he prepared the opera for presentation in Vienna in 1786, he rewrote the role of Idamante for a tenor.<sup>11</sup> This revision itself is emblematic of the swiftly changing musical tides in Vienna in the 1780s, which can be best understood through an examination of the rise and fall of the operatic form of the *Singspiel*.

The German *Singspiel* has the youngest genesis of the three operatic genres in which Mozart composed. Johann Adam Hiller (1728-1804) wrote the first *Singspiel*, which premiered in 1766 in Leipzig and was a re-composition of the British "ballad opera" *The Devil to Pay* by Charles Coffey (?-1745). This opera was, as were other early *Singspiele*, a spoken comedy with some simplistic musical numbers added. The relative

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<sup>11</sup> Hertz, 203.

ease of the vocal requirements allowed this genre to flourish in Germany, which did not have a strong history of native professional vocalists.

The *Singspiel* eventually migrated southward and was championed by Austrian Emperor Joseph II (1741-1790), who established the *National-Singspiel* company in Vienna in 1778. He believed *Singspiel* to be an important Germanic art form, and hoped that (with State support) it would flourish and eventually compete with Italian opera for cultural supremacy. The *Singspiel*, which took many of its plot conventions from Italian *opera buffa*, never gained strong acceptance in Vienna. In spite of the resounding success of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782), the *National-Singspiel* company went bankrupt in 1783. Thereafter, Joseph II reinstated *opera buffa*, which he had banned from Viennese stages since 1776 in the vain hope that *Singspiele* might succeed without "foreign" competition. His decision to allow *opera buffa* to return to the Viennese stage was intended to placate the upper and middle classes, who much preferred Italian opera and, most especially, Italian singers.<sup>12</sup> It was in this Italianate cultural milieu that Mozart, desperate for another operatic success, began his collaboration on *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Italian librettist Lorenzo da Ponte in 1784.

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<sup>12</sup> Bauman, 107.

CHAPTER III  
*DON GIOVANNI*

Mozart and da Ponte's first operatic collaboration, *Le nozze di Figaro*, had been moderately successful after its Vienna premiere in May 1786, but became an immediate success in Prague where it was first performed in December of 1786. This led to a commission from Prague for the following season, and Mozart again asked da Ponte to write a libretto. For subject matter, they agreed upon the story of the infamous Don Juan, a renowned seducer of women, of whom many plays and operas had already been written. Da Ponte proceeded to borrow liberally from many of these sources, including Gabriel Tellez's (a.k.a. Tirso de Molina) (1571-1641) original play entitled *El Burlador de Sevilla y Convidado de piedra* (1630), Molière's *Dom Juan, ou Le festin de pierre* (1665), the aforementioned Carlo Goldoni's *Don Giovanni Tenorio, o sia Il dissoluto* (1736), and Giovanni Bertati's *Don Giovanni Tenorio, o sia Il convitato di pietra* (1787) with music by Giuseppe Gazzaniga.<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly, the original Don Ottavio, Antonio Baglioni, who would later premiere the role of Tito in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* (1791), had just played the title role of Don Giovanni in the premiere of *Don Giovanni Tenorio* in Venice on February 5, 1787. It has been speculated that the Prague impresario, Pasquale Bondini, initially offered Mozart the Bertati libretto, which was perhaps provided by the tenor Baglioni

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<sup>13</sup> Edward Forman. "Don Juan before da Ponte" in *W.A. Mozart: Don Giovanni*, ed. Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 29-31.

himself.<sup>14</sup> Although Mozart declined to set the Bertati libretto, electing instead to use da Ponte, it is certainly possible that the tenor was responsible for the suggestion of the operatic subject.

Da Ponte originally entitled the work *Il dissoluto punito* (the degenerate punished), *ossia Don Giovanni*, and described this work as *dramma giocoso*. However, Mozart described it as *opera buffa* when compiling his works catalogue. Did this labeling practice suggest that Mozart and da Ponte viewed the opera's genre differently? That the *dramma giocoso* vs. *opera buffa* designation dilemma has inspired tremendous divergence of critical opinion is indicative of the fact that *Don Giovanni* defies such clear-cut designation.

While it is believed that the terms *dramma giocoso* and *opera buffa* were used fairly interchangeably in the eighteenth century, one important distinction is that *drammi giocosi* included elements of both *seria* and *buffa* operas, and were further defined (by the nomenclature of Carlo Goldoni) as containing interactions between three distinct classes of characters: high (*parti serie*), middle (*di mezzo carattere*) and low (*parti buffi*). It is crucial to note that *opere buffe* generally employed the *parti serie* for the purpose of parody; this was not the case in *drammi giocosi*. Thus, to evaluate Mozart's operas as *drammi giocosi*, one must answer two questions: does he stratify the characters in accordance with Goldoni's taxonomy, and, if so, what is the treatment of the *parti serie*?

We know from his correspondence that Mozart himself was aware of these established terms for operatic character stratification. In a letter dated May 7, 1783,

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<sup>14</sup> David Cairns. *Mozart and His Operas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) 138.

Mozart wrote to his father, specifically requesting a libretto that featured each of the three aforementioned classes:

So I thought perhaps Varesco, provided he isn't angry with me because of the Munich opera - could write me a New libretto for 7 characters.... The most essential ingredient is this: it has to be, on the whole, very *Comical*; and, if possible, include 2 *equally good female roles*; - one would have to be a *Seria*, and the other a *Mezzo Carattere* - but *in quality* - both roles would have to be absolutely equal. - the third female character can be entirely *buffa*, and so could the male parts.<sup>15</sup>

This letter has several significant implications. Mozart was interested in creating another opera for Vienna to follow the success of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and hoped to work with his former librettist for *Idomeneo*. The date of the letter (1783) is significant because it is the same year that the National Singspiel was dissolved, making it obvious as to why Mozart was looking to write an *opera buffa*, a form which was exceedingly popular in Vienna at the time, instead of another *Singspiel*. It is also clear that this portrayal of characters as *seria*, *buffa*, or *mezzo* was not something that Mozart happened upon in the midst of composition, but something he planned well in advance as a directive to his librettists. Thus, although Mozart did not label *Don Giovanni* a *dramma giocoso* in his catalogue, he certainly thought in the terms established by Goldoni when he composed operas with these three character types.

The dramatic, musical and textual distinctions between the characters in *Don Giovanni* help to define them within these three groups. The low (*parti buffi*) characters are Zerlina, Masetto, and Leporello. These individuals are all lower class, and strongly

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Spaethling, *Mozart's letters, Mozart's Life*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000) 350-351.

resemble venerable *commedia dell'arte* characters “Colombina,” “Pagliaccio,” and “Pulcinella,” respectively. Zerlina is innocent, flirtatious, coy and manipulative. She is initially flattered by Don Giovanni’s romantic overtures, but later uses her feminine wiles and simple songs to win Masetto’s forgiveness. Notably, Masetto’s character was named Pierrot in Molière’s *Dom Juan*, directly linking him to the *commedia dell'arte* tradition.<sup>16</sup> He is a rustic bumpkin, but knows enough to distrust Giovanni from the onset. His vocal line is appropriately constrained to mostly stepwise, simple singing.

Leporello is the most contradictory character in the opera. He insists that he does not wish to do his master’s bidding, especially when it involves immoral activities. Nevertheless, the allure of payment, food to be stolen from his master’s table and, it would seem, his vicarious enjoyment of Don Giovanni’s various exploits, always pull him back to his post. His music is also stereotypically *buffa*, as are his words in both “Notte e giorno fatica,” as he complains about his station and employment to a jaunty tune with repetitive descending leaps, and in “Madamina, il catalogo è questo,” where he enumerates the number of women with whom Don Giovanni slept in each country.

