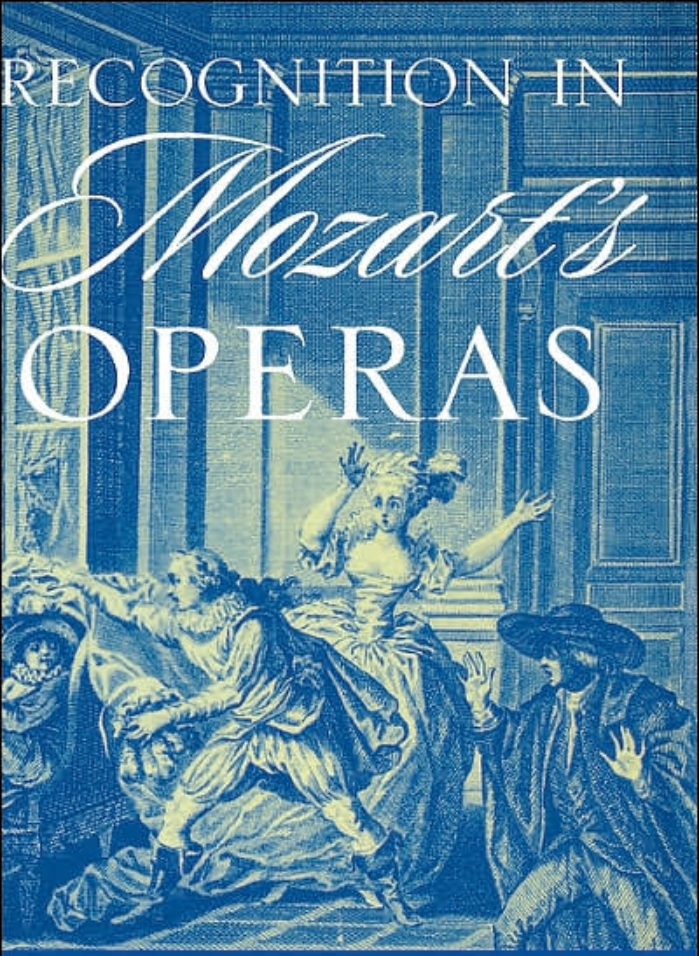
RECOGNITION IN *Mozart's* OPERAS



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Recognition in Mozart's Operas

Jessica Waldoff

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For my parents,

Leon and Alice Waldoff

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Preface

Intended as a dramaturgical study of Mozart's operas, this book attempts both to illuminate individual works and to offer a substantial treatment of a topic common to them as a group (as well as to operas of Mozart's contemporaries). In many ways, the overall design of the book has been determined by the subject itself. Recognition illuminates certain characters, plots, and themes more than others. The introduction and first three chapters are designed as a sequence; the following chapters are devoted to individual operas and intended as independent but complementary explorations of a central theme.

Because most of the operas discussed here are well known and readily available in a variety of editions, I have provided musical examples only where the discussion seems most to require them. The examples are taken from the Bärenreiter vocal scores, which are based on the Urtext of the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe,* with the exception of those examples in chapter 4 that are taken from the facsimile edition of Niccolò Piccinni's *La buona figliuola* in the Garland series. All have been newly (and expertly) set by Bill Holab of Bill Holab Music.

Passages quoted from the librettos of Mozart's operas are presented in the original language alongside translations designed to be as literal as possible. The sources for these passages are the facsimile editions of the original librettos included in *The Librettos of Mozart's Operas,* edited by Ernest Warburton, with the exception of *La finta giardiniera,* for which I have consulted both the facsimile edition of the Roman libretto of 1774 (included in volume 6 of the same series), upon which Mozart based his opera, and the edition of the opera edited by Rudolph Angermüller and Dietrich Berke in the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe.* Obvious errors of spelling and punctuation in the original librettos have been silently corrected in consultation with the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe.* The translations are mine in some cases and are adapted in others with varying degrees of emendation from the following sources: Gery Bramall's translation of *La finta giardiniera* included in the jacket notes to the Nikolaus Harnoncourt recording (Teldec 9031–72309–2, 1992); and Lionel Salter's translations of

Così fan tutte and *La clemenza di Tito* included in the jacket notes to the John Eliot Gardiner recordings of these operas (Deutsche Grammophon 437 829–2, 1993, and 431 806–2, 1991, respectively).

For discussions of passages from Mozart's letters and documents, I have quoted from the standard editions in English translation: the third edition of *The Letters of Mozart and His Family,* translated by Emily Anderson, and Otto Erich Deutsch's *Mozart: A Documentary Biography,* translated by Eric Blom, Peter Branscombe, and Jeremy Noble. I have, however, occasionally included words and phrases in the original German and/or altered these translations slightly (where indicated) in consultation with *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, Gesamtausgabe* and *Mozart: Die Dokumente seines Lebens.*

I gratefully acknowledge permission granted by Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press to reproduce three previously published essays here in slightly revised form: chapter 1, which originally appeared as "The Music of Recognition: Operatic Enlightenment in 'The Magic Flute'" in *Music & Letters* 75 (1994); chapter 3, which originated as my principal contribution (sections 1 and 2) to an article jointly authored with James Webster, "Operatic Plotting in *Le nozze di Figaro,*" in *Wolfgang Amadè Mozart: Essays on His Life and Music,* edited by Stanley Sadie; and chapter 5, which appeared as "Don Giovanni: Recognition Denied" in *Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna,* edited by Mary Hunter and James Webster.

Acknowledgments

The literature on Mozart's operas and their surrounding culture is vast and has grown considerably and to my great benefit while I have worked on this book. Although I have indicated my indebtedness to many authors throughout the book, especially in the footnotes, I would like to express special gratitude here to the authors whose writings have influenced me the most: Wye Jamison Allanbrook, Thomas Bauman, Bruce Alan Brown, Daniel Heartz, Mary Hunter, John Platoff, John Rice, Julian Rushton, and James Webster. I would also like to express my gratitude to Terence Cave, whose magisterial book on recognition inspired this study. Although I had drafted much of this book before I had the opportunity to meet him, Terence has been one of its most careful and thoughtful readers. His suggestions have improved this volume in countless ways.

Of the many colleagues and friends on whose advice and support I have relied, none has contributed more than Jim Webster. It's been many years since I first brought a copy of Aristotle's *Poetics* to his office hours, but Jim has been an unfailing supporter of this project since that time; his comments and suggestions at virtually every stage of its development have been invaluable. John Platoff read the manuscript in its entirety at a crucial stage and provided criticism and comments that proved extremely helpful. Alessandra Campana read and reread parts of the manuscript as it developed and made many valuable suggestions. I am grateful to her for much stimulating discussion about opera, for her assistance with and careful review of all translations from Italian, and for her unflagging support. Karl-Heinz Schoeps graciously agreed to review all translations from German and made many valuable recommendations. Mark Ferraguto, to whom I want to say a special word of thanks, assisted me in numerous ways during the last year of this project; his contributions have improved the book in matters of content, form, and presentation.

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Four professors from my years at Amherst College contributed to this project in ways they could not have anticipated: the late Carol Kay, who introduced me to sentimental literature; David Grayson, who introduced me to musicology; the late Henry Mishkin, who gave me my first opportunities to write about Mozart; and William Pritchard, who encouraged me to pursue literature and music first in my honors thesis and then in graduate school. I would also like to say a word of thanks to four friends whose support of this project has taken a less tangible form—Christopher Barber, Osvaldo Golijov, Shirish Korde, and Margaret Webster.

I am grateful to the College of the Holy Cross for a sabbatical leave and research support that were essential to the completion of this book. Alan Karass, our Music Librarian, ever resourceful, has been a wonderful help. Jacky Anderson, our administrative assistant in the Music Department, and Julia Severens, our assistant in the Music Library, deserve thanks for their help with many details over the years. Maria Purciello, who spent a year with us as a lecturer, generously offered assistance when I needed it. It is with real pleasure that I also extend a word of thanks to my students; many of them are fine musicians and a small number are gifted musicologists. Their questions and requests and enthusiasms have challenged me as both a teacher and a scholar. It would be impossible to name them all, but, in addition to Dan DiCenso, Mark Ferraguto, and Maria Purciello (mentioned above), Marisa Biaggi, Yves Calderone, Bethany Collier, Vanessa Kabash, Meredith Lavendar, Evan MacCarthy, and Julia Madden deserve mention here.

I am grateful to everyone at Oxford University Press who has worked on the development and production of this book, but especially to my editor Kim Robinson, assistant editor Norm Hirschy, and my production editor Christine Dahlin.

I do not know how to begin to describe the debt I owe my parents, to whom this book is dedicated. My father has read this book at every stage of its development and has helped me with countless tasks related to it, both great and small. The benefit of his many thoughtful recommendations and editorial comments can be found on every page. My mother, too, has read this book carefully more than once and has been a constant source of support and encouragement. However insufficient words may be to express such a debt, I would like to conclude by thanking my father and mother, who inspired my love of literature and music, respectively.

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Introduction

This book explores the ways in which the central themes of Mozart's operas—themes cherished by late eighteenth-century culture such as clemency, constancy, forgiveness, and reconciliation—depend for their dramatization on the same element of plot, recognition. Recognition—or *anagnôrisis,* the term we have inherited from Aristotle's *Poetics*—marks the shift from ignorance to knowledge and involves the protagonist (and the audience) in a powerful reversal of former understanding. It is recognition that holds the key to Sandrina's identity in *La finta giardiniera,* to the contradiction inherent in the King's vow in *Idomeneo,* to the Count's unexpected contrition in *Le nozze di Figaro,* to Fiordiligi's conflicted fidelity in *Così fan tutte,* to Tamino's enlightenment quest in *Die Zauberflöte.* Whether the discovery concerns identity, purpose, or feeling, recognition serves as a vehicle for the thematization of knowledge. Many of these operas turn explicitly on themes of knowledge and discovery, themes that possess a special resonance in an age that named itself the Enlightenment. The ascendance of light in the act 2 finale of *Zauberflöte* is perhaps the most obvious example of how the experience of knowledge may be spectacularly brought to life on the stage, but nearly every contemporary opera ends with some invocation of Enlightenment teachings—whether dramatized primarily in domestic and private terms (as in *Figaro*), in the context of the culture of sensibility (as in *Giardiniera* and *Così*), or with public rhetoric and spectacle (as in *Idomeneo, Zauberflöte,* and *La clemenza di Tito*). The conclusions of these operas, whether buffa or seria, whether Italian or German, culminate in a moral, philosophical, or other "truth" that recognition brings, not merely for an individual protagonist or group of characters but for the whole stage and the larger world it represents.

Recognition scenes, of course, are not peculiar to Mozart. They have appeared in opera since its beginnings, and with such regularity that they may be taken as a standard feature of the form—from the personally shattering moment in Monteverdi's *Orfeo* when the hero discovers his mortality to the apocalyptic moment in Wagner's *Ring* when Wotan first imagines and longs for his. As in spoken theater, recognition

marks the moments in which major themes and ideas take definitive shape and brings the action to its eventual climax and conclusion. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that opera, which has such rich means of creating and varying voice in drama, would have its own ways of distinguishing these important moments. Opera's complex dynamic of action, text, and music possesses a special potential for realizing dramatic events, and recognition scenes are moments in which that potential is most fully realized.

The special quality of recognition as a vehicle for the gaining of knowledge accounts in large measure for the extent and force of its presence in Mozart's operas, as it does, in fact, in much late eighteenth-century literature, philosophy, and art. As a result, critical thinking about recognition opens up a new way of exploring an important and complex question: the extent to which enlightenment (in several senses of the term) underlies Mozart's operas. Although the diverse movements and ideologies of this period can hardly be thought to share the rubric "Enlightenment" unproblematically, it is clear that the concept of "enlightenment" has particularly rich associations for dramatic representation in this period. It serves as a philosophical and cultural backdrop to the action and at the same time offers a metaphor for the gaining of knowledge that may be vividly represented on the stage. A focus on recognition also provides a new perspective on many other issues central to understanding these works and prominent in current critical conversations about the operas of Mozart and his contemporaries. Among the most important of these are the role of sensibility in his works; the representation of women and of attitudes toward them; the status of the plot and its musical mechanisms in late eighteenth-century opera; and the problem(s) of Mozart's conventional endings and their troubled reception from his day to ours.