The middle characters (*di mezzo carattere*) of the opera are Don Giovanni and Donna Elvira. While Elvira has no cognate in *commedia dell'arte* tradition, hers is the part of a woman scorned. She lacks both the noble indignation of the staid Donna Anna, and the flippant and care-free nature of Zerlina. Her characterization captures this dichotomy as she is simultaneously besotted with and repulsed by Don Giovanni. Her name itself is indicative of a higher social standing, yet she is preposterously traveling

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<sup>16</sup> Mann, 452. (Also see Appendix B on p. 59)

virtually unescorted, and hoping to track down her seducer, Giovanni, presumably to make him follow through on his promise to wed her. All of these aspects point to a character that sits in the middle between the high and low.

Giovanni also sits between the high and low. He is a chameleon, moving easily between social strata for the sole purpose of adding another seduction to his catalog. “By turning Giovanni into a baritone, Mozart was reverting to the traditional choice for a *mezzo carattere* male part, an intermediate vocal type to match his intermediate social role – at home with both low born and high born (albeit a scourge to both in the case of Giovanni).”<sup>17</sup> This concept of vocal range as class determinant is followed in the opera. The lower-class Leporello and Masetto are usually portrayed by bass-baritones, the upper-class Ottavio is a tenor, and the baritone Giovanni sits between the two categories.

In his own way, Don Giovanni is remarkably similar to the *commedia dell’arte* character “Arlecchino” (harlequin). Both are expert seducers, prone to sing serenades, and they share a penchant for dressing up in costume. What is shocking about Giovanni is his positively amoral approach to life, whereas Leporello is simply immoral for choosing to follow him. Giovanni does whatever to whomever as long as it pleases him. His singing, too, is often charming, smooth, and invariably seductively oriented. This is especially true of his serenade of Donna Elvira’s handmaiden in the aria “Deh vieni alla finestra.” In this *canzonetta*, Giovanni sings two strophic stanzas of formal *endecasillabo* (eleven syllables) text where every line is *verso piano* (featuring soft/feminine endings).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Hertz, 203-204.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix A on p. 57 for a brief introduction to Italian versification.

Deh vieni alla finestra, o mio <u>tesoro</u> ,	a	Come to the window, my treasure;
Deh, vieni a consolar il pianto <u>mio</u> .	b	O come to console my weeping!
Se neghi a me di dar qualche <u>ristoro</u> ,	a	If you refuse to give me comfort,
Davanti agli occhi tuoi morir vogl' <u>io</u> !	b	before your eyes I will die.
Tu ch'hai la bocca dolce più del <u>miele</u> ,	c	Your lips are sweeter than honey,
Tu che il zucchero porti in mezzo al <u>core</u> !	d	Your heart has a sugar center:
Non esser, gioia mia, con me <u>crudele</u> !	c	Then be not cruel to me, my jewel,
Lasciati almen veder, mio bell' <u>amore</u> !	d	Let yourself be seen my beloved!

The music, which features the sparse accompaniment of the mandolin and pizzicato strings, reinforces the soft and romantic poetic effect.

In contrast, Don Giovanni's presto aria, "Fin ch'han dal vino," reveals his more boisterous *buffa* side, which is nonetheless licentious. Here the text is in consistent *quinario* (five syllables) with *versi piani* (soft / feminine endings) on most lines except those that end each stanza which are always *tronco* (strong / masculine) and rhyme with a final "ar" sound. The general length of poetic text, irregular rhyme scheme, and inconsistent stanza lengths are all indicative of the *buffa* aria form.

Fin ch'han dal <u>vino</u>	a	While they have from wine
calda la <u>testa</u> ,	b	Heat in the head,
Una gran <u>festa</u>	b	A great party.
fa' <u>preparar</u> .	c	Make preparations.
Se trovi in <u>piazza</u>	d	If you find in the square
qualche <u>ragazza</u> ,	d	Some girl,
Teco ancor <u>quella</u>	e	With you also her
cerca <u>menar</u> .	c	Try to bring.
Senza alcun <u>ordine</u>	f	Without any order
la danza <u>sia</u> ,	g	Let the dance be,
Chi'l <u>minuetto</u>	h	Who a minuet
chi la <u>follia</u> ,	g	Who a folia,
Chi l' <u>alemanna</u>	i	Who an allemande
farai <u>ballar</u> .	c	You make them dance.

Ed io fratt <u>anto</u>	j	And I meanwhile
dall' altro <u>c</u> anto	j	In another corner
Con questa e <u>q</u> uella	e	With this girl or that girl
vo' amoreggi <u>ar</u> .	c	I want to make love.
Ah la mia <u>l</u> ista	k	Ah, my list
doman matt <u>i</u> na	l	Tomorrow morning
D' una <u>d</u> ecina	l	By ten entries
devi aument <u>a</u> re.	c	You must increase.

The striking musical and textual differences between these two arias demonstrate Giovanni's ability to shift seamlessly between social strata as the situation dictates, further solidifying his place as a *mezzo carattere*.

The *seria* characters in *Don Giovanni* are Don Ottavio, Donna Anna and the Comendatore. The Comendatore has an unflappable sense of duty and honor, even to the point of death, and his low, stentorian voice is terrifyingly ominous when he returns as the stone guest. It is likely that this role was given to a bass voice primarily to achieve the necessary gravitas and demonic undertones of the finale of the opera. It is difficult to imagine a high-voiced character dragging Giovanni into the depths of Hell.

The two remaining *parti serie*, Donna Anna and Don Ottavio, bear resemblance to two lesser characters of the *commedia dell'arte*; they are "Isabella," the beautiful and disdainful upper-class woman, and "Octavio," the foppish, but dull, rich snob. The names of these *commedia dell'arte* characters are particularly amusing, because "Octavio" and "Isabela" were the original names of the betrothed couple in Tirso de Molina's original play, *El Burlador de Sevilla*. One might surmise that Tirso lifted these characters and their names from the *commedia dell'arte* tradition; however, the playwright was Spanish, not Italian, and the *commedia dell'arte* performers would not

likely have formalized their usage of names by the time Tirso was writing. It is also possible that the rapid dissemination of *El Burlador de Sevilla* to Naples, which was under Spanish control in the middle of the seventeenth century, may well have led to the co-opting of these names for the Italian *commedia dell'arte* characters. At present, this ostensibly fortuitous connection remains a mystery.

Throughout *Don Giovanni*, the high-born Donna Anna's character is a maiden in distress. She is set upon by Don Giovanni offstage, confronts him and she calls out for help, presumably to prevent her attacker's escape. Her father, the Comendatore, hastens to defend her. He is killed in the ensuing duel with Giovanni, which leaves Donna Anna devastated. Her entire focus for the remainder of the opera is bringing her father's killer, and her assailant, to justice. In order to accomplish this, she extracts the promise of assistance from her betrothed, Don Ottavio, in their duet "Fuggi, crudele, fuggi!"

Don Ottavio's role in the opera is, in many ways, shaped by this vow of vengeance. He is only seen following Donna Anna wherever she might go, continuously inquiring about her mental state, and requesting that she consent to marry him sooner rather than later. Because of his lack of agency, Ottavio is often maligned as a milquetoast character who is overwhelmed in the role of dramatic foil for the ebullient anti-hero, Don Giovanni. Here, in contrast to the romantic, exciting, and yet thoroughly disgusting title character, is a man of solid principles, deliberate in his words and deeds.

As members of the titled nobility, Ottavio and Giovanni are both from patrician backgrounds, and one would expect a similar genteel approach to the world around them. Nevertheless, they remain exceedingly different in their patterns of behavior. The

narcissistic and nihilistic Giovanni runs rampant, whereas Ottavio is constrained by the conventions of contemporary morality. “With Ottavio, love is the fundamental motive for all action, as it is with Don Giovanni; but while it unleashes all the latter’s energy, it thoroughly paralyzes Ottavio’s.”<sup>19</sup>

The inert aspect of Ottavio’s characterization is most apparent in his arias, “Dalla sua pace” and “Il mio tesoro.” The out-of-time nature of both these arias is certainly exemplary of the old *seria* style, where characters would rhapsodize about their emotional status, with no direct bearing on the forward movement of the opera plot itself. “As befits his expression of emotional dependency, *Dalla sua pace* (No. 10A) is built around the harmonic and thematic structure of Anna’s preceding aria – an old-fashioned ternary form with a central section in and around the tonic minor.”<sup>20</sup> “Dalla sua pace” is indeed quite reminiscent of the Baroque *opera seria* writing practices, especially with regards to its poetic text, initial orchestral accompaniment and musical form.

In the course of the opera, “Dalla sua pace” occurs immediately after Donna Anna realizes that it was Don Giovanni who assaulted her, pleads for Ottavio to exact vengeance upon the wretch, and exits. Now alone on stage, Don Ottavio wonders aloud in recitative if a gentleman like Don Giovanni is capable of such a crime. Although one might expect a more visceral reaction from the tenor, he nevertheless, in spite of his uncertainty, avows to placate Donna Anna, and sings about his desire so to do.

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<sup>19</sup> Hermann Abert, *Mozart’s Don Giovanni*, trans. Peter Gellhorn (London: Eulenburg Books, 1976), 113.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Ford, *Così?: Sexual Politics in Mozart’s Operas* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), 124.

Poetically, “Dalla sua pace” falls in line with *opera seria* convention, with its bland, self-reflective lyrics, and its use of two stanzas of text, although the stanzas do not contrast as greatly as one might expect. The poetic meter is a very regular *quinario* (five syllables), with *versi piani* (feminine/weak) endings to all lines excepting the final line of each stanza which is *verso tronco* (truncated and masculine/strong). As one would expect, the first stanza of text is set to both the musical A section and the repeated A' section, while the second stanza of text is set to the musical B section.

Dalla sua <u>pace</u>	a	On her peace
la mia <u>dipende</u> ;	b	My peace depends,
Quel che a lei <u>piace</u>	a	That which pleases her
vita mi <u>rende</u> ,	b	gives life to me,
Quel che le <u>incresce</u>	c	That which is unpleasant to her
morte mi <u>dà</u> .	d	give me death.
S'ella <u>sospira</u> ,	e	If she sighs,
sospiro <u>anch'io</u> ;	f	I sigh as well;
È mia quell' <u>ira</u> ,	e	And mine her wrath,
quel pianto è <u>mio</u> ;	f	her tears are mine
E non ho <u>bene</u> ,	g	I have no happiness
S'ella non l' <u>ha</u>	d	If she does not have it

The opening bars present a slow, stately aria in G major with lengthy tied notes in the orchestra. This is evocative of an “arioso,” an antique baroque form of vocal writing that was aria-like, but over recitative style accompaniment. Notably, rhythmic movement in the orchestra begins only after the seventh measure. (Example 1)

(Example 1: “Dalla sua pace” m. 1-9)

The image displays a musical score for the first nine measures of the aria "Dalla sua pace". It is written in G major and 2/4 time. The score consists of two systems. The first system covers measures 1-4, and the second system covers measures 5-9. Each system includes a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The lyrics are: "Dal - la sua pa - ce la mia di - pen - de, quel che'a lei pia - - - ce vi - - - ta mi - ren - de,". The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line and chords that support the vocal melody. The vocal line begins with a rest in measure 1, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, including a trill in measure 4. The piano accompaniment starts with a half-note chord in the right hand and a half-note chord in the left hand, with some chords being sustained across measures.

The formal structure of “Dalla sua pace” is an ABA' form plus coda. It is, in essence, a written out version of a *da capo* aria because the initial 16 bars of the A' section are an exact repeat of the initial A section. The coda that follows the A' mostly reuses old melodic material and is not particularly remarkable. However, the B section makes it clear that we are dealing with “new wine in old bottles.” This is to say that while the aria may be *seria*-like, the B section is strikingly innovative in both its harmonic instability and the fact that it is not tonally closed. By ending the B section on

a  $V^7$  chord, Mozart is not closing the section in the dominant key, as one might expect, but using the dominant seventh chord to lead directly back into the A' section.

Figure 1: Dalla sua pace (simple ternary plus coda)

A:	B:	A':	CODA			
I (G)	i (g) - III (Bb) – iii – $V^7$ (D)	I (G)	+ exten.	+ rpt.	+ new	+ play out
m. 1-17	m. 17-36	m. 37-52	m. 52-56	m. 57-64	m. 65-70	m. 71-74
16 m.	20 m.	16 m.	4 m.	8 m.	6 m.	4 m.

The vocal range of “Dalla sua pace” is not especially wide, extending from  $D^3$  to  $G^4$ . Nevertheless, the fairly high *tessitura* (ranging from  $G^3$ - $G^4$ ), and the need for absolute vocal placidity and ease in the aria create a great challenge with regard to maintaining smooth vocal “line.”

Although in many modern productions, Don Ottavio sings both “Dalla sua pace” and “Il mio tesoro,” historically he would have sung only one of the two. “Dalla sua pace” was added for Francesco Morella, the new Don Ottavio for the Viennese premiere of 1788, to replace “Il mio tesoro.” The reason for this substitution, which has often been suggested but is impossible to confirm, is that Morella found the original aria too great a challenge. Indeed, “Il mio tesoro” requires “line,” as well as excellent breath control and supreme agility in order to handle its furious coloratura. Its florid runs are pointedly not to be mistaken for *buffa* style patter, but are rather exemplars of the rococo *seria* style. Edward Dent agreed, calling it “the most formal and elaborate solo of the whole opera

and the nearest approach that Mozart ever makes in it to the style and constructive method of *opera seria*.”<sup>21</sup>

Figure 2: Il mio tesoro (compound binary form or sonata form without development)

Ritornello:	A:	B:	extension	A:	B'/A:	
I (Bb)	I (Bb)	vi (g) – V (F)	V – V <sup>7</sup>	I (Bb)	I (Bb)	play out
m. 1-7	m. 8-29	m. 30-43	m. 43-48	m. 49-70	m. 71-93	93-101
7 m.	22 m.	14 m.	6m.	22 m.	23 m.	9 m.

The structure of “Il mio tesoro,” as with “Dalla sua pace,” is indeed quite formal. Unlike “Dalla sua pace,” there is an instrumental opening that functions as a ritornello would in a baroque *seria* aria. The A section of the aria is lyrical and sweet. It begins in B-flat major, a key which in Mozart’s composition milieu was considered “noble and richly human.”<sup>22</sup> A notable feature of the section is the long sustained notes on an F<sup>4</sup>, a note that falls squarely in the *passaggio*, a difficult vocal transition point in most tenor voices.

From its very onset, the B section features trumpet-like arpeggios and leaps. In fact, the B section contains the most determined and forceful singing that the character ever performs. The B section begins on a g minor chord, moving from I to vi (a very common transition in the baroque *seria* tradition) before eventually settling into the dominant (V) F major. The strongest cadence of this new tonality occurs at m. 43, tonally closing the B section. This is immediately followed by a lengthy section of aggressive *coloratura* which functions as a written out cadenza, extending the initial B

<sup>21</sup> Edward J. Dent, *Mozart’s Operas: A Critical Study*, 2d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 169.

<sup>22</sup> Myer Fredman, *From Idomeneo to Die Zauberflöte: A Conductor’s Commentary on the Operas of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*. (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2002), 12.

section. The *coloratura* decelerates in m. 47 and 48 by way of chromatic and later diatonic scales, effectively reinterpreting the recently established tonic F major chord as a dominant seventh chord that leads directly into an almost exactly repeated A section, again in B-flat major, beginning in m. 49. (Example 2)

(Example 2: "Il mio tesoro" m. 41- 49)

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with three staves: vocal line (treble clef), piano right hand (treble clef), and piano left hand (bass clef). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is common time (C). The vocal line includes the following lyrics: "nun - zio vo - gl'io tor - - - nar" in the first system, and "Il mio te - so - ro in - tan - to" in the third system. The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with arpeggiated chords and rhythmic patterns in both hands. A large slur covers the vocal line and piano accompaniment from measure 41 to 49. The score concludes with a final cadence in measure 49.