Recognition: "From Ignorance to Knowledge"

As a dramatic device, recognition has a rich and complex history in both literature and literary studies. In over four hundred years of writing about opera, by contrast, and despite considerable deliberation over the nature of operatic drama, recognition scenes have been almost entirely neglected. Literary theory thus provides an invaluable framework for thinking about recognition in opera. It seems necessary, therefore, before turning to the subject of recognition in Mozart's operas, to offer a brief consideration of both classical and contemporary views on the subject. I shall begin with Aristotle, whose *Poetics* offers the first articulation of the concept and the one to which all later considerations of the topic are indebted:

> Recognition [*anagnôrisis*], as the very name shows, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, bringing the characters into either a close bond, or enmity, with one another, and concerning matters which bear on their prosperity or affliction. The finest recognition occurs in direct conjunction with reversal

> [*peripeteia*]—as with the one in the *Oedipus.* There are, of course, other kinds of recognition, for recognition can relate to inanimate or fortuitous objects, or reveal that someone has, or has not, committed a deed. But the type I have mentioned is the one which is most integral to the plot-structure and its action: for such a combination of recognition and reversal will produce pity or fear (and it is events of this kind that tragedy, on our definition, is a mimesis of), since both affliction and prosperity will hinge on such circumstances.[1]

Reversal, or *peripeteia,* is brought about by "a complete swing in the direction of the action," one that produces the opposite effect of what was intended.[2] In the *Poetics,* recognition and reversal are two of the three elements of plot (the third is suffering, or *pathos*) and are most frequently discussed in the context of what Aristotle calls "complex" plots.[3] The finest recognition, according to Aristotle, is one that comes in the course of a complex action at the same moment as a peripeteia and is brought about by the events themselves. This last point is crucial, as we can see by Aristotle's choice of Sophocles' *Oedipus* as his paradigmatic example. The recognition in the play is brought about by the events of the plot and is accompanied by a peripeteia. Oedipus sought to avoid fulfilling the prophecy of the oracle, but in the end his actions are revealed, in a powerful recognition scene, to have brought about the very thing he feared. We need not concern ourselves at this point with Aristotle's elaborate typology and ranking of recognitions, except to observe his still influential view that the finest type is that brought about by the events of the plot.[4]

Aristotle is particular in stating that peripeteia is the shift in one continuous action. In the example he discusses most fully, *Oedipus,* this shift is the single climax of the drama. His definition is biased in favor of plots that move toward the revelation of hidden or unknown identity, and in which the discovery of identity becomes a moment of both recognition and reversal, as when Oedipus discovers who he is. It is also generally the case, as in *Oedipus,* that such a reversal occurs near the end, bringing about a recognition after which everything will be significantly and forever changed. There may, however, be more recognitions than one in a single plot, and this is as true for detective fiction or opera as for Greek tragedy. The ultimate recognition will thus turn out to be the result of shifts, discoveries, and/or small or even partial moments of awareness that occurred earlier in the plot. In this

1. Aristotle, *Poetics,* trans. Halliwell (11), 43. See also Halliwell's discussion of this passage, 116–20. All quotations of Aristotle's *Poetics,* unless otherwise indicated, are from this translation and identified by chapter and page.

2. *Poetics* (11), 42. See also Else's translation, where the definition is given as "a shift of what is being undertaken to the opposite" (35).

3. Aristotle defines the "complex" action as "one whose transformation involves recognition or reversal, or both" (*Poetics* [10], 42). For his definition of *pathos* and the distinction between "simple" and "complex" plots, see *Poetics* (11), 43, and (10), 42, respectively.

4. Aristotle's five types of recognition are enumerated in *Poetics* (16), 48–49; for a discussion of these, see chapter 2.

respect, reversal, contrast, discovery, and change of action or fortune are the stuff of which all plots are made. The climactic recognition at the end cannot be thought to stand alone. It satisfies to the degree that it does precisely because it mirrors and has grown out of a series of smaller discoveries.

Recognition holds two further implications for the stories in which it plays a part, each of which involves a double sense of the term itself. The first is concerned with what recognition is. Where recognition or knowledge itself is the subject of a story (which is often the case, as in *Zauberflöte*), it is developed in two ways, as I have already suggested: as a function of the plot and as a central theme. This double sense is what Terence Cave has called the "double character of recognition." "Recognition," he explains, "as both formal device and vehicle for themes of knowledge allows one the latitude to move freely between formal poetics and interpretation."[5] This double character implies that the act of recognition itself mediates the move from issues of form to those of content and back again.

The second implication entails an important and particular double meaning contained within the term itself: recognition is both new awareness and re-cognition. To recognize is to re-cognize, that is, to know again, but to do so in a way that involves new understanding. It implies the recovery of something already known. Knowledge is therefore inherent in recognition; it lies concealed, deep within memory, waiting to be brought to the surface. To the extent that recognitions depend on memory, even though memory recovered with new understanding, they involve a repetition of recollected events and thoughts. Hence recognition always involves narrative. This point cannot be overemphasized: recognition always comes as part of a story. Brought about by one narrative, recognition reaches back to another narrative (or episode) for its explanation, which, when it comes, conflates past and present in a powerful moment of new awareness. The protagonist of a drama or fiction (or the individual who recounts the story of his or her life) encounters something new that contains within it some recollection, some trace of the past.[6] The crucial element here is repetition: a word, a story, a sound, or an event that triggers recognition. This repetition brings to mind some former event that is at least in part repeated (if only by reference) as it is remembered, and is now understood with new awareness.

Recognition therefore implies both the gaining and the regaining of knowledge. Its paradoxical nature is complicated and enriched by the overlay of connotation and critical history, as well as of literal and figurative meanings. Ambiguity and complexity lie at the heart of it. The challenge for opera studies is to find a way to understand recognition in terms appropriate—perhaps even exclusive—to opera, where recognition is almost always realized in musical terms. In operas of different periods, genres, and traditions, however, recognition scenes do not obey any specific set

5. Cave, *Recognitions,* 4. I am especially indebted to this book for my understanding of the topic.

6. This is also the situation of the analysand. Two works of Freud's of special interest in this connection—that is, the return of the repressed and repetition—are "The Uncanny" and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.*

of musical patterns or rules; they appear in various keys, tempos, or styles, and in a wide variety of recitative, aria, ensemble, and other forms. Still, recognition, in opera as in other genres, is central to understanding themes, characters, plot complications, dénouements, and conclusions. Critical application of the idea to individual works, as even Aristotle demonstrates, is riddled with complications, but it should be not only possible but analytically productive to adapt this concept from the world of literature to that of musical drama, even though it will first have to be rethought and recontextualized for the purpose. In this book, I have attempted just such an adaptation, and one in which a virtue may be made of the attendant complications.

Recognition as a New Perspective

In opera as in literature, recognition—if mentioned at all—has generally been regarded as a jaded convention. The issue of plot, essential to any discussion of recognition, has also been marginalized, particularly in studies of Mozart's operas, and in two notable ways: the plots of operas have, as a matter of course, been passed over as too "obvious" to warrant serious attention, but they have also frequently been disparaged. Indeed, many operas are as notorious for their purportedly absurd plots as renowned for their musical expression. Most important, even though opera is properly understood as both a literary and a musical kind of drama (one that involves text, music, and action), it has often been viewed primarily as a musical genre. As a result, dramatic issues in opera have tended to be defined in terms of musical phenomena—aria types, musical textures, ensemble and finale forms, tonal planning, and musico-dramatic events such as recurring themes—rather than in terms of the elements essential to understanding opera as drama, such as plot types, conventions of ending, character development, and, of course, recognitions and the reversals they bring.

Joseph Kerman summed up this problem in his seminal 1956 study, *Opera as Drama,* when he identified two prevailing views that, perhaps more than any others, have inhibited the study of opera: "the one held by musicians, that opera is a low form of music, and the one apparently held by everybody else, that opera is a low form of drama."[7] At the same time, it is a long-held and understandable belief of opera critics that whatever is truly important and persuasive in opera must happen in the music. We trust the music first and last, and if something of great consequence transpires in opera but remains *unconfirmed* by the music, we tend to consider it suspect. The unfortunate corollary of this belief, however, has been a privileging of the musical perspective, at times to the exclusion of other aspects of operatic drama. To view opera *as* drama, therefore, requires more than just an approach that joins musical and literary perspectives; it requires an approach in which the musical dimension of opera is neither overestimated nor underestimated. A focus on recognition

7. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 16.

offers a new perspective on some of the particular difficulties that inhere in the study of opera.

To the extent it can be gleaned from the writings of contemporary librettists and composers, the history of opera in this period reads as a constant struggle to reconcile the demands of musical form on the one hand, and those of dramatic action on the other. Chafing in his *Memoirs* that the "hollow devices" of opera buffa may reflect badly on the poet, for example, Mozart's best-known librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte, decries the conventional structure of the opera buffa finale, which requires the inclusion of a singing part for every member of the cast, "and if the plot of the drama does not permit, the poet must find a way to make it permit, in the face of reason, good sense, Aristotle, and all the powers of heaven or earth; and if then the *finale* happens to go badly, so much the worse for him!"[8] In the dedication to *Alceste,* Gluck offers sharp criticism of the operatic conventions of his day and claims that in this work he has "sought to abolish all the abuses against which good sense and reason have long cried out in vain."[9] Like librettists and composers of Mozart's day, critics and commentators of later eras have struggled to resolve the conflict between musical form and dramatic content, and much critical thinking about Mozart's operas can be characterized by some of the problems that have arisen as a result.

Let me summarize briefly just five of these problems. First, analysis in the operatic context is, by definition, multivalent and multidisciplinary. It involves an approach that is both musical and literary, as Kerman has suggested, but it also requires something more. Wagner offered his view of this analytical challenge long ago when he insisted that musical drama ought to comprise "acts of music made visible" ("ersichtlich gewordene Taten der Musik").[10] But in his theory of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* he assumed a "unity" of text, music, and action—a "unity" in which elements of musical construction are privileged—that came to dominate opera studies, including the field of Mozart's operas. As a concept and an analytical goal, unity has become increasingly suspect in today's critical climate. Opera is a fundamentally intertextual medium; its component parts do not always work together and may often be shown to contradict one another. Some of the most interesting recent work in the field of Mozart's operas (and in opera studies in general) is characterized by thinking about this issue.

Second, as performative art, opera is a genre for which there is neither "text" nor "score" in the ordinary sense. And while this is true for opera in general, it is particularly important for late eighteenth-century opera. The surviving sources are now widely regarded as woefully inadequate reflections of what may have happened on any particular stage on any given evening. The first printed libretto and the autograph score, for example, often contradict one another. In Mary Hunter's words,

8. Da Ponte, *Memoirs,* 59–60.
9. Gluck, "Dedication to *Alceste,*" in Strunk, ed., *Source Readings in Music History,* 933.
10. Wagner, "Über die Benennung 'Musikdrama,'" 306.

"The notion of 'the work' then becomes not the final thoughts of a single creator, or even the final thoughts of two 'authors' (composer and librettist), but rather an ongoing collaboration between those authors and what might otherwise be thought to be its 'context'—the performers, set designers, censors, and other figures vital to establishing what played on any given evening."[11] In some cases, famously in that of the Viennese run of *Don Giovanni,* we cannot even be certain how the opera ends. Attempts to fix or standardize a version of the "work" that can be studied have motivated scholars to expand the field of source studies beyond the making of critical editions to include the pursuit of manuscript copies, early editions, performing parts, librettos, prompt books, letters, and theatrical records. This work is invaluable, but it is not centered on dramatic questions.

Third, in part because of the difficulty of isolating the object of study, the operatic "work," the consideration of any given operatic context or culture is enormously complex. As Lorenzo Bianconi has shown in his discussion of Venetian opera in the seventeenth century, opera needs to be understood as both an art form (a distinct genre with its own conventions and habits) and an "institution" (a theatrical company associated with a particular city and building, devoted to the business of pleasing consumers and making a profit).[12] It has become commonplace in the last twenty years to speak of librettists, directors, designers, and singers as a composer's collaborators, and to draw on the social, economic, and ideological circumstances of any given opera, as well as on the history of the theater for which it was written, including its personnel, repertoire, and audience. This kind of activity, which has opened the field to fascinating questions about reception history and genre, has, not surprisingly, divided opera studies into culturally and historically defined subareas: public opera in seventeenth-century Venice, opera buffa in Mozart's Vienna, French grand opera, Verdi studies, Wagner studies, and so on. Like source studies, this perspective, however, has understandably not favored larger questions of operatic drama.

Fourth, the dominant analytical tradition in studies of Mozart's operas until very recently has been grounded in a bias against the libretto. For example, although nearly everyone acknowledges that *Zauberflöte* contains great music, many have considered it highly implausible, second-rate drama. Emanuel Schikaneder's libretto is regarded, in the oft-cited words of Edward Dent, as "one of the most absurd specimens of that form of literature in which absurdity is regarded as a matter of course."[13] Mozart's sublime music, it is believed, must overcome, transform, even transcend its libretto. This long-standing view of the libretto as a low form of literature has led to a privileging of matters of exclusively musical construction over dramaturgical concerns that inhere in the libretto and its plot. But these "pure-music"

11. Hunter, *Culture of Opera Buffa,* 16.
12. Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century,* 161–70.
13. Dent, *Mozart's Operas,* 218.

approaches—for that is what they are—assume at the very least a subordination of text to music, if not an outright separation of music from both its text and context. No method could be more inappropriate for opera.

Fifth, due in large part to this dismissive stance toward the libretto, Mozart's operatic music has often been studied not merely from a predominantly musical but from a particularly instrumental perspective. This approach is directly descended from the Romantics' exaltation of instrumental music as "absolute" music—something, as Carl Dahlhaus reminds us, that may be regarded as "art-religion."[14] According to this view, instrumental music, which, in E. T. A. Hoffmann's famous formulation, "scorns all assistance from and combination with other art," reigns as the *non plus ultra* of musical drama.[15] Ironically, this metaphoric notion of "drama" borrowed from instrumental models came to dominate thinking about Mozart's operas, at times even to replace the literal sense of drama intrinsic to opera as a theatrical medium. Opera's overt "drama" was thus marginalized and subverted, and this tendency has been reinforced by the fact that the models for appreciating and analyzing Mozart's instrumental music were in place long ago. For example, the privileging of ensembles over arias, which has long characterized the literature, surely has its origins in the ease with which sonata form—or at least a "sonata principle"—may be shown to underlie the formal structure of many ensembles.[16] And while it must be said that a focus on instrumental models has revealed much about the construction of individual numbers and need not necessarily be understood as excluding or overriding considerations of text or plot, it has more often than not done just that. Instrumental models have frequently been used to "free" operatic music from what were thought of as the encumbrances of plot, character, and staging, and, at the same time, to lift it above the controversies surrounding them. Musical drama was thus transmuted into dramatic music—a practice that undoubtedly has its origins in Wagner's attempts in writing to distinguish the opera of his day from his music dramas.