The repeated A section is followed by another forceful section that is labeled B'/A in the above formal diagram (Figure 2). The rationale for this odd designation is that this section remains in the original tonic key of B-flat and combines various musical figures from both the previous A section such as the use of lengthy held notes (again F<sup>4</sup>), with the text and large leaps of the B section. It is this complex section that makes “Il mio tesoro” so difficult to classify in traditional aria forms. Overall, the aria is somewhat like a compound binary form, but it lacks the thematic return of the unpolluted B material. Just so, it resembles a sonata form without development, but unlike most examples of this form, there is a strong recapitulation of the A section material. Thus, although the aria seems very formal in its structure, it cannot be fully explained within the constraints of the traditional *seria* aria forms.

The text of “Il mio tesoro,” unlike that of “Dalla sua pace,” displays an emphatic division between the two stanzas. In the first stanza, Ottavio bids Elvira, Zerlina and Masetto to comfort Donna Anna, and in the second he swears to accomplish her revenge. This technique of using contrasting sections of music with strongly contrasting stanzas of text, and then repeating them, is yet another hallmark of *opera seria*.

The poetic meter is settenario (seven syllables), which was one of the two most common verse types in the *seria* tradition. The lines alternate between *verso piano* (weak ending) and line of *verso tronco* (strong ending). This change in the proportion of strong and weak meters is indicative of the change in Ottavio’s attitude. Whereas in “Dalla sua pace,” only every sixth line was *verso tronco*, every other line is *verso tronco* in “Il mio tesoro.” This increased usage indicates that he is much more agitated than in his earlier

aria. However, even when his poetic form suggests that he is angry, the poetic meter and rhyme scheme remain undisturbed. In essence, even though he is angry, Ottavio cannot help but remain a gentleman.

Il mio tesoro <u>intanto</u>	a	To my love meanwhile
Andate a <u>consolar</u> ,	b	go and console her.
E del bel ciglio il <u>pianto</u>	a	And from her beautiful eyes the tears
Cercate di <u>asciugar</u> .	b	Seek to dry.
Ditele che i suoi <u>torti</u>	c	Tell her wrongs
A vendicar io <u>vado</u> ;	d	to avenge I go,
Che sol di stragi e <u>morti</u>	c	That only of carnage and death
Nunzio vogl'io <u>tornar</u> .	b	As a messenger I long to return

An interesting comparison is da Ponte's strikingly different approach to versification in Masetto's first act aria "Ho capito, signor sì." In this aria, the character realizes Don Giovanni is attempting to seduce his bride-to-be and that he is powerless to stop him. In the first two stanzas of this aria, da Ponte strings together eight straight lines of *verso tronco*. This indicates the character's supreme agitation and confirms Masetto's lower class social standing.

Ho capito, signor <u>sì</u> ,	a	I understand, sir yes,
Chino il capo e me ne <u>vo</u> .	b	I bow my head and I go.
Gia che piace a voi <u>così</u> ,	a	As it pleases you like that,
Altre repliche non <u>fo</u> .	b	Further objections I will not make.
Cavalier voi siete <u>già</u> .	c	You are a Cavalier,
Dubitar non posso <u>affé</u> ;	d	To doubt that is impossible in faith:
Me lo dice la <u>bontà</u>	c	I can tell by the kindness
Che volete aver per <u>me</u> .	d	that you want to have for me.

Bricconaccia, malandr <u>ina</u> !	e	Little rogue, little rascal!
Fosti o <u>gn</u> or la mia ru <u>ina</u> !	e	You were always my ruin!
Vengo, vengo! Rest <u>a</u> , rest <u>a</u> .	f	I'm coming! I'm coming! Stay, stay
È una cosa molto on <u>esta</u> !	f	It is something very honest!
Faccia il nostro cavali <u>ere</u>	g	Allow my lord to make
Cavaliera ancora <u>te</u> .	d	A lady of you!

The ease of substituting “Dalla sua pace” for “Il mio tesoro” in the Vienna production of *Don Giovanni* is further proof that Ottavio *should* be interpreted as a *seria* part. This is because these two arias essentially function as “suitcase” arias would in a Baroque *opera seria*. “Suitcase” arias were often freely substituted into one opera from another at the behest of a singer who was desirous to display his or her voice to its best quality, even if the aria did not contribute anything to the story itself. Just so, “Dalla sua pace” and “Il mio tesoro” exist primarily to display the vocal abilities of the two singers who sang the role in the different productions, and neither aria has particular importance to the action of the opera itself. Additionally, as in an *opera seria*, the arias were composed with the intention that they may be added or removed as the situation dictates.

In some ways, Ottavio fits in to his *seria* role *too* well, seeming unrealistically staid in the opera and leaving the audience somehow unsatisfied. It is important to note that, in spite of the fact that he is an inadequate foil for Don Giovanni, Ottavio could not have effectively challenged Giovanni’s supremacy and still remained true to the operatic form. This was because “the *seria* lover was in fact never more than a peripheral figure in *dramma giocoso*, ever since Goldoni established the specific kind.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Hertz, 203.

In spite of Ottavio's dramatic shortcomings, his arias help to illuminate his character, and highlight his best quality - his enduring and supportive love for Donna Anna. Indeed, "Don Ottavio's unsuspected charm fortunately seems to be the highly commendable one to have in opera – the ability to express his dog-like devotion in two quite beautiful arias."<sup>24</sup> That these expressions of devotion are so unremarkable, and perhaps even boring, is the reason why many critics feel that his character is a weak point of the opera.

This is not to say that Ottavio, even as a *seria* character, does not create humorous moments in the opera, but it is significant that these are inevitably the result of unintentional comedy with Ottavio playing the "straight man." An example of this is the aforementioned scene in which Donna Anna tells Ottavio about Giovanni's assault on her purity, while Ottavio makes a variety of interjections, expressing his dismay at some moments and his relief at others. "Now, it is reported that 18<sup>th</sup>-century audiences found this a particularly hilarious scene – especially Don Ottavio's line 'Respiro!' ('I breathe again'); it was obvious to everybody that Don Giovanni had, as they say, taken his pleasure of Donna Anna for there are noticeable gaps and discrepancies...."<sup>25</sup>

While Ottavio may be capable of creating a humorous effect, there can be little doubt that he is earnest in his words and deeds. Thus, while Ottavio does seem weak and ineffectual, his music and lyrics tell us that these perceived inadequacies are little more than a misunderstanding of the true Ottavio. He is not a parody of the *seria* type, but rather a man of conservative, and yes, old-fashioned character, whom Mozart and

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<sup>24</sup> Spike Hughes, *Famous Mozart Operas* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1958), 100.

<sup>25</sup> Hughes, 97.

da Ponte present with suitably conservative, old-fashioned music and lyrics within the context of a world gone mad.

CHAPTER IV  
*COSÌ FAN TUTTE*

In Mozart and da Ponte's final collaboration, *Così fan tutte*, we again find a *seria*-like tenor character caught up in romantic intrigue that challenges the social mores of the day. This project began with a new commission from Emperor Joseph the II in 1789 (following the successful Vienna revival of *Le nozze di Figaro*), and culminated in 1790 with the Vienna premiere of *Così fan tutte*. While the true origins of the story remain a mystery, an apocryphal rumor has long suggested that its plot was taken directly from an incident in contemporary Viennese society.<sup>26</sup>

Like *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte* has been categorized in many different ways. Mozart called it *opera buffa* while da Ponte called it a *dramma giocoso*, as he had with *Don Giovanni*. "On the surface of things, *Così fan tutte* is an exemplary *opera buffa*. The narrative consists of a string of hack *buffa lazzi* – comic gags – through which the conventional, but apparently mismatched, pairs of *parte prima* and *parte seconda* lovers engage in a strictly materialist situation comedy with a cynical philosopher and a powerful maid."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, there is much to suggest that this seemingly frivolous story is more than pure fluff.

As in *Don Giovanni*, the characters in *Così fan tutte* can be placed into the three categories of *parti buffi*, *di mezzo carattere*, and *parti serie*, and there is, again, a strong

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<sup>26</sup> Bauman, 113.

<sup>27</sup> Ford, 107.

reference to *commedia dell'arte*. Don Alfonso, the *buffo* bass, is a jaded old philosopher and bears resemblance to the wily “Scaramuccio.” It is he who challenges the young officers to this test of lover’s fidelity. He is the puppeteer, and they the marionettes. The other *buffa* character, the cynical and resourceful *soubrette* Despina, wears a variety of masks through the course of the opera, first as herself, the malcontent servant-girl, who again bears resemblance to the coquettish “Colombina.” Later, she appears as the bogus magnetic medico, “Graziano,” and later still as the droning notary, “Tartaglia.”

The *mezzo carattere* are Dorabella and Guglielmo; these characters have elements of both *seria* and *buffa*. “As in *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro*, Mozart has sharply differentiated between types of soprano in *Così fan tutte*, making a distinction between temperaments as well as between classes.”<sup>28</sup> Dorabella is the lower voiced, and certainly more capricious of the two sisters. Surprisingly, it was she who in her *seria* aria, “*Smanie implacabili*,” complains most loudly that she will die without her Ferrando. One must “recognize that Dorabella is indulging her emotions and that she is about to sing an extravagant aria of frenzied grief, more suited to Electra in *Idomeneo* than to a frivolous young lady in a comic opera. The effect is absurd and raises smiles of amusement.”<sup>29</sup> Of course, the lady doth protest too much, and a few hours later, she discards her complaints and readily succumbs to seduction without the flourish.

Guglielmo, the baritone, is always engaging in some form of competition with his compatriot Ferrando. This is apparent in the very first scene, when they give their word of honor to keep the wager a secret. Ferrando swears “*Tutto*” (everything), and Guglielmo says

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<sup>28</sup> Charles Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Mozart* (New York: Da Capo, 1978), 288.

<sup>29</sup> Mann, 536.

“Tuttissimo” (everything and then some).<sup>30</sup> Guglielmo finds a *commedia dell’arte* cognate in “Spavento,” the braggart military captain. As he regards himself as irresistible, he is initially confident that the women, or his betrothed at least, will remain faithful, and that he will win the bet. As a matter of honor, he plays the part of the Albanian suitor admirably, and as the events unfold, he successfully seduces Dorabella. Nevertheless, he remains aloof from the action, teasing Ferrando about his lack of seductive success. “Guglielmo chips in with the superbly conceited assurance that of course things couldn’t really happen otherwise. What woman, asks Guglielmo, would ever dream of being unfaithful to *him*? He’s not blowing his own trumpet, but – strictly between friends – one has certain advantages, you know.”<sup>31</sup> Ferrando is, understandably, at a loss. He does not know where to turn, so he asks his friend for some advice. In response, Guglielmo sings his chattering chauvinist attack on women, “Donne mie, la fate a tanti a tanti,” indicating with both his poetic text and his *buffo* music that he now believes Don Alfonso might be right after all.

The *seria* couple is comprised of the highest voiced individuals (Ferrando and Fiordiligi), as was the case in *Don Giovanni*. Fiordiligi, like her sister, sings an aria strongly suggestive of the *seria* style. Her “Come scoglio,” however, is not quite as obviously over-the-top as her sister’s aria had been. Indeed, the exceedingly wide leaps and blazing coloratura give the impression of seriousness and determination, and Fiordiligi’s later actions show this assessment to be correct. She does not prove as easy to seduce as Dorabella, but is more passionate when she finally does submit to Ferrando’s wooing in the Act II duet, “Fra gli amplessi.” “With

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<sup>30</sup> Joachim Kaiser, *Who’s Who in Mozart’s Operas*, trans. Charles Kessler (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1986), 94.

<sup>31</sup> Hughes, 176.

Fiordiligi, indeed, it is not a matter of changing love, but finding it. Our main impression in the duet with Ferrando is of her new capacity for genuine feeling, even – or perhaps, particularly – in her capitulation.”<sup>32</sup>

The tenor Ferrando often seems a proverbial fish out of water in this game of seduction. His earnestness is perhaps reminiscent of Don Ottavio, but Ferrando never seems dull or foppish in the way his *Don Giovanni* counterpart could not help but be. Ferrando states that if he wins the bet, “he will arrange a serenade for his ‘Goddess’ . . . . Guglielmo, being a baritone, is a little more realistic and decides in a matter-of-fact, no-nonsense-in-the-Army manner that he will give a dinner party ‘in honor of Cytherea’.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, from the very beginning of the opera, a clear distinction is drawn between the pragmatic Guglielmo (*mezzo carattere*) and Ferrando (*seria*) the romantic idealist.

Later in the first act, while both of his lower-voiced counterparts once again bluster about food, Ferrando sings, in his aria “Un’ aura amorosa,” that the “breath of love” provides his only needed nourishment. This is “an aria that would grace any opera seria. Like most seria arias, it stands outside the action, as do Ottavio’s two meditations on his love for Anna, ‘Dalla sua pace’ and ‘Il mio tesoro.’”<sup>34</sup> Although the tessitura and vocal range of “Un’ aura amorosa” are higher than “Dalla sua pace,” they share a number of similarities. Most notably, both contain two stanzas of text and are simple ternary arias that feature an ABA plus coda form.

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<sup>32</sup> Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, new and revised ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 97.

<sup>33</sup> Hughes, 149.

<sup>34</sup> Hertz, 240.

Figure 3: Un'aura amorosa (ternary ABA' plus Coda)

A:	B:			A': + coda w/ A&B		
I (A)	mod. to V (E)	V (Establish E)	Prolong.	I (A)	extension	play out
(m. 1-23)	(m. 24-29)	(m. 30 – 37)	(38-41)	(42-63)	(63-73)	(m. 73-80)
22 m.	6m.	8 m.	4 m.	22 m.	10 m.	8 m.
	[18 total]			[40 total]		

Harmonically, “Un’ aura amorosa” begins the A section in A major, a key that in Mozart’s music is “practically always associated with aspects of romantic and/or sensuous love.”<sup>35</sup> However, unlike many other *seria* arias, the B section does not begin immediately in the dominant (V) nor in the harmonic minor (vi), but it instead transitions gradually to the dominant beginning in measure 24. Here the e# vii<sup>o7</sup> chord (which would have been vii<sup>o7</sup>/ vi in A major) functions as a pivot chord, and is reinterpreted as vii<sup>o7</sup>/ ii in E major. The transition then proceeds by way of a seven measure descent that features one primary chord for each measure, passing from (in E major) vii<sup>o7</sup>/ ii, ii, V, I<sup>6</sup>, V<sup>4/3</sup>/V, V, I. This transition is harmonically enigmatic up until the final two chords of the descent, which conclude with a cadence at measure 30 on the E major (the new I) chord, which had been eagerly anticipated. (Example 3)

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<sup>35</sup> Fredman, 12.

(Example 3: "Un'aura amorosa" m. 23-30)

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and piano accompaniment (bass clef). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/8. The piano accompaniment features a consistent eighth-note bass line with arpeggiated chords. The vocal line includes trills and a triplet.

System 1:  
Vocal: rà. Al cor che nu -  
Piano: Accompaniment with trills.

System 2:  
Vocal: dri - to da spe - me d'a - mo - re, da  
Piano: Accompaniment with trills.

System 3:  
Vocal: spe - me d'a - mo - re, d'un e - sca mi  
Piano: Accompaniment with a triplet in the final measure.

The next twelve bars (30-41) feature a sparser accompaniment which simply reinforces E major as tonic. The B section eventually ends on a perfect authentic cadence of an E major chord in m. 41 which tonally closes the section, a standard operating procedure in a *da capo*-style *seria* aria, which was surprisingly not observed in “Dalla sua pace” (see Figure 1 above). The singer, however, can choose to “open” the section by way of a vocal embellishment in the fermata in m. 41. Here the tenor descends from E to D# and then D natural, effectively turning the E major chord into a  $V^7$  leading gracefully back to A major for the recapitulation of the A' section.