Figaro's "Scar" as the "Signature of a Fiction"

The neglect of recognition, then, may be understood as part and parcel of the opera-as-drama problem. Indeed, the value of recognition as a new perspective for the study of Mozart's operas lies precisely in its status as a dramatic rather than a musical approach. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that recognition scenes are not only moments of resolution and completion; they are also problem moments,

14. See Dahlhaus, *Idea of Absolute Music.*

15. Hoffmann, "Review of the Fifth Symphony," 151.

16. Examples of such "sonata form" analyses of operatic numbers are too numerous to mention. The term "sonata principle" originates in Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance,* 76–77. A discussion of it in relation to Mozart's operas appears in Carter, *W. A. Mozart: "Le nozze di Figaro,"* 89–90. On the privileging of ensembles, see Webster, "Analysis of Mozart's Arias," especially 101–5; and Hunter, *Culture of Opera Buffa,* 156–57.

moments that strain belief and call attention to the contrivance and quality of artifice that inhere in fictional plots. "The recognition scene," as Cave has observed, "is, as it were, the mark or signature of a fiction, so that even if something like it occurs in fact, it still sounds like fiction and will probably be retold as such."[17] Take, for example, a scene from *Figaro* that Mozart's friend Michael Kelly (the tenor who created the roles of Basilio and Don Curzio in the first production) tells us was the composer's favorite: the scene in act 3 in which the discovery of a spatula-shaped birthmark on Figaro's arm reveals him to be the long-lost son of his archenemies Marcellina and Bartolo.[18] This recognition scene marks a crucial reversal in the plot. It releases Figaro from the contract that binds him to either repay the money he owes Marcellina or marry her, for, as the lawyer Don Curzio is the first to observe, Figaro cannot marry his own mother. It transforms Marcellina and Bartolo into doting parents who are now glad to forgive their newly recovered son his outstanding debt and to embrace Susanna as a daughter. Finally, to the Count's dismay, it removes the last obstacle in the way of Figaro's marriage to Susanna. It is difficult to imagine a coincidence more fortuitous or more unlikely. It is as if this recognition scene was designed to call attention to the construction of the plot and the implausibility of its fiction, to the fact of its participation in a comedy. And it does so by making deliberate sport of the conventions of recognition.

Following the Beaumarchais play upon which the libretto is based, this scene combines aspects of two well-known recognition scenes from the Classical period—scenes treated as paradigmatic in the *Poetics*—into one implausible scenario. The spatula-shaped birthmark that triggers the discovery is, of course, a comic version of Odysseus's "scar," the mark by which his old nurse recognizes him on his return to Ithaca. Thus when Bartolo tells Figaro that Marcellina is his mother, Figaro counters, "Balia?" (My nurse?), as if to point out that in a proper recreation of this scene the woman to identify his scar would be his nurse, not his mother. At the same time, the comic discovery of identity by means of this "scar," fortunately indeed for Figaro, occurs in time to prevent him from marrying his mother and enduring the tragic recognition of Oedipus.[19] Here, fused by an extraordinary contrivance of the poet (or poets), are the two recognition scenes that Aristotle offers as examples of the weakest and the finest of his five types: that of Odysseus, which is brought about by means of a "token" and has been viewed since as the hallmark of the contrived or

17. Cave, *Recognitions,* 4.

18. Michael Kelly, *Reminiscences,* 260. Kelly goes on to say that Mozart asked him to refrain from stuttering in the sextet (as Kelly created him, Don Curzio stuttered in other scenes) because it would spoil the music.

19. Figaro himself acknowledges the oedipal situation in Beaumarchais's play, exclaiming shortly after the revelation is made to him: "After all the times I've refrained from breaking this gentleman's neck because of his cursed hundred crowns—he now turns out to be my father! However, since Heaven has prevented me from committing a crime, accept my apologies, Father. And you, Mother, embrace me—as maternally as you can." Beaumarchais, *The Barber of Seville and the Marriage of Figaro,* 177. See, among others, D. W. Howarth, "The Recognition-Scene in 'Le Mariage de Figaro.'"

conventional recognition, and that of Oedipus, which is brought about by the events themselves. Such a moment as this one in *Figaro* may be enjoyed as much for its ingenious construction as for the happy reconciliation it makes possible on stage. Mozart sets the moment of discovery as recitative; the emotional reconciliation it makes possible immediately unfolds in the opening lines of the sextet "Riconosci in questo amplesso" as Figaro embraces his newly discovered family. When Susanna enters during the sextet to discover Figaro in Marcellina's arms, confusion, discovery, and reconciliation are immediately replayed to create a second recognition scene for her.

It would be difficult to point to more convincing evidence that Aristotle's *Poetics* and its paradigms were alive and well in the world of Mozart's theater or that the multiple authors of the *Figaro* story were aware of the significance (and origin) of recognition scenes. At the same time, this complex and critically self-reflective recognition illustrates how recognition can problematize the very sense of closure it attempts to bring about. Here is Cave:

> Recognition scenes in literary works are by their nature "problem" moments rather than moments of satisfaction and completion. Anagnorisis seems at first sight to be the paradigm of narrative satisfaction: it answers questions, restores identity and symmetry, and makes a whole hidden structure of relations intelligible. Yet the satisfaction is also somehow excessive, the reassurance too easy; the structure is visibly prone to collapse.[20]

The discovery of Figaro's lineage neatly resolves a number of plot difficulties and reveals a "whole hidden structure of relations" vital to the outcome of the opera, but the reconciliation seems, to borrow Cave's attractive phrase, like "the mark or signature of a fiction," too good to be true. In the Beaumarchais play, Figaro, reflecting on the events of the day in act 5, even betrays a sense of disbelief at the extraordinary way in which he escapes Oedipus's fate: "I'm on the point of falling into an abyss and marrying my own mother when, lo and behold, my parents turn up one after the other! (*He rises.*) Debate and discussion. It's you, it's him, it's me, it's thee, no, it isn't any of us, no, who is it then? (*Falls into his seat again.*) Oh! Fantastic series of events!"[21] Mozart allows his setting to reflect the extraordinary unlikelihood of these events in several ways. First, at the moment of recognition in the recitative, when Marcellina exclaims, "È desso" (It is he), Figaro replies, "È ver, son io" (Indeed, it is I) over a sustained dominant seventh sonority. But the significance of his statement is precisely that he does not yet realize who he is, something Da Ponte and Mozart emphasize when Don Curzio, the Count, and Bartolo all exclaim in rapid succession "Chi?" "Chi?" "Chi?" (Who?). The suspense is relieved when the harmony

20. Cave, *Recognitions,* 489.
21. Beaumarchais, *The Barber of Seville and the Marriage of Figaro,* 202.

resolves to G minor and Marcellina provides Figaro with the answer, "Raffaello." But Figaro responds to this news with pointed disbelief, first by suggesting that she was his nurse and then by exclaiming, "Cosa sento!" (What do I hear!).

When in the sextet Marcellina identifies herself to Susanna as Figaro's mother, Mozart again emphasizes the implausibility of this turn of events and in an even more striking manner. Susanna's query, "Sua madre?" (His mother?) to which all reply "Sua madre!" is transformed into an amusing little drama in its own right. Susanna responds to Marcellina's extraordinary statement with complete incredulity, addressing her question, "Sua madre?" to each character in turn. When she finally asks the question of Figaro, still in disbelief, he assumes the question of Marcellina's identity is settled and presents his father to her instead, allowing the entire exchange to be replayed on the words "Suo padre." Here is Mozart's rendering of what were originally only six lines of verse in the libretto:

Susanna (to Bartolo)	
Sua madre?	His mother?
Bartolo	
Sua madre!	His mother!
Susanna (to the Count)	
Sua madre?	His mother?
The Count	
Sua madre!	His mother!
Susanna (to Don Curzio)	
Sua madre?	His mother?
Don Curzio	
Sua madre!	His mother!
Susanna (to Marcellina)	
Sua madre?	His mother?
Marcellina	
Sua madre . . .	His mother . . .
Marcellina, The Count, Don Curzio, Bartolo	
Sua madre, sua madre!	His mother, his mother!
Susanna (to Figaro)	
Tua madre?	Your mother?
Figaro	
E quello è mio padre,	And this is my father,
Che a te lo dirà.	as he will tell you himself.

Susanna (to Bartolo)	
Suo padre?	His father?
Bartolo	
Suo padre!	His father!
Susanna (to the Count)	
Suo padre?	His father?
The Count	
Suo padre!	His father!
Susanna (to Don Curzio)	
Suo padre?	His father?
Don Curzio	
Suo padre!	His father!
Susanna (to Marcellina)	
Suo padre?	His father?
Marcellina	
Suo padre . . .	His father . . .
Marcellina, The Count, Don Curzio, Bartolo	
Suo padre, suo padre!	His father, his father!
Susanna (to Figaro)	
Tuo padre?	Your father?
Figaro	
E quella è mia madre,	And this is my mother,
Che a te lo dirà.	as she will tell you herself.

As both dramatist and critic, Mozart cleverly composes the resistance to recognition into his sextet. At precisely the moment of greatest musico-dramatic satisfaction (m. 74), the moment when all is revealed to the unsuspecting Susanna, Marcellina moves to embrace her daughter-in-law to be, restoring the tonic and returning to the original melody with which she had embraced Figaro at the ensemble's opening. But Susanna responds to this "recapitulation" (and its implied reconciliation) with understandable mistrust. As her ensuing questions show, satisfaction is indeed "excessive," reassurance both "easy" and dubious.[22]

That recognition scenes are also "problem" moments suggests an additional value of studying their role in Mozart's operas. Often the moments criticized as contrived or poorly constructed in treatments of these operas—the very moments held

22. For a different reading of this scene, see Castelvecchi, "Sentimental and Anti-Sentimental in *Le nozze di Figaro*."

up as "problem" moments—*are* recognition moments but have not been understood as such because of the neglect into which recognition has fallen. It seems possible therefore that such moments have been perceived as problems precisely because of the presence of recognition. As a result, recognition has perhaps played a much larger role in the development of Mozart opera studies than has yet been realized—one with direct bearing on the desire to separate operatic music from the contrivances of its plot and to view operatic drama as stemming from its musical form rather than its dramatic action. Recognition thus offers a new way of understanding the abuse heaped on opera plots and their "absurd" librettos, a way of rehabilitating the study of plot in opera, and a new way of approaching opera *as* drama.

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I

Operatic Enlightenment in *Die Zauberflöte*

Enlightenment as Metaphor

With the understanding that it is a musical drama, *Die Zauberflöte* may be approached as one would a play by Sophocles or Shakespeare—in terms of theme and plot. It dramatizes a large theme by means of a complex plot, which is organized—as such plots often are—around a crucial recognition scene. Though fashioned from a fairy tale, its high-minded theme is that of enlightenment. Its plot, the dramatic representation of this theme, is that of an individual's quest for knowledge. In keeping with its central theme—as I am not the first to observe—the opera is replete with metaphor and symbolism that contrast light and dark, from characters who represent one or the other (Sarastro and the Queen of the Night, for example), to actions and dialogue that dramatize the conflict between them, to imagery that underscores the theme. Day and night, knowledge and ignorance, truth and falsehood, good and evil, love and hate, friendship and enmity, forgiveness and revenge—all stand opposed in the opera. While such oppositions have always been problematic—and are especially so in today's critical climate—they are fully in keeping with the fairy-tale logic that governs this opera.[1] When Tamino and Pamina enter the temple at the end, they have come through the night and into the sunlight. In keeping with the prevailing metaphor of the opera and the age, they have achieved enlightenment.

The theme of enlightenment in this opera is infused with multiple meanings, all of which are inherent in the etymology of the word and the metaphor it employs. To enlighten is to impart light or wisdom, and enlightenment is a state of new awareness brought about by this figurative illumination. The appellations given to the age in different languages—the Enlightenment, *le siècle des Lumières, l'Illuminismo, die Aufklärung*—are all derived from the same metaphor, in which light is knowledge. The Latin nouns *lux* and *lumen* for "light" influence the English, Italian, and French

1. See Buch, "Fairy-Tale Literature and *Die Zauberflöte*."

terms, while the adjective *clarus* for "clear" or "bright" influences the German. (In French the connection of light and knowledge is apparent in the phrase *avoir des lumières sur,* "to have knowledge of.") The connotations in all three languages point toward the ideologies of the age. More important for my purposes, the term is embedded in a historical context that has particular and well-known associations with *Zauberflöte*.

The distinction between the possible meanings of the term and its historical and cultural associations may be articulated in English by the writing of the word with a lowercase or an uppercase *e,* signifying the metaphor or idea of enlightenment in general as opposed to the distinct, if complex, historical period known as the Enlightenment. The slippage at this intersection of metaphor and history, however, may be impossible to contain. In recent scholarship, the historical period has been thought to comprise diverse movements, the goals of which are often simultaneously complementary and contradictory, and it is now generally accepted that such movements represent different "Enlightenments" experienced by people of different genders, races, and nationalities.[2] With any use of the term, however, these distinctions quickly begin to blur, for "Enlightenment" resonates within an increasingly rich network of literal, figurative, and historical meanings in which the new struggle in vain to supplant the old. The symbolism of light and the allegorical experience of enlightenment, whether or not they accurately reflect any particular eighteenth-century reality, are pervasive in the age and implicit in its appellation in various European languages.

With this etymology and its protean associations in mind, we can trace the ways in which the language of Schikaneder and Mozart's libretto invokes the quest for enlightenment. For example, Sarastro rules in the domain of light and wears the powerful sevenfold circle of the sun ("den [mächtigen] siebenfachen Sonnenkreis"). He who passes the trials of fire, water, air, and earth, the two armored men tell Tamino in the finale of act 2, will be enlightened ("erleuchtet"). In contrast, images of night are repeatedly employed as a metaphor for the potential darkness of human thoughts and deeds. On first learning of Pamina's abduction, Tamino exclaims "O ewige Dunkelheit!" (O eternal darkness!). From this point forward, Tamino's confusion and despair are characterized in terms of darkness. As her title indicates, the Queen of the Night (die Königin der Nacht), who is bent on revenge, is characterized by the darkness over which she rules.[3] At the end of the opera, unable to invade Sarastro's enlightened realm, she and her entourage are plunged into eternal night ("in ewige Nacht").

The metaphoric shroud of darkness already implicit in Tamino's question, "Wann also wird die Decke schwinden?" (When, then, will the veil be lifted?) is at times

2. See, among many others, Darnton, *Literary Underground;* Chartier, *Cultural History;* Porter, *Enlightenment;* and Outram, *Enlightenment.*

3. For alternative readings of the Queen's "darkness," see Abbate, *In Search of Opera,* 55–107; and J. Brown, "Queen of the Night."

made manifest by the use of veils. At the end of act 1, the initiates Tamino and Papageno are led off stage with their heads veiled, and from this point forward their actual veiling and unveiling is explicit. The veils—and the darkness they necessarily impose—are an important part of the ritual of the trials. For example, Tamino and Papageno are veiled as they are led on stage for the first test, that of silence; the veils are removed as the test begins, and are replaced when the test is passed and the two are again led off. Sarastro describes Tamino's entrance to the trials as his seeking to tear off the veil of night and to see into the sanctuary of great light ("dieser Jüngling will seinen nächtlichen Schleier von sich reißen, und ins Heiligtum des größten Lichtes blicken").

The central drama turns on the symbolic opposition of light and dark, and the move from darkness to light is the dominant metaphor employed in the opera for the gaining of knowledge. First suggested by Tamino's "O ewige Nacht! Wann wirst du schwinden? / Wann wird das Licht mein Auge finden?" (O eternal night! When will you end? / When will my eyes find the light?), enlightenment (literally and figuratively) becomes the object of Tamino's quest when, in the second act, he seeks membership in the sacred order. The metaphor pervades the language used to develop themes of knowledge. The image of the coming of light (dawn) complements the coming of knowledge as the three boys begin the act 2 finale: "Bald prangt, den Morgen zu verkünden, / Die Sonn' auf goldner Bahn" (Soon, to herald the morning, the sun will shine on its golden path). It also permeates the remarks of the priests, as in the following line from the chorus "O Isis, und Osiris, welche Wonne!" in act 2 (No. 18): "Die düstre Nacht verscheucht der Glanz der Sonne" (The dark night is banished by the brightness of the sun). Other uses of the same metaphor include Papageno's telling outburst in the dialogue before the act 2 quintet No. 12: "He, Lichter her! Lichter her!—Das ist doch wunderlich, so oft einen die Herrn verlassen, so sieht man mit offenen Augen nichts." ("Hey, lights over here! Lights over here! How strange! As soon as these men leave you, you can't see a thing with your eyes open.") When the enlightened leave Papageno, he is figuratively—and in this case literally—in the dark.

The Queen's fear of enlightenment is represented not only by her role as supreme monarch of darkness and by her plotting against Sarastro and his realm but also in her language. She tells Pamina that Tamino will be lost to her, "wenn du nicht, eh' die Sonne die Erde färbt, ihn durch diese unterirdischen Gewölbe zu fliehen beredest.—Der erste Schimmer des Tages entscheidet, ob er ganz dir oder den Eingeweihten gegeben sei" (unless you persuade him to flee through these subterranean vaults before the sun tinges the earth—the first glimmer of day will decide whether he is given to you wholly or to the enlightened ones). The dawn's first light will carry Tamino out of the reach of the Queen's power and, so she imagines, of her daughter's as well. To summarize, the use of language in the libretto develops the quest for enlightenment as a complex idea of light, reason, knowledge, love, and friendship—a quest for everything aligned on the bright side of the symbolic opposition of light and dark.

In addition to being the dominant metaphor within the opera, the theme of enlightenment (as I have already suggested) is played out against an obvious historical and ideological backdrop. The quest for knowledge in *Zauberflöte* is a double quest: for knowledge *of* the self and *for* the self. This view of knowledge often found expression in the age, and had some currency outside the philosopher's study. For example, when the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* posed the question "What is Enlightenment?" no less a figure than Immanuel Kant responded (in company with Gotthold Lessing, Moses Mendelssohn, and many others). Kant's short essay was published by the journal in December 1784 under the title, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" (In Response to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?). Here Kant presents his own definition for the age. In it he emphasizes that an individual must learn through self-awareness:

> Enlightenment is man's leaving his self-caused immaturity. Immaturity is the incapacity to use one's intelligence without the guidance of another. Such immaturity is self-caused if it is not caused by lack of intelligence, but by lack of determination and courage to use one's intelligence without being guided by another. *Sapere Aude!* Have the courage to use your own intelligence! is therefore the motto of the enlightenment.[4]

Faith is not inherited truth in Kant's philosophy, but something that an individual comes to know through thought and self-development. Similarly, enlightenment is not conferred knowledge; it may only be achieved by those who resolve to seek it. (In this context, it is worth noting Schiller's famous response to Kant's injunction: "Dare to be wise!" ["Erkühne dich, weise zu sein"]).[5]

To what extent Mozart and Schikaneder felt a loyalty to any so-designated Enlightenment ideals, as represented in a manifesto such as Kant's, is difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine. What we know for certain is that the "Enlightenment" question was of contemporaneous concern in Vienna. Johann Pezzl discusses it in his *Skizze von Wien* (1786–1790): "The nonsensical clamourings from all quarters of the German lands during the last decade (more or less) concerning the *word* 'Enlightenment' have almost made the *cause* itself an object of general ridicule. . . . Such infantile babblings must not, however, be allowed to deflect us from honouring and advancing the real Enlightenment."[6] And one would have to go out of one's way to ignore the fact that the central theme of *Zauberflöte* is also the theme of the age. In addition, both Schikaneder and Mozart were Freemasons, and the Masons in late eighteenth-century Vienna espoused many of the philosophical and political ideals also claimed as Enlightenment. Contemporary evidence reveals that from the first

4. Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" 132.

5. See Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man,* 48–53.

6. Johann Pezzl, "Sketch of Vienna," in Landon, *Mozart and Vienna,* 128. I have amended Landon's translation slightly; see Johann Pezzl, *Skizze von Wien,* 381.

the opera's use of symbol and ritual was connected with Freemasonry. The frontispiece for the original libretto, for example, published by Ignaz Alberti, a fellow Mason and member of Mozart's own lodge, *Zur Neugekrönten Hoffnung,* strongly suggests Masonic connections in its imagery and symbolism.[7] The sacred band of Sarastro and his priests has long been taken to represent a Masonic order. Indeed, several of the men involved in the first performance were known to be Masons, and the Masonic symbolism is overt: the sevenfold sun emblem, the emphasis upon the number three, and particularly the initiation rites including the test of silence and the trials by fire and water.

Nor was this Mozart's first engagement with Masonic ritual in the theater. Tobias Philipp von Gebler's play *Thamos, König in Ägypten,* for which Mozart had earlier composed incidental music for performances in Salzburg, tells the story of a high priest who rules in a temple of the sun and wears a sun emblem. Mozart's music for this Masonic allegory includes the so-called threefold chord, later to become the hallmark gesture of *Zauberflöte,* as well as "priestly" music similar to that in the later opera.[8] Many have suggested that the character of this gesture and of the music of the priests in *Thamos,* both unquestionably Masonic in the context of Gebler's play, reveal the Masonic underpinnings of *Zauberflöte.*[9] Some have even gone so far as to suppose that the opera may be understood as a defense of the Masons, a subtle way of pleading the order's cause in difficult times. But whatever Mozart's and Schikaneder's motives may have been (about which there has been much speculation), no one would deny that *Zauberflöte* reflects several of the major themes and concerns of its age.

Against this background, *Zauberflöte* may be understood as an allegory of enlightenment. The shift to the enlightened state, by definition, implies the gaining of knowledge. Its vehicle is recognition. In terms of its dramaturgy, *Zauberflöte* is based on a "quest" plot, centering on a recognition scene. Tamino's quest for knowledge is a dramatization of the theme of enlightenment, and reaches a climax at moments when he achieves new awareness, particularly in the recitative scene with the priest in the act 1 finale (a scene considered in detail below). When the plot of *Zauberflöte* is considered in the context of its theme of enlightenment, the quest at the heart of it assumes a new significance for understanding the opera as musical drama. Recog-

7. The oft-reproduced frontispiece may be found with a brief discussion in Landon, *1791,* plate 9 and pp. 127–37. Of the many detailed Masonic interpretations of the opera, see especially Nettl, *Mozart and Masonry;* Rosenberg, *Die Zauberflöte;* and Chailley, *Magic Flute.*

8. King, "Melodic Sources and Affinities of *Die Zauberflöte,*" 242 and 249.

9. The presentation of Masonic ritual in both *Thamos* and *Zauberflöte* has also been traced to a French novel by the *abbé* Jean Terrasson, *Sethos* (1731), first translated into German in 1732, and again in 1778. Among the many who have developed the connection are Nettl, *Mozart and Masonry,* 69–80; Rosenberg, *Zauberflöte,* 167–80; and Branscombe, *W. A. Mozart: "Die Zauberflöte,"* 10–20. For an excellent treatment of *Sethos* and the influence of Masonic ritual in the opera, see Koenigsberger, "New Metaphor for Mozart's *The Magic Flute.*"

nition is thus crucial to the opera in two respects: as an aspect of the plot and as a central theme.

Tamino's Recognition: "Wann wird das Licht mein Auge finden?"

I turn now to the crucial recognition scene in *Zauberflöte,* Tamino's great recitative colloquy with the priest. Among others who have focused attention on this scene and suggested its central role in the drama are Rodney Farnsworth, James Webster, and Christoph Wolff.[10] My understanding of this passage, however, differs from theirs in two fundamental respects: first, I provide an analysis of it as a recognition scene; and second, I consider this scene with respect to the opera as a whole, taking recognition as a key to the plot and as a dominant theme of the work.[11]

At the beginning of the finale in act 1, Tamino's quest for Pamina has brought him to Sarastro's realm, specifically to the gates of the three temples of Wisdom, Reason, and Nature. But the priest who greets Tamino will not let him pass, and their conversation leaves Tamino in confusion. "Wann also wird die Decke schwinden?" (When then will the veil be lifted?), he asks finally. "Sobald dich führt der Freundschaft Hand, / Ins Heiligtum zum ew'gen Band" (As soon as the hand of friendship leads you into the holy place to the eternal order), the priest answers in parting, leaving Tamino alone. Now comes the moment of recognition: "O ewige Nacht!" Tamino cries, "Wann wirst du schwinden? / Wann wird das Licht mein Auge finden?" (O eternal night! When will you end? / When will light strike my eyes?).

Tamino has suddenly become aware that his understanding of Pamina's abduction, of the Queen's distress, of Sarastro's true nature—and thus, his understanding of his world and of himself—is false. The night seems eternal because the "truth," the knowledge that he seeks, has been denied him. But his exclamation is an important turning point. He had not questioned the Queen's story, and had believed her to be good and Sarastro evil. Tamino's new awareness is a reversal of his former understanding: it is a moment of recognition. What is more, to paraphrase Aristotle, Tamino's recognition comes as the direct result of the events themselves. In this context, of course, such events may not be understood singly as events of action, text, or music; they must be understood as composite, operatic events.

This scene takes the form of a long and complex accompanied recitative, an unusual occurrence in an eighteenth-century German opera.[12] As recitative, the scene

10. See Farnsworth, "Tamino at the Temple's Portals"; Webster, "To Understand Verdi and Wagner"; and Wolff, "'O ew'ge Nacht!'"

11. As far as I know, the term *recognition* has not been employed in an analysis of the opera, with the single exception of Baker, "'Night into Day.'" But he does not provide a detailed analysis of this or any other scene, and he does not offer any serious consideration of recognition as a topic.

12. For a discussion of the prevalence of dialogue as opposed to recitative in eighteenth-century German opera, see Bauman, *North German Opera,* 9–14; and Bauman, "Benda, the Germans, and Simple Recitative."

is organized in terms of straightforward text declamation (without repetition), wandering tonality, generally spare orchestration, and a continual succession of nonrepetitive musical lines: one hundred and twenty-two measures that suspend us in an unfamiliar world that restructures our expectations as it proceeds. In this extraordinary context, certain features of regularity will appear exceptional; even the simple recurrence of melodic or motivic material, or a brief sustaining of a single tonal area, becomes portentous. I shall focus on just one aspect of the scene's construction: the use of repetition. As I suggested in the introduction, repetition and recollection are often essential to the way recognition works in plots.