While the vocal music in the A' section is nearly identical to that of the initial A section, the accompaniment is substantially denser and more harmonically complex, hence the decision to call the section A' rather than simply a repeated A. The coda is tagged onto this A' section and begins in measure 63. The text is a continued repetition of the first stanza (and thus the lyrics of the A section). Notably, however, the musical material of the vocal line, especially with the use of the triplet, is more reminiscent of the B section. This is also the case for the accompaniment figuration in m. 63-66 of the coda which is very similar to that of the B section in m. 37-40. (Examples 4 and 5)

(Ex. 4 “Un’aura amorosa” m. 63-66)



(Ex. 5 “Un’aura amorosa” m. 37-40)



Another interesting aspect of the coda is the treacherously difficult vocal arpeggiation which descends through the D major from F<sup>4</sup> chord to D<sup>3</sup>. This final note sits very low in the tenor voice, especially considering the high-lying material that immediately precedes it. To accomplish this phrase delicately and without major changes in tone quality is the supreme challenge of the aria.

Un’ aura amor <u>o</u> sa	a	A loving ambience
del nostro tes <u>o</u> ro	b	Of our treasure
un dolce rist <u>o</u> ro	b	A sweet refreshment
al cor porger <u>a</u> .	c	To the heart will offer.
Al cor che nudr <u>i</u> to	d	When the heart is nourished
Da speme, d’am <u>o</u> re,	e	With hope of love
D’un esca migl <u>i</u> ore	e	A better decoy
Bisogno non h <u>a</u> .	c	Is not needed.

The aria’s meter is *senario* (six syllables) and each of the two stanzas is comprised of three lines of *versi piani* followed by a line of *verso tronco*. Another similarity between “Un’

aura amorosa” and “Dalla sua pace” is the surprising lack of contrast between the stanzas, in spite of their distinctive musical treatment. Nevertheless, the poetic form bears many of the hallmarks of *opera seria*, particularly because of its cursory length, regular meter and repetitive rhyme scheme.

Although Ferrando’s initial Act II aria, “Ah! lo veggio quell’anima bella,” also contains the aforementioned poetic aspects of a *seria* aria, it bears little musical resemblance to either “Un’ aura amorosa” or even “Dalla sua pace.” Instead, it is closer in style to “Il mio tesoro” not only because of their shared Bb key signature, but also because of its lengthy repeated sections and the presence of a B’ section in which the second poetic stanza is repeated in the tonic, rather than the dominant key. According to Daniel Hertz, “Ah! lo veggio” contains “several features of the two-tempo *rondò* that the primo uomo was expected to sing in serious operas, gavotte rhythm being one of them, concertante wind writing another.”<sup>36</sup>

Because it begins in an *Allegretto* tempo and moves to *Allegro*, “Ah! lo veggio” is indeed a two-tempo aria. Hertz’s classification as a *rondò*, however, is somewhat inadequate because it does not account for the fact that Mozart did not apply the label of *rondò* to the aria, although he did use it for Fiordiligi’s “Per pietà,” which follows immediately afterwards. Additionally, a *rondò* designation for an aria would suggest an ABA form in the initial tempo before the up-tempo C section, not an ABA’B’ as “Ah! lo veggio” possesses. One might posit that the C section could be considered a coda, but this is also inadequate because of the length of the section and the fact that the vocal material is fully distinct from the music of the A or B sections.

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<sup>36</sup> Hertz, 242.

As such, “Ah! lo veggio” can be best understood as a compound binary form with an up-tempo stretta.<sup>37</sup>

Figure 4: Ah! lo veggio (compound binary with stretta / somewhat rondo-like)

A:	B:	A':	B':	interrupt / trans.	C: (Allegro)
I (Bb)	I -V (F)	I (Bb)	I (Bb) + V/V – V	prolong.	I (Bb) + play out
(m. 1-14)	(m. 14-42)	(m. 43-57)	(m. 57-92)	(m. 92-99)	(m. 100-126) (126-133)
14 m.	29m.	15 m.	34 m.	8 m.	27 m. 8 m.
	[28 total]		[42 total measures]		[34 total measures]

As in “Un’ aura amorosa,” the sections are tonally closed until the striking interruption in m. 92, which transitions from the B' section to the C section in the new allegro tempo. (Example 6)

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<sup>37</sup> Jack Westrup, et al. "Aria." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, volume 1, ed. Stanley Sadie. (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1992) 173.

(Example 6: “Ah! lo veggio” m. 92-99)

mor. Ma tu fug - gi, spie - ta - ta tu ta - ci, ed in - va - no mi sen - ti lan - guir? Allegro

Another interesting facet of this aria is that the accompaniment proceeds to B section figuration one bar ahead of the vocal line. This occurs both in m. 14 and m. 57, hence the overlapping measure numbers of the sections in the formal diagram. Unlike most *seria* arias, however, there are no ritornelli of any kind; thus the modulation to the new key of the B section occurs in conjunction with the vocal line as in m. 14-22. As such, F major is not firmly established as the key area of the B section until the perfect authentic dominant-to-tonic cadence in m. 22-23, about a third of the way through the section. (Example 7)

(Example 7: “Ah! lo veggio” m. 14-22)

The image displays a musical score for the aria "Ah! lo veggio" from the opera *Il Trovatore*, specifically measures 14-22. The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower two staves. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "In quel guar-do in quei ca-ri so-spi-ri dol-ce rag-gio lam-peg-gia'al mio cor, lam-peg-gia'al mio cor:". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a more active treble line in the right hand, with various chords and melodic fragments.

In the scope of the opera, Ferrando sings “Ah! lo veggio” to Fiordiligi in response to her protestations against his romantic overtures. He has high hopes of winning her heart, and thereby the bet. However, in the third stanza of text, Ferrando realizes that Fiordiligi is rebuffing his overtures yet again. After singing the aria, he promptly leaves the stage in true *seria* fashion. Surprisingly, the first two lines of this third stanza of text do not correspond to the musical C section and new tempo, but rather to the harmonically unstable interruption/transitional section in m. 93-99. (See Example 6 and figure 4 above) The musical C section actually corresponds to only the final two lines of the text.

Poetically, the aria is quite traditional. It has *decasillabo* (ten syllables) meter and, perhaps as an expression of consternation, the lines alternate between *versi piani* (weak) and *versi tronchi* (strong), just as in “Il mio tesoro.” The primary contrast in the poem is the introduction of the new poetic idea in the third stanza.

Ah lo veggio quell'anima <u>b</u> ella	a	Ah I see that beautiful soul
Al mio pianto resister non <u>s</u> à:	b	My weeping doesn't know to resist
Non è fatta per esser <u>r</u> ub <u>e</u> lla	a	She's not made to be rebellious
Agli affetti di amica <u>p</u> ietà.	b	To the affections of friendly pity.
In quel guardo, in quei cari <u>s</u> ospiri	c	In those looks, in those dear sighs
Dolce raggio lampeggia al mio <u>c</u> or:	d	A sweet ray [of light] shines to my heart:
Già rispondi a miei caldi <u>d</u> esiri,	c	Already you respond to my warm desires,
Già tu cedi al più tenero <u>a</u> mor.	d	Already you surrender to most tender love.
Ma tu fuggi, spietata tu <u>t</u> aci,	e	But you flee, un-pitiful you're silent
Ed invano mi senti languir?	f	And in vain you hear me languishing?
Ah cessate, speranze <u>f</u> allaci,	e	Ah cease, false hopes,
La crudel mi condanna a <u>m</u> orir.	f	The cruel one condemns me to die.

This aria is traditionally omitted from productions. The reason for this is likely because of its lack of dramatic necessity in an already lengthy opera, and because of its extreme vocal challenges. Even though the tessitura is quite similar to “Un'aura amorosa,” “Ah! lo veggio” presents greater difficulties to the singer because the vocal line extends thirteen times to a Bb<sup>5</sup>, a note which is at the very top of the vocal range for many tenors. Another challenge of the aria is the brisk pace, which may prevent the singer from taking an adequate breath, making those repeated Bb<sup>5</sup> even more daunting. These factors make “Ah! lo veggio” a showpiece aria, much like those sung by castrati in *opere serie*, and cutting it severely lessens the importance of the character.