The scene makes complex use of repetition as a structural phenomenon. On three different occasions, it is the last of three repeated attempts that succeeds, and these occasions mark the beginning of the dialogue, its midpoint, and its conclusion.[13] (The text for these three passages is given in figure 1.1.) The first is Tamino's approach to the temple gates. Marching up to the first gate, he is told, "Zurück!" (Back!) by an offstage voice. This pattern—that is, the exchange of approach and response (see "1a" and "1b" in example 1.1)—occurs three times. The second time, he is also told "Zurück!" But on the third try, Tamino actually knocks and is answered by an old priest, who refuses to let Tamino pass; he keeps Tamino back without saying so. Within what is clearly a threefold event, there is motivic and tonal variation. The third approach is distinguished from the first two by Tamino's actually knocking, by the silence of the priest's entrance, and by the missing anacrusis and the expansion of the musical response. The three approaches are made on D major, G minor, and C minor, respectively, and the three responses juxtapose third relations, but differently. (Although Tamino's first and third approaches are less similar gesturally, they are more similar harmonically; in each case the tonal shock comes on "Zurück!" Tamino sets out in D major, and the B-flat, when it comes on "Zurück!" is a rude third juxtaposition. The second "Zurück!" arrives on E-flat, prepared by a dominant this time but approached from G minor. The third arrival—the entrance of the priest on A-flat—is prepared by a unison G suggesting V of C minor.) This gestural and tonal variation forms a pattern of repetition that serves two masters. True to the immediate context, the pattern of repetition is striking, but true to the context of through-composed recitative, the musical repetition is varied just enough to distinguish the subtle differences in text and action, especially when the priest unexpectedly appears at Tamino's third attempt. Repetition initiates the dialogue.

At the priest's entrance, his musical line moves to E-flat major as he refers to the holy place ("Was suchst du hier im Heiligtum?"). The significance of E-flat here, particularly on the word "Heiligtum" and in Tamino's response that he seeks love and virtue ("Der Lieb und Tugend Eigentum"), seems to signal the kind of truth toward

13. Although the significance of the number three is not my subject, its symbolism has often been noted, especially in the Masonic interpretations. (For example, see Rosenberg, *Zauberflöte,* 141–51.) The number three is also significant in many other contexts, most notably in fairy tales.

Figure 1.1. Tamino's recognition scene in the act 1 finale.

First Use of Repetition: At the Gates

		Tamino	
		Paminen retten ist mir Pflicht.	Pamina's rescue is my duty.
(i)	[1a]*	(*Er geht an die Pforte zur rechten Seite, macht sie auf, und als er hinein will, hört man von fern eine Stimme.*)	(*He goes to the door on the right side, opens it, and when he tries to enter, a voice is heard from afar.*)
		Voice	
	[1b]	Zurück!	Back!
		Tamino	
		Zurück? so wag' ich hier mein Glück!	Back? Then I shall try my luck here.
(ii)	[1a]	(*Er geht zur linken Pforte, eine Stimme von innen.*)	(*He goes toward the door at the left, a voice from within.*)
		Voice	
	[1b]	Zurück!	Back!
		Tamino	
		Auch hier ruft man "zurück"?	Also here one cries "back"?
		(*Sieht sich um.*)	(*He looks around.*)
		Da sehe ich noch eine Thür!	There I see yet another door!
		Vielleicht find' ich den Eingang hier.	Perhaps I shall find entrance here.
(iii)	[1a]	(*Er klopft, ein alter Priester erscheint.*)	(*He knocks, an elderly priest appears.*)
		Priest	
	[1b]	Wo willst du kühner Fremdling, hin?	Where do you want to go, bold stranger?
		Was suchst du hier im Heiligtum?	What do you seek here in the holy place?

* * *

Second Use of Repetition: Midpoint of the Dialogue

		Tamino	
(i)	[x]	So ist denn alles Heuchelei!	So then all [here] is hypocrisy!
		(*Will gehen.*)	(*Turns to go.*)
		Priest	
(ii)	[x]	Willst du schon wieder geh'n?	Do you wish to go so soon?
		Tamino	
(iii)	[x]	Ja, ich will geh'n, froh und frei, —	Yes, I wish to go, glad and free
		Nie euren Tempel seh'n.	Never to see your temple.
		Priest	
		Erklär dich näher mir,	Explain yourself to me more clearly,
		Dich täuschet ein Betrug.	A deception misleads you.

* * *

Figure 1.1. *Continued*

Third Use of Repetition: The Priest's Exit

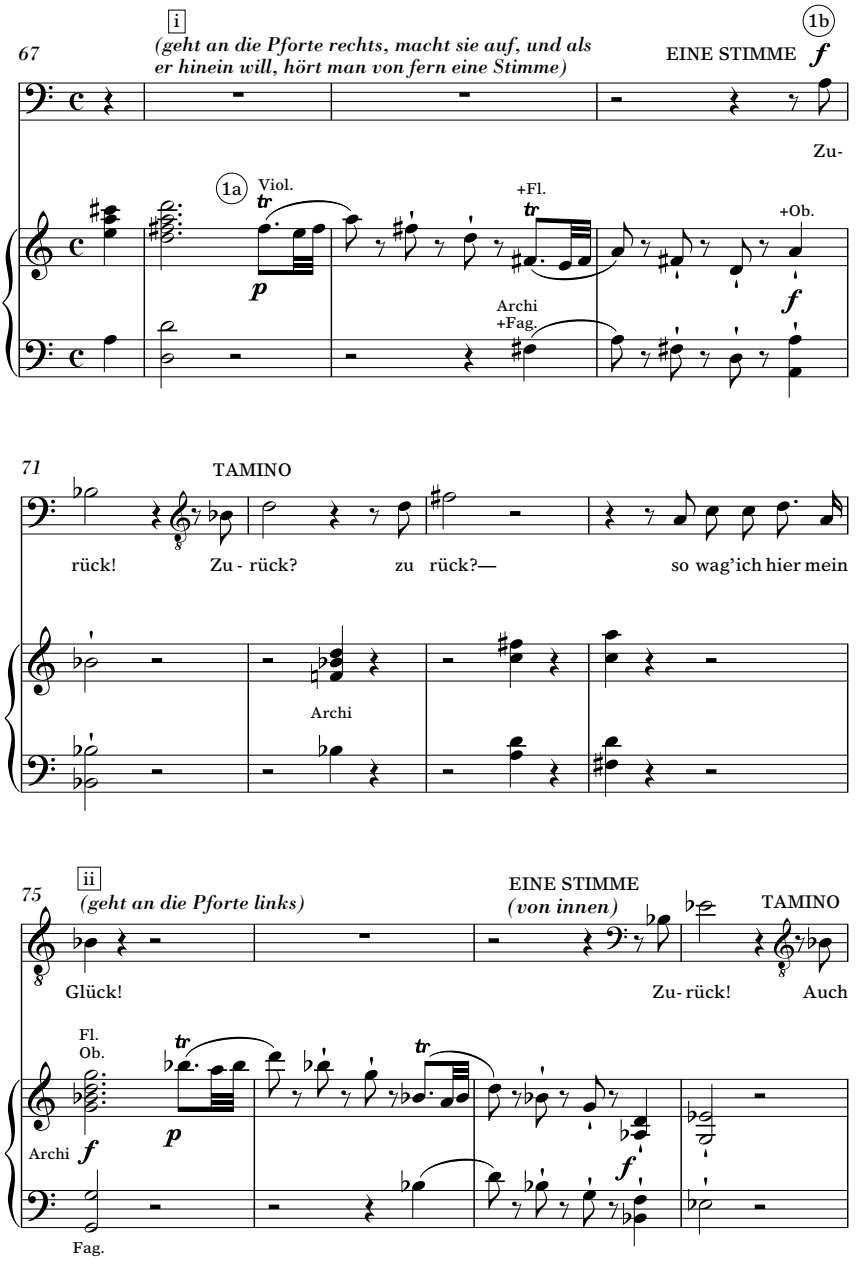
		Tamino	
		Erklär dies Räthsel, täusch mich nicht.	Explain this riddle, don't deceive me.
		Priest	
		Die Zunge bindet Eid und Pflicht.	My tongue is bound by oath and duty.
		Tamino	
(i)	[3a]	Wann also wird die Decke schwinden?	When then will the veil be lifted?
		Priest	
	[3b]	Sobald dich führt der Freundschaft Hand,	As soon as the hand of friendship leads you
		Ins Heiligtum zum ew'gen Band.	Into the holy place to the eternal order.
	[x]	(*Geht ab.*)	(*Exits.*)
		Tamino (alone)	
(ii)	[y]	O ewige Nacht! Wann wirst du schwinden?	O eternal night! When will you end?
	[3a]	Wann wird das Licht mein Auge finden?	When will light strike my eyes?
		A Few Voices	
	[3b]	Bald Jüngling, oder nie!	Soon, Youth, or never!
		Tamino	
(iii)		Bald sagt ihr, oder nie!	Soon you say, or never!
		Ihr Unsichtbaren, saget mir!	You invisible ones, tell me!
	[3a]	Lebt denn Pamina noch?	Does Pamina live still?
		Voices	
	[3b]	Pamina lebet noch!	Pamina lives still!
		Tamino	
		Sie lebt? Ich danke euch dafür. (*Er nimmt seine Flöte heraus.*)	She lives? I thank you for this. (*He takes out his flute.*)

*Note: Roman numerals indicate instances of repetition; the designations given in brackets appear in the musical examples.

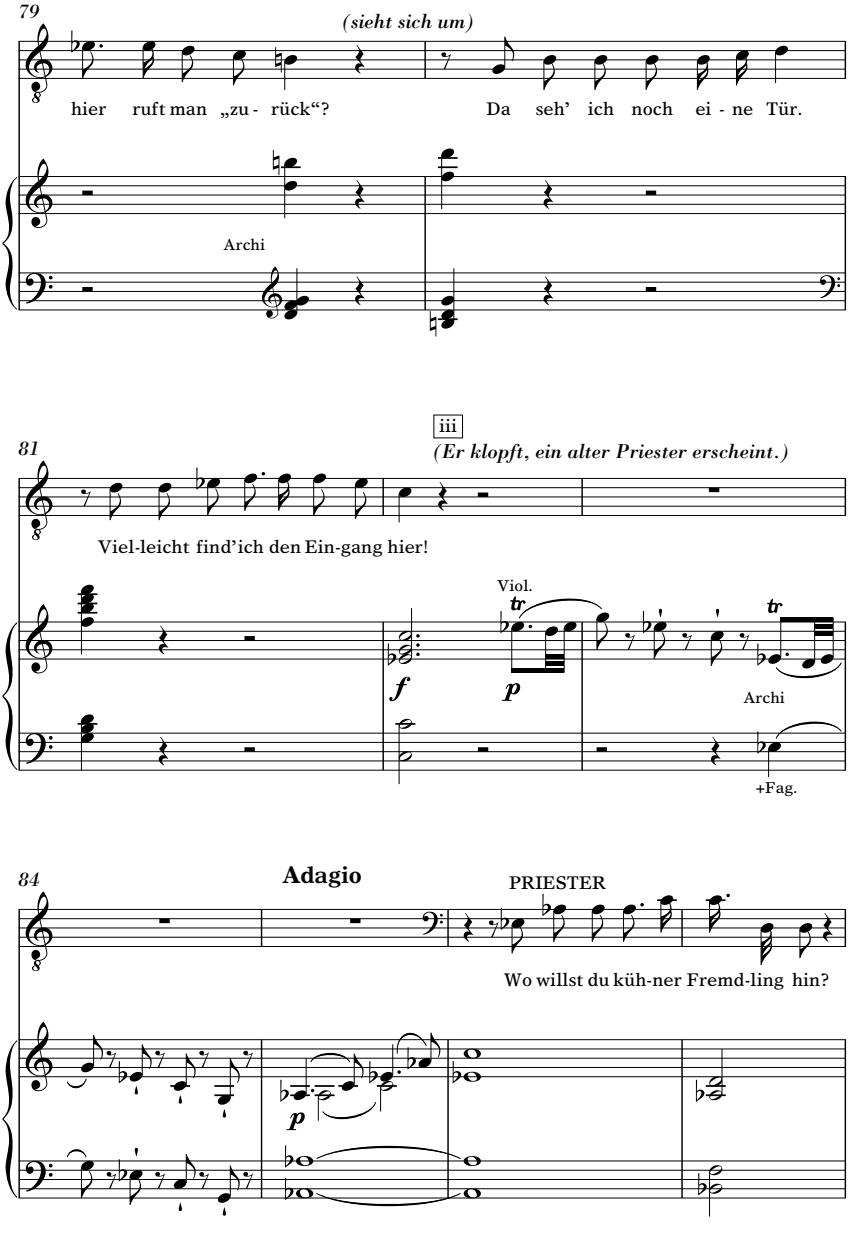
which the operatic plot is moving, if one accepts that E-flat is later to be established, if it has not been already, as the key of enlightenment and of "Heiligtum."[14] But the priest immediately turns from major to minor in his response (with the B-natural in m. 91), and then characterizes Tamino's wrath and desire for vengeance in C minor.