Throughout the opera to this point, Ferrando has remained remarkably constrained and has stayed within the prescribed limits of a *seria* character. His arias have been musically and poetically well-balanced, and thus align with the *seria* classification. However, this façade of calm confidence is shattered after Guglielmo reveals that he has successfully won the affections of Ferrando’s beloved Dorabella. This is indeed the only time where Ferrando “seems to fall from the lofty pedestal of idealistic love erected by his sentiments and his music.”<sup>38</sup>

In his rage, Ferrando sings his *cavatina* “Tradito, schernito.” He is understandably distraught and feels torn between his anger at her betrayal and his continuing love for her. The form of the aria depicts these feelings because of its unbalanced form and frequent shifting of key areas, mirroring the character’s emotional instability.

Figure 5: Tradito, schernito (compound binary)

A:	B:	A':	B':
i (c minor)	III (Eb major)	(Transitional /unstable)	I (C major) + play out
(m. 1-7)	(m. 8-28)	(m. 29-37)	(m. 38-69) (m. 70-73)
7 m.	21 m.	8 m.	32 m. 4 m.

From the very beginning, the music has the trappings of a traditional *opera seria* rage aria, especially with regard to the fermatas after the declamation of both the first and second word (Betrayed! Scorned!). However “Tradito, schernito” quickly shifts from the angry C minor declaration of the first line of poetry to E flat Major just eight bars into the piece. On this, the first iteration of the second two lines of text, Mozart creates “soaring and smoothly conjunct

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<sup>38</sup> Hertz, 242.

lines in the major mode, expressive of hope and very much in the vein of a seria lover.”<sup>39</sup>

(Example 8)

(Example 8: “Tradito, schernito” m. 1-15)

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 8/8. The first system (measures 1-4) has the vocal line starting with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes F4, E4, D4, and a half note C4. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line with quarter notes. The second system (measures 5-8) has the vocal line with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes F4, E4, D4, and a half note C4. The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note pattern. The third system (measures 9-15) has the vocal line with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes F4, E4, D4, and a half note C4. The piano accompaniment features a more complex texture with sixteenth-note runs in the right hand and a bass line with quarter notes.

Tra - di - to, scher - ni - to dal per - fi - do cor, dal  
per - - - - fi - - - - do - cor,  
io sen - to che'an - co - ra-quest' al - ma l'a do - ra, io

<sup>39</sup> Hertz, 242.

Certainly, this schizophrenic musical material reflects Ferrando's confused thoughts and addled feelings of hate, resentment and adoration, all of which set him at cross-purposes with himself. A striking interruption (that is A' in Figure 5 above) brings back the first line of text and destabilizes the harmony until order is restored in measure 38, with a C major iteration of the second romantic theme associated with the second two lines of text (B'). (Example 9 below)

Poetically, too, the aria is very disjointed. Although it is set in regular *senario* (six syllables per line), both the rhyme scheme and the unusually irregular use of two lines of *versi tronchi* in lines 2 and 6 (rather than lines 3 and 6, or lines 2, 4, and 6 as one might expect) set this poem off-kilter. In the end, however, Ferrando's music makes it clear that his love for Dorabella is able to diffuse the anger he expresses so vehemently in the first two lines.

Tradito, schernito	a	Betrayed, scorned
dal perfido <u>cor</u> ,	b	by her faithless heart,
Io sento che <u>ancora</u>	c	I feel that still
quest'alma l' <u>adora</u> ,	c	my soul adores her,
Io sento per <u>essa</u>	d	I hear for her
le voci d' <u>amor</u> .	b	the voices of love.

This aria, like “Ah! lo veggio,” is often cut from performances. This practice of cutting two of his three arias necessarily relegates Ferrando to a position of lesser importance in the opera, just as the inclusion of both arias for Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* leads to an aggrandizement of the character's import. In both instances, the inclusion or exclusion of certain arias leads the audience to perceive the characters in different ways. Without “Tradito, schernito,” the audience never observes Ferrando's internal torment, which makes the seduction to come in the duet “Fra gli amplessi” less affecting.

(Example 9: "Tradito, schernito" m. 27-43)

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is common time (C). The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand.

**System 1:** The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics "Tra - di - to, scher - ni - to dal". The piano accompaniment starts with a chord in the left hand and eighth-note patterns in the right hand.

**System 2:** The vocal line continues with "per - fi - do cor, dal per - - - - fi - - - - do - cor,". The piano accompaniment features a more active right hand with eighth-note runs and chords in the left hand.

**System 3:** The vocal line concludes with "io sen-to che'an - co - ra - quest' al - ma l'a - do - ra, io". The piano accompaniment continues with eighth-note patterns and chords.

Now that Ferrando has been cuckolded (and has musically broken out of the stricter *seria* limitations of his earlier arias), he is given the opportunity to exact his revenge on Guglielmo, and does so in his seduction duet with Fiordiligi, “Fra gli amplessi.” The duet, like Mozart’s other seduction duets in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (“Crudel! Perchè finora”) and *Don Giovanni* (“Là ci darem la mano”), is in the key of A major. The accompaniment of the opening measure of the duet is nearly an exact echo of the opening bar of “Un’aura amoroso.” (Examples 10 & 11)

(Ex. 10: “Fra gli amplessi,” m. 1)



(Ex. 11: “Un’aura amoroso,” m. 1)



At the opening of this duet, Fiordiligi is readying herself to join Guglielmo on the front lines of the battlefield in disguise wearing Ferrando’s spare military uniform. However, the music purposefully invokes “Un’aura amoroso,” and thus Ferrando, and notably *not* her beloved Guglielmo. It would seem that the sentiments of the beautiful, loving music of “Un’aura amoroso,” although unknown to Fiordiligi when they were sung, have permeated her thoughts prior to the duet. Another similarity between the two pieces occurs later in the duet when Ferrando echoes his own vocal line from “Un’aura amoroso,” suggesting that his affections have changed as well. (Examples 12 & 13)

(Ex. 12 “Un’aura amoroso” m. 65-67)

al cor por - ge - ra

(Ex. 13 “Fra gli amplessi” m. 100-101)

più non tar - dar

Upon his entrance, Ferrando takes control of the music (m.16), immediately shifting the tonality into e minor and proclaiming he will die if Fiordiligi does not return his love. Fiordiligi tries to resist him by moving the music to C major in the midst of her next vocal line (m. 24), but Ferrando persists, and soon she is echoing his thoughts (m. 47) and the two begin singing in harmony (m.53). After another brief musical struggle, Ferrando reasserts his will, modulating back to A major on his vocal line, “Volgi a me pietoso,” (in m. 78) finally completing the seduction. (Example 14)

(Example 14 “Fra gli amplessi” m. 76-81)

Dei con - sig-lio!

Vol - gi - a me - pic - to - so il ci - glio,

Fiordiligi exasperatedly submits and gives not just her heart, but indeed her whole self, declaring “Crudel! hai vinto. Fa di me quell chi ti par!” (Cruel one, you are victorious! Do with me what you will!) (m. 96-103). At last, their voices join in triadic coupling, now firmly in the key of A major, a less than subtle suggestion of their new-found intimacy. (Example 15)

(Example 15 “Fra gli amplessi,” m. 103-105)

The musical score for Example 15, "Fra gli amplessi," measures 103-105, is presented in A major (two sharps) and 6/8 time. It consists of two vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The vocal staves show the lyrics "par" and "Ab - brac - ciam - ci,". The piano accompaniment consists of a treble and bass clef staff with a flowing eighth-note pattern in the bass and a more melodic line in the treble.