14. The significance of E-flat (as the key of three flats) has long been argued by commentators on account of its association with Masonry (in *Thamos,* for example). Whether or not E-flat holds any special meaning for Masonic music, there is no question that in *Zauberflöte* it is associated with Sarastro and his order. With respect to this passage, see Webster, "To Understand Verdi and Wagner," 187.

Example 1.1. *Zauberflöte,* act 1 finale, mm. 67–87.



Example 1.1. *Continued*



As this first half of the dialogue proceeds, Tamino challenges the priest. But the priest reveals that Sarastro rules here, even in the Temple of Wisdom. Horrified, Tamino makes to leave, and his gesture is accompanied by a poignant orchestral figure (marked "x" in example 1.2). This gesture is then repeated a second and a third time, before the priest convinces him to remain.

From the midpoint of the dialogue, when Tamino is persuaded to stay, the predominance of sudden *forte* markings and the occasional tremolo for Tamino, and sustained, quiet lines for the priest, are the only norms. Furious at the riddle answers, and having already been denied both the story that would explain the priest's words and any information regarding Pamina's fate, Tamino asks, quietly now, in desperation, "Wann also wird die Decke schwinden?" (When then will the veil be lifted?). In response, the priest sings a somber but clearly structured melody in A minor. It is a striking moment, especially so in a context where we have all but forgotten what real melodies sound like. Also striking is the unison doubling of the voice (only the priest's line has had such an accompaniment, and only once before, when the priest tells Tamino that he shall never find love and virtue as long as death and vengeance are in his heart ["Dich leitet Lieb und Tugend nicht, / Weil Tod und Rache dich entzünden"] at mm. 92–94). The effect is intensified when the cadence in A minor arrives in measure 139, confirming the tonal area of the priest's melody. This is the first clear arrival for seventy measures, and it marks the priest's exit (see example 1.3).

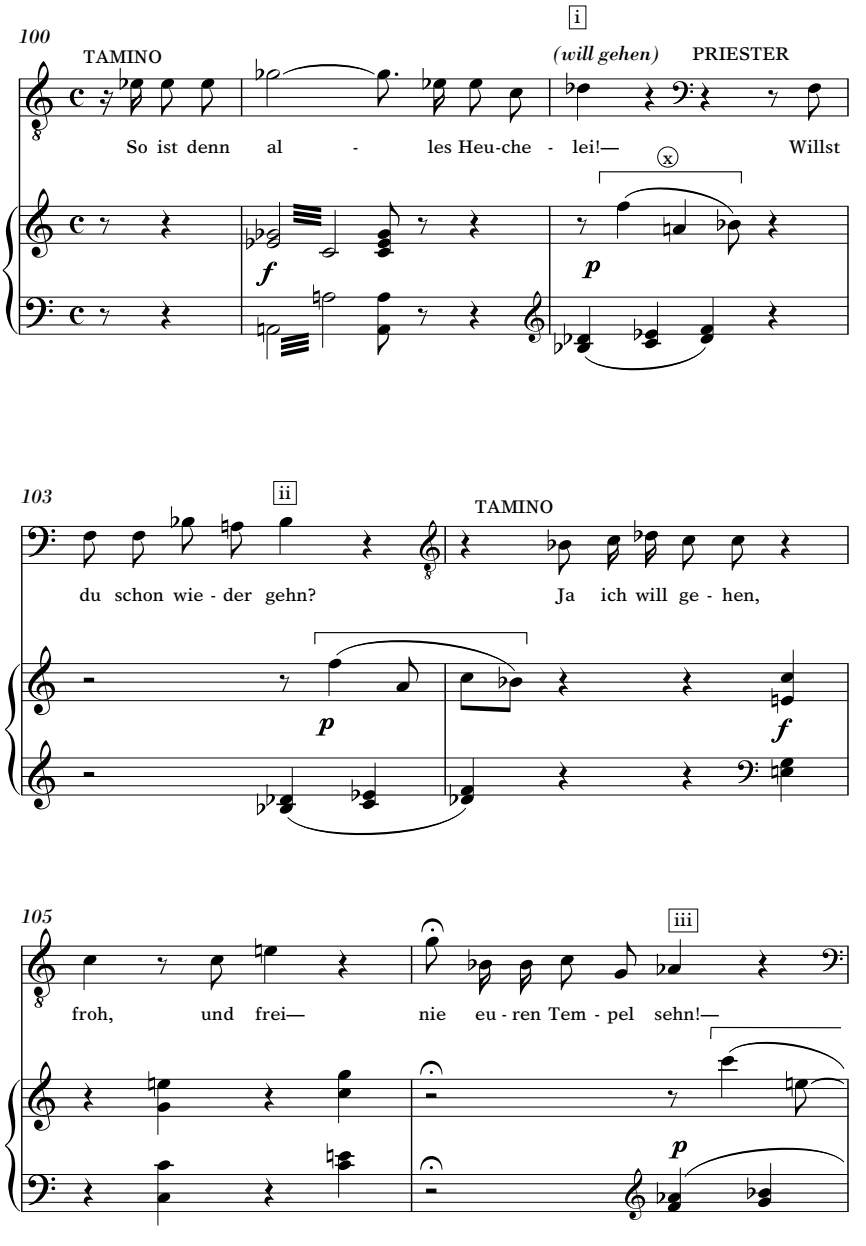
The dialogue ends as it began, with a series of three. The two repetitions of the A-minor melody following the priest's exit, however, set new text and are performed only by the cellos, while offstage voices respond to Tamino's questions. This third threefold repetition also contains two additional instances of repetition of a different kind. The first is a return of material from earlier in the recitative; the two-bar orchestral figure at the priest's exit recalls the moment in the middle of the scene when Tamino turned to go, stressing especially the minor second G-sharp to A (compare the figure marked "x" in example 1.3 with that in example 1.2).[15] The priest's exit is a gesture designed to bring Tamino understanding by leaving him alone, just as detaining him previously was designed to bring him understanding by refusing to let him leave when he was not yet ready to be alone.

Tamino's reaction "O ewige Nacht!" is the second repetition of a different sort. It is, in fact, a reminiscence of something he heard much earlier in the opera. And, as I noted earlier, this phrase is the crux of the entire recognition process. It recalls the Queen's first words to him, in her recitative and aria (No. 4): "O zittre nicht, mein lieber Sohn" (O tremble not, my dear son).[16] (Compare the musical line marked "y" in examples 1.3 and 1.4.) Tamino's exclamation thus involves a recollection from deep within memory. This is precisely what is most characteristic of moments of

15. See Wolff, "O ew'ge Nacht!" 244.

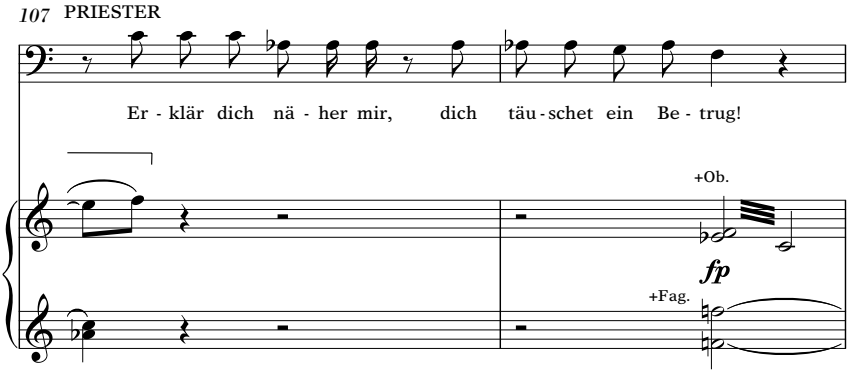
16. See Abert, *W. A. Mozart,* 2:656n; and Wolff, "O ew'ge Nacht!" 246.

Example 1.2. *Zauberflöte,* act 1 finale, mm. 100–108.



(*continued*)

Example 1.2. *Continued*

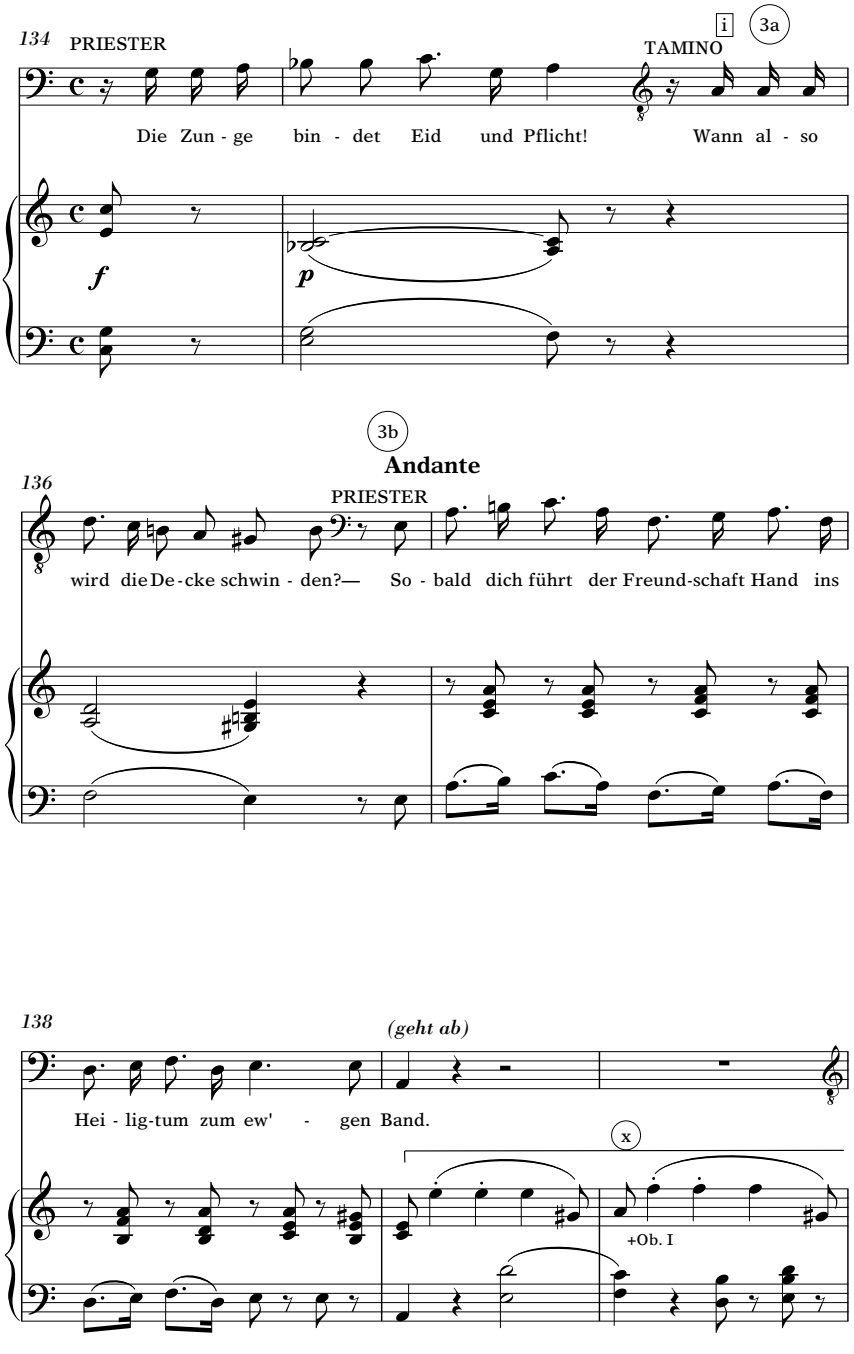


recognition: something already known, the significance of which had never before been apparent, repeats itself and in the process becomes understood. Tamino had thought the Queen to be a force for good, and Sarastro a force for evil. But he now realizes that the reverse is true. Only now does he grasp the significance of what the priest has said, as well as what truly lay behind the Queen's words. In recalling her kindness to him, and the import of her recitative and aria, Tamino remembers, and in remembering now understands for the first time, the truth of what has passed.

The C-major Andante that follows balances the earlier C-major Larghetto entrance of Tamino and the three boys, the two passages serving as a frame for the long accompanied recitative. The irregularity of the recitative section stands in contrast not only to the opera overall but also—and powerfully—to the music immediately preceding and following it. Figure 1.2 offers a graphic representation of this double frame for the recitative. The first frame is marked by tonality, musical style, and the contrast of the surrounding musical context to the recitative, as well as by the parallel of the three boys and the flute as talismans. The recitative is flanked on both sides by C major, by nonrecitative, and by the use of magic—as opposed to reasoning through dialogue.

The second frame is set within the first. The actual dialogue is framed by two of the series of threefold repetitions just described (its midpoint is also marked by a threefold repetition): the three approaches to the gates call the priest forth, and Tamino's questions result in his exit. As we have seen, the third in each series of three brings about an important event: in the first instance the appearance of the priest; in the second, Tamino's decision to remain; and in the last, the newfound knowledge that Pamina is alive. At the priest's exit, however, the layering of repetition, recollection, recognition, and knowledge (the long-sought response that Pamina is alive), and the clear tonal arrival in A minor make this moment especially complex and affecting. The priest's exit does not take place at the third question, but after the first. As figure 1.2 reveals, the threes of the priest's exit (one plus two) mirror the threes of his en-

Example 1.3. *Zauberflöte,* act 1 finale, mm. 134–53.



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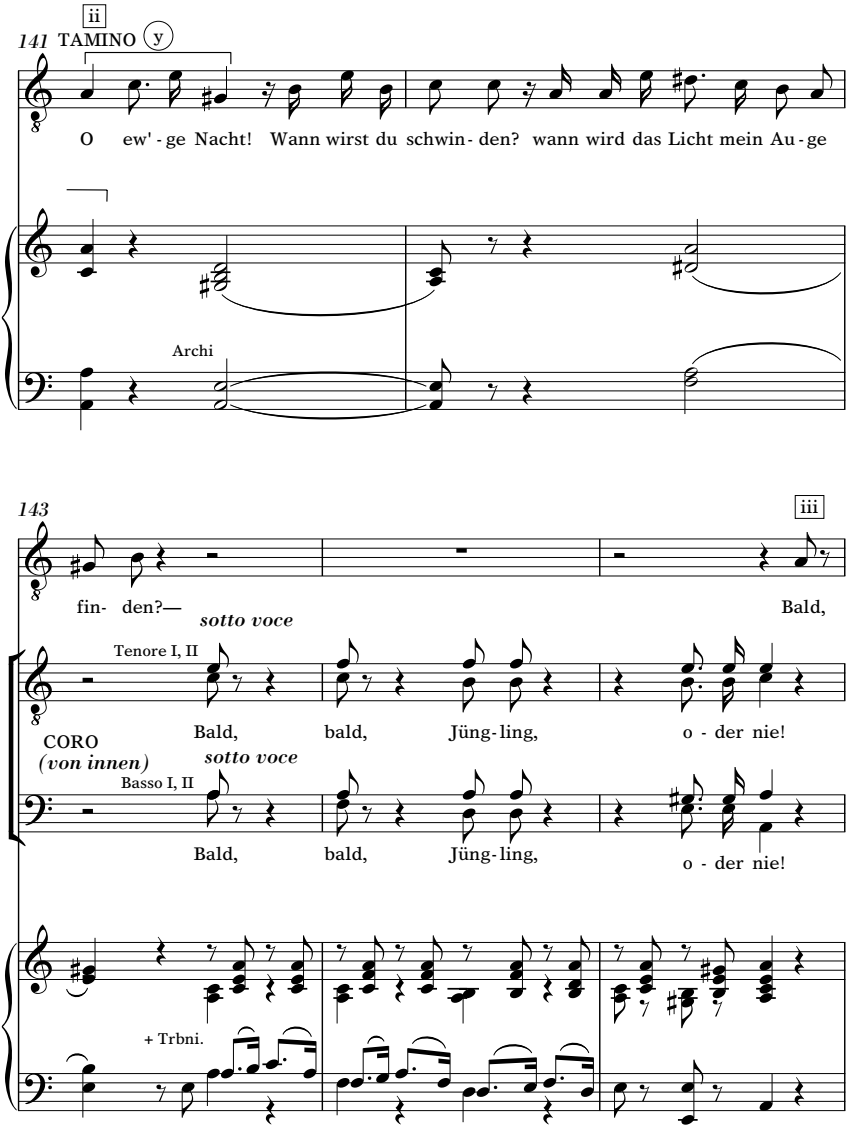
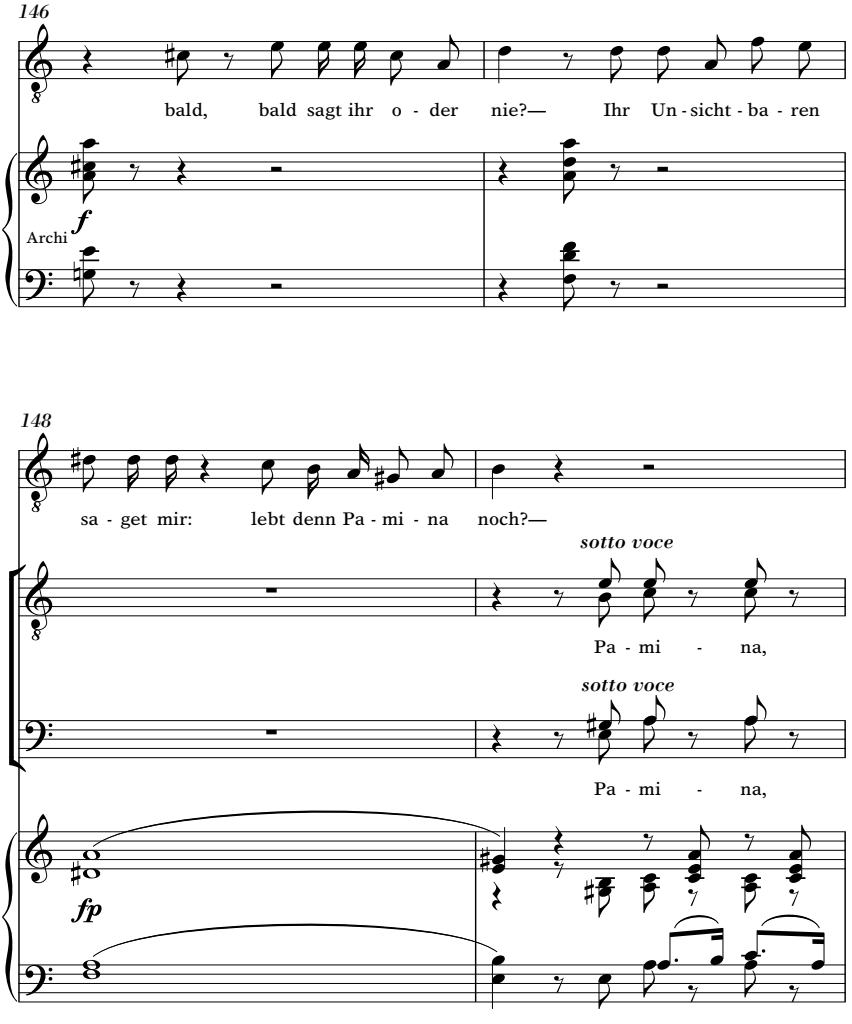
Example 1.3. *Continued*



trance (two plus one); the pattern of repetition is not parallel but symmetrical. As I have already suggested, there are dramatic reasons for the priest's leaving Tamino alone to awaken to the truth; nevertheless, the symmetry of the scene is remarkable. Passages of *accompagnato* are not generally thought to possess any particular form, let alone a tightly structured design, yet this recitative exhibits a fluid but balanced

Example 1.3. *Continued*

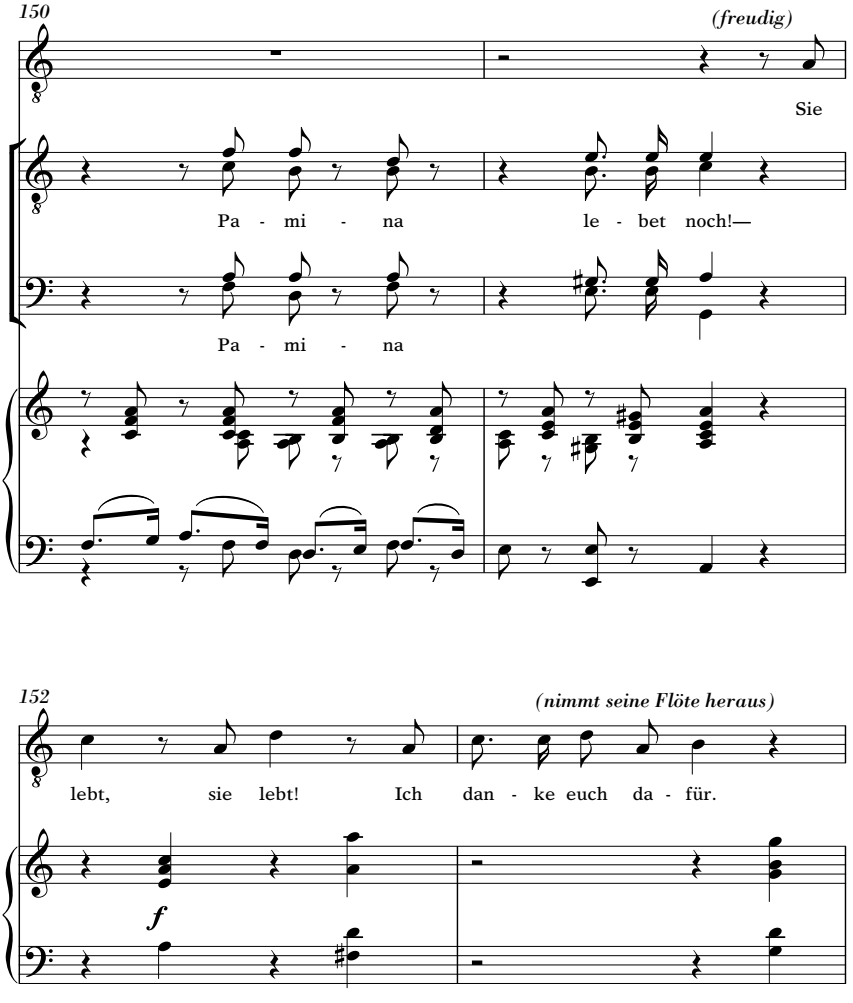


(*continued*)

internal structure that is supported by its surrounding context (and indeed, as we shall see, by its position in the finale).

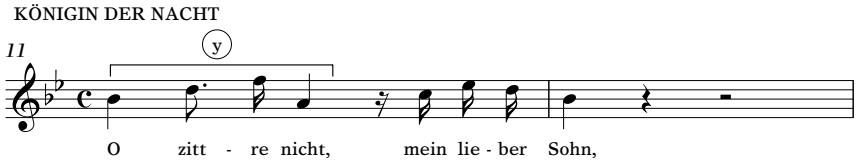
Tamino's recognition has come in conjunction with a reversal, and his purpose from this point forward will therefore be different from what it was. It is not an epiphany but rather the first step in a complex process of self-knowledge. The recognition involves repetition at several levels, as I have shown, and also narrative, as critical thinking about recognition predicts. The priest acknowledged the existence of a story that would explain all, but withheld it from Tamino. Tamino has come

Example 1.3. *Continued*



to this stage of knowledge through the operatic events themselves. His two questions at the moment of recognition hold a double implication. The first aspect of recognition, as plot device, is given by "O ewige Nacht! Wann wirst du schwinden?" and the reversal Tamino's realization brings about. The second aspect follows: recognition as a vehicle for themes of knowledge. Tamino's recognition expresses itself as a wish for further enlightenment: "Wann wird das Licht mein Auge finden?" he asks. Although he has attained new awareness, Tamino is still a seeker, now of light and knowledge, and not merely in a personal and limited sense. Confirmation of this perhaps comes when his exit music at the end of the scene recalls his earlier ap-

Example 1.4. *Zauberflöte,* "O zittre nicht, mein lieber Sohn" (No. 4), mm. 11–12.



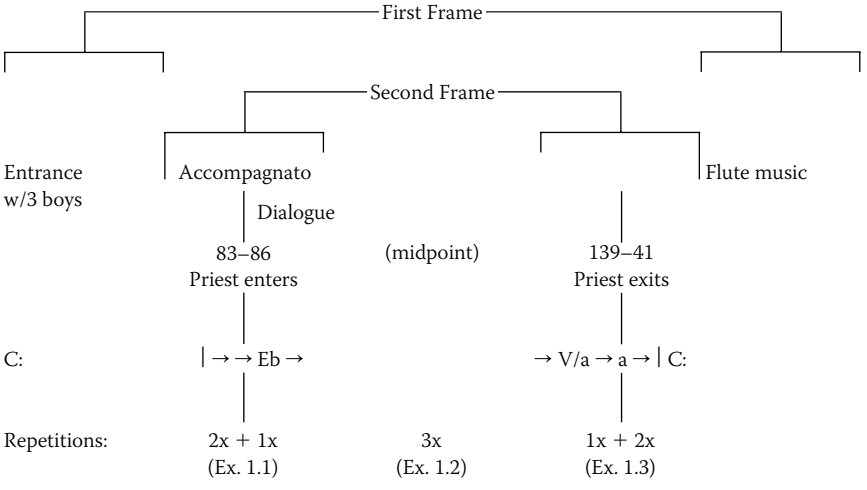
proach to the gates (compare example 1.5 and "1a" in example 1.1). The question "Wann wird das Licht mein Auge finden?" calls for a second recognition that will be an unfolding and a fulfillment of the first one. The recognition yet to come will be represented in both individual and universal terms, and will be marked by this opera's greatest stage spectacle: the sudden illumination of the stage (one of several special effects for which the Theater auf der Wieden was especially equipped). It will serve as a dramatization for the audience of the whole experience of knowledge, in terms of enlightenment, and will be enacted in the second finale.

Tamino's scene involves the "double character of recognition," in the manner described in the introduction, implying that the act of recognition, as Terence Cave has suggested, mediates the move from issues of form to those of content and back again. Tamino's recognition and the musical events that bring it about cannot be separated from the events of the plot. Confirmed tonality, the repetition of melody (as opposed to motives or gestures), a sustained melodic line in the bass, the promise of a narrative that will reveal all (even though it is withheld), the repetition of a melodic fragment from earlier in the opera that culminates in recognition—all come together powerfully as the events of an operatic plot.