After this seemingly sincere outpouring of love, a critical questions arise: why were the couples so apparently mismatched at the beginning? Moreover, why do they return to their original partners at the end of the opera? Perhaps returning to the original coupling is merely a stage convention, and the matter is meant to be left open to interpretation. Conversely, Spike Hughes suggests that the partners should switch at the end of the opera:

If the librettist asks us to use our imagination then he gives us a symbolic hint when Fiordiligi puts on Ferrando's uniform and pointedly leaves Guglielmo's for Dorabella. And if that is not convincing then surely operatic convention makes it all as clear as daylight: of course Ferrando and Fiordiligi pair off, for who ever heard of a prima donna marrying a baritone?<sup>40</sup>

It certainly seems true that the two *seria* characters and the two *mezzo* characters should end up with one another. Many directors have "solved" this problem by having the new couples remain together, but this seems improbable, especially in light of Guglielmo's black mood in the midst of the wedding celebration. Ferrando and Guglielmo are soldiers by trade, and both believe themselves to be honorable men, although their actions do not always reveal them to be so. As such, they could never continue the relationships founded on the basis of their own perfidy, and their respective fiancées' infidelity, for it would be a constant and clearly unpalatable reminder to them of this failing.

Nevertheless, the opera, being a comedy, *should* certainly end on a positive note. However, "the conclusion represents not a solution but a way of bringing the action to a close with an artificiality so evident that no happy outcome can be predicted. The music creates this enigma, but cannot solve it."<sup>41</sup> Thus, a return to the status quo, while not necessarily the ideal result for anyone, embodies the philosophy of the finale ("Happy are those who see the good side of all things") and perhaps makes the best of this uncomfortable situation.

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<sup>40</sup> Hughes, 186-187.

<sup>41</sup> Julian Rushton. "Così fan tutte." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, edited by Stanley Sadie. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O003389> (accessed November 8, 2009).

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

In spite of their travails, Don Ottavio and Ferrando are certainly the noblest and most forthright male characters in their respective operas. They are serious men who are out of place in worlds dominated by frivolity. Mozart and da Ponte achieve this effect by creating music and poetry for both that is appropriately antiquated. They are not necessarily old men, but perhaps more accurately, old souls. In spite of their similarities, Mozart and da Ponte portray them in significantly different ways. Ferrando is an earnestly serious character in a farcical comedy of manners, whereas Don Ottavio is an absurdly serious character in an opera that blends comedy and tragedy on a much deeper level.

These characters paved the way for the continued emergence of the tenor as a romantic protagonist, in spite of (or perhaps *because of*) the fact that opera had seldom made much use of tenor voice before that time. These characters may also represent broader changes in the fabric of society, particularly with regard to the burgeoning middle class and the dissemination of the ideals of classical liberalism. Charles Ford suggests:

The very fact that the emphasis changes between *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*, that in the former, Giovanni's materialism is emphasized over and above Ottavio's idealism, whereas in the latter opera, it is the proto-Romantic sensibilities of Ferrando that up-stage Guglielmo's materialism, demonstrates the ascendancy of the Germanic, subjectivist conception of freedom.<sup>42</sup>

The aforementioned arias of Ottavio and Ferrando all display aspects of *opera seria* convention, and confirm the characters as *parti serie* in their respective *drammi giocosi*. Although these arias are reminiscent of the *opera seria* style, they should not be viewed as a simple parody of the form. Indeed, these idealistic characters are genuinely at odds with the debased worlds of *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*. This dissonance inherently involves them in comedic situations. Nevertheless, Mozart and da Ponte treat these characters in a dignified musical and textual manner. As a result, the composer and librettist achieve comedy through contrast while maintaining the integrity of these *seria* character types, ingeniously melding these disparate traditions to create two seminal works of *dramma giocoso*.

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<sup>42</sup> Ford, 127.

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## APPENDIX A. INTRODUCTION TO ITALIAN VERSIFICATION

The two primary factors to consider in analyzing Italian poetry are line length and the final accentuation pattern for each line. Line lengths in Italian poetry are counted in syllables, not in feet as they are in English. The most common line lengths in classical Italian poetry are seven (*settenario*) or eleven (*endecasillabo*) syllables. In fact, operatic recitative is set almost exclusively in a mixture of these two line lengths. In general, however, most arias remain in one line length, ranging from three to eleven syllables, for the duration of their texts.<sup>43</sup>

One facet of counting syllables in Italian poetry that is unusual to many English speakers is the elision of vowels between words, and the propensity to count short diphthongs such as “sua” as a single syllable. For example, the line “Un’ aura amorosa” is scanned as *senario* (six syllables) as follows Un’/ au/ra\_a/mo/ro/sa. The line “Il mio tesoro intanto” is scanned in *settenario* (seven syllables) as follows Il/ mio/ te/so/ro\_in/tan/to.

The final accentuation of both of the above lines is called *verso piano*, literally meaning soft verse. The stress is on the penultimate syllable (stresses are underlined in my illustrative examples). This corresponds to weak/feminine/trochaic endings in English poetry. The *verso piano* is the standard ending for most lines of text, excluding the final line of a stanza which is often *verso tronco* (literally cut verse).

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<sup>43</sup> For a more extensive explanation, refer to Tim Carter, et al. "Versification." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, volume 4, ed. Stanley Sadie. (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1992) 964-966.

A *tronco* verse features an accent on the final syllable, corresponding to the English strong/masculine or iambic ending as in Ferrando's line "al/ cor/ por/ge/rà." This affect is called *tronco* because it is often achieved by truncating the end of a word that would ordinarily have an un-accented vowel to follow such as the word "amore" being shortened to "amor." Because of this, *versi tronchi* (the plural) are considered variations on the *verso piano* form. Thus, although the above line is technically only five syllables in length, because it is part of a poem that features *versi piani* (the plural form) of *senario* (six syllables length) it is considered a continuation of the pattern of *senario* verse. While each stanza of an aria traditionally ends in a *verso tronco*, this accent type can also be utilized more frequently by the librettist, an affect that would seem humorous and potentially convey a character's agitation.

The third, and final, accentuation type is the *verso sdrucchiolo* (literally sliding verse). This verse type features an accent on the antepenultimate syllable, which is relatively rare in Italian words. The English equivalent is the dactylic ending. Traditionally, this accent type is associated with rustic or lower class individuals or even with elements of the demonic. It is unsurprising that this line ending type does not occur in any of the arias of either Ferrando or Ottavio, but does occur in those of more comic characters such as Guglielmo and Don Giovanni, as observed in the latter's line "Sen/za\_al/cun/ or/di/ne." Just as with the *tronco* verse type, the *verso sdrucchiolo* is considered a variation of the *verso piano*. As such, the above line, although it includes six syllables, is considered *quinario* (five syllables in length).

## APPENDIX B. COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE CHARACTERS

(Charts adapted from William Mann's *The Operas of Mozart*, pg. 359)

Characters in bold bear the greatest resemblance to characters in  
*Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*

Major Characters from the <i>commedia dell'arte</i> and their description:
<b>Arlecchino:</b> Pantolone's valet from Bergamo, an athletic and graceful lady-killer, cynical, claims noble birth, transvestitism.
Brighella: A servant from Bergamo, quick-witted, musician, violent enforcer (a.k.a. Scapino, and Mezzetin after a French actor)
<b>Colombina:</b> pretty young girl, feared for sharp tongue (did not wear mask)
<b>Graziano:</b> Doctor from Bologna, old pedant of bogus learning
Pantalone, rich merchant from Venice, often cuckolded or robbed (a.k.a. Cassandro, and Il Barone)
<b>Pagliaccio:</b> moonfaced, simple fall-guy, servant to Graziano (a.k.a. in French Pierrot, and in Russian Petrushka)
<b>Pulcinella:</b> A hunchback with a punch from Naples, also known for gluttony (a.k.a. in English Mr. Punch, and in German Hanswurst)
<b>Spavento:</b> Military Captain from Venice, braggart, bully, and a coward
<b>Tartaglia:</b> Stammering cleric from Naples
Truffaldino: A sausage man, known for gluttony

Minor characters from the <i>commedia dell'arte</i> and their description:
Cavicchio: hayseed rustic
Coviello, Burattino, Stentorello: servants
<b>Isabella:</b> A pretty and snobby girl
<b>Octavio</b> (a.k.a. Lelio or Leandro): A rich snob, but dull and foppish
Pasquariello: gardener
<b>Scaramuccio:</b> wily