Pamina, Papageno, and the End of the Opera

Recognition in *Zauberflöte* is not only a matter of this single, climactic scene; it is crucial to structure and meaning throughout. Although it would be impractical to draw up an exhaustive list of moments in which recognition is alluded to or enacted on the stage, I do want to emphasize the extent and force of its presence: from the moral lessons Mozart sets in chorale style—when, for example, the three ladies offer the following instruction in the act 1 quintet (No. 5), "Bekämen doch die Lügner alle / Ein solches Schloß vor ihren Mund; / Statt Haß, Verleumdung, schwarzer Galle, / Bestünden Lieb' und Bruderbund" (If all liars had such a lock for their mouths, instead of hatred, slander, black bile, there would be love and brotherhood)—to the structurally important recognition scenes for Tamino, Pamina, and Papageno in the finales. Take, for example, a brief moment of little importance to the action but central to the opera's representation of its high-minded theme: the brief passage in the act 1 finale when Pamina and Papageno, having just charmed Monostatos and his slaves with Papageno's glockenspiel, hear the chorus singing

Figure 1.2. A double frame for Tamino's dialogue with the priest.



Sarastro's praises in the distance. As the voices grow nearer, Papageno, who is terrified, can think of nothing but his desire to hide:

O wär' ich eine Maus!	If only I were a mouse!
Wie wollt' ich mich verstecken,	I would hide myself,
Wär' ich so klein wie Schnecken,	if only I were as small as a snail,
So kröch' ich in mein Haus.	I would crawl into my house.
Mein Kind, was werden wir nun sprechen?	My child, what shall we say now?

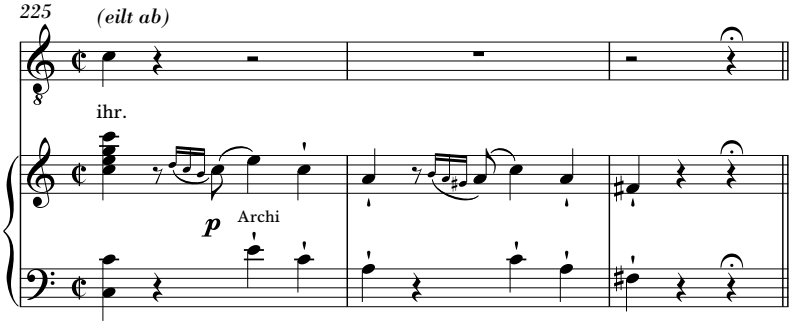
Pamina's response resonates with a significance that reaches beyond the confines of the present stage:

Die Wahrheit! sei sie auch Verbrechen.	The truth! even if it is a crime.

The exchange is dramatized vividly in the music. Papageno moves from G major (the key of the preceding duet section) to C minor, anticipating the worst. But Pamina redirects Papageno's dominant of C minor toward C major on the words "die Wahrheit" (see example 1.6). And it is no accident that her arrival on C major takes place within the context of a finale that both begins and ends in this key. Her "return" to the tonic is both sure-footed and resolute, and thus seems to confirm the import of her words.

The double character of recognition is reflected in many other ways in the opera. Both finales dramatize recognition (though with different emphases), and in this way address themes of knowledge on three levels: first, the individual's pursuit of en-

Example 1.5. *Zauberflöte,* act 1 finale, mm. 225–27.



lightenment and the happiness it brings; second, the pursuit of happiness without enlightenment; and third, the dramatization of enlightenment as the confrontation of symbolic universals. What is more, as figure 1.3 shows, both finales dramatize knowledge with respect to these three levels in the same order. The act 1 finale falls into three broad sections: first, Tamino's recognition scene; second, Papageno's and Pamina's escape from Monostatos; and third, the entrance of the priests and Sarastro. In the act 2 finale, there are three parallel sections: a recognition scene for Pamina, the scene in which Papageno finds Papagena, and the confrontation of universals in the triumph of light over darkness.

The first sections of both finales are reserved for the most high-minded dramatization of the pursuit of knowledge: Tamino's recognition scene in act 1, and Pamina's triumph over despair and the fire and water trials (which the pair pass together) in act 2. These trials and the completion they represent cannot come until both Tamino and Pamina have declared themselves seekers of enlightenment. The second sections of the finales each focus on the characters belonging to the lower social orders, whose concerns are more earthly. In this part of the act 2 finale, Papageno, who shows little interest in the opportunity he is offered to pursue the elevated enlightenment of Sarastro's order, finds his partner for life. In the equivalent part of the act 1 finale, Pamina, not yet aware of the truth about her own predicament and not yet seeking enlightenment, searches for Tamino in company with Papageno. Her empathy with Papageno—and their mutual desire to find love, something Mozart has already elevated with their duet, "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen" (No. 7)—emphasizes the human bond between the noble and the ordinary, between the enlightened (which she is soon to be) and the unenlightened (which Papageno will choose to remain). In act 2, significantly, Pamina does not appear in the corresponding portion of the finale, where Papageno and Papagena seek a happiness uncomplicated by the higher goals of enlightenment. The third sections of both finales conclude with the representation of universals: Sarastro's first entrance, the meting out of justice to Monostatos, the invitation for Tamino to begin the initiation rites, and eventually the vanquishing of the powers of darkness are all enacted in terms of symbol and ritual.

Example 1.6. *Zauberflöte,* act 1 finale, mm. 363–74.

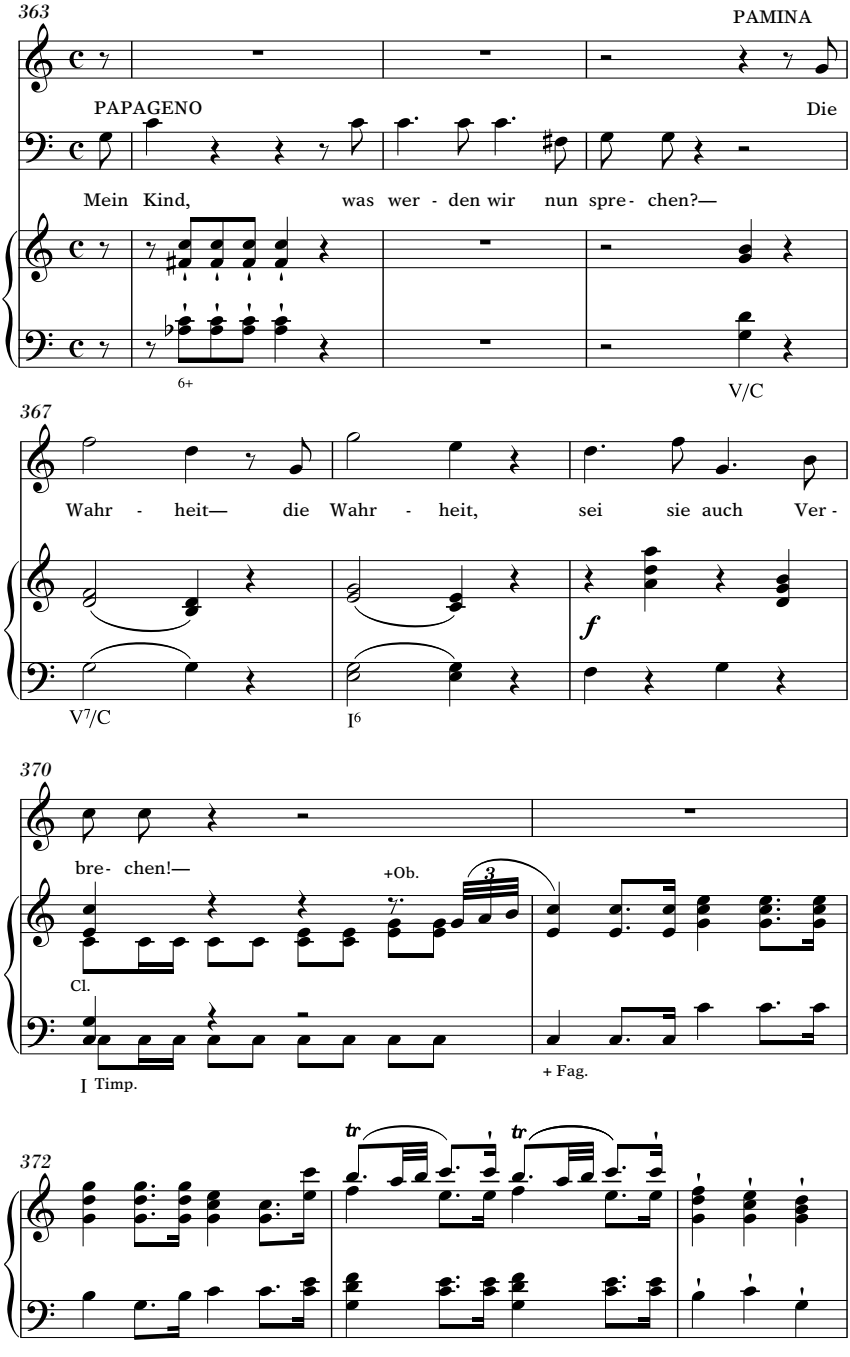


Figure 1.3. Parallel dramatic structures in the *Zauberflöte* finales.

	-1- Pursuit of knowledge		-2- Pursuit of happiness without knowledge	-3- Confrontation of universals: Ignorance vanquished by →	Enlightenment
Finale I:	**Tamino**		**Papageno**	**Sarastro and Priests**	
	3 boys		with Pamina	Join Pamina and Papageno	
	Doubt*		Fear of capture	Tamino enters**	Reconciliation and invitation to trials
	Hope	→ Plays flute	Plays bells	Punishment of Monostatos	Rejoicing
Finale II:	**Pamina**	**Trials**	**Papageno**	**Queen of the Night**	Sarastro et al.
	3 boys	Adagio and chorale	Doubt*	Enters with others to surprise Sarastro	Sun triumphs over night
	Doubt*	Pamina enters**	3 boys		
		Flute narrative		Plunged into endless night	Rejoicing
	Hope	Tamino plays flute	Plays bells		
			Papagena and union		

* Narrative is withheld.
** One lover enters to discover the other.

Tamino's recognition scene involves three essential elements that set the pattern for others in which Pamina and Papageno also make discoveries: (1) the presence of the three boys; (2) doubt, overcome by (Socratic) dialogue and culminating in new awareness; and (3) hope, given expression by the playing of the flute (see figure 1.4). Tamino and Pamina, who are destined to be united in marriage, each undergo a moment of great personal struggle. Tamino's despair and new awareness begin the first finale, and Pamina's the second; both involve reasoning through dialogue and withheld narrative. The pattern of action is also the same: the three boys appear; Pamina, in despair, comes to realize through dialogue that Tamino is faithful and resolves to find him; and, as they undergo the trials, the flute is played.[17]

Papageno also has two scenes that follow this pattern, although neither brings him closer to embracing the enlightenment of the order. The first of these makes obvious comic reference to Tamino's scene. In the dialogue before "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" (No. 20), Papageno, alone on the stage, despairs and wanders toward a door (the very door through which Tamino has just been led away). As he

17. For an analysis of Pamina's recognition scene, see chapter 2.

Figure 1.4. Recognition scenes for Tamino, Pamina, and Papageno.

	Tamino's Despair (finale, act 1)		
3 boys	Doubt (¬ Hope)	Plays Flute	
3 boys give Tamino advice	Tamino tries the gates. "Züruck!"	Thanksgiving	
	Dialogue with priest reveals new hope*	Confirmation of what he has learned	
(1)	(39)	(160)	
	Pamina's Despair (finale, act 2)		
3 boys	Doubt (¬ Hope)	Trials	Plays Flute
3 boys discover Pamina about to commit suicide	Dialogue in which Pamina is given hope and resolves to find Tamino*	Adagio	to pass the trials
		Chorale	
They stop her		Pamina's entrance	
(1)	(94)	(190)	(362 and 378)
	Papageno's Despair (before No. 20)		
No boys	No Doubt (¬ Hope)	Plays Bells	
Papageno is alone on stage	Told "Züruck!"	Overjoyed by the arrival of some wine	
	Dialogue with Speaker		
	Papageno's Last Chance (finale, act 2)		
Doubt	3 boys (¬ Hope)	Plays Bells	
Papageno is alone. In despair he plans to hang himself	They appear, stop him, and tell him to play bells*	Hopeful, Papageno plays	
		Papagena appears	
(413)	(543)	(576)	

* Narrative is withheld.

approaches, an offstage voice suddenly calls out "Zurück!" (Back!). The terrified Papageno meets with the same response at another door and, unlike Tamino, abandons hope: "Nun kann ich weder zurück, noch vorwärts!" (Now I can't go back and I can't go on!). The Speaker enters to chastise Papageno, telling him that he will never know the heavenly pleasure of the initiates ("das himmlische Vergnügen der Eingeweihten"). But Papageno feels no remorse; he exclaims, "Je nun, es gibt ja noch mehr Leute meinesgleichen" (Good heavens, there are even more people just like me). Finally, just as Tamino played his flute, Papageno plays his bells, overjoyed not by the dawning of knowledge or hope, but by the arrival of some wine. Like the Italian *buffo,* from whose tradition he is partly derived, Papageno is more focused on corporeal than cerebral concerns.

In the second finale after the trials, Papageno, in the depths of despair and about to hang himself because he cannot find Papagena, is given one last chance to come to awareness, and the three sections of this scene will by now be familiar: the three boys enter and engage him in dialogue; he is little capable of reason but plays his bells

when told to; and as he plays, Papagena appears. The story of Papageno and Papagena is that of the common folk who find happiness without enlightenment. In Kant's view, all ignorance threatens enlightenment, but in Mozart's fairy-tale world, only a direct attack poses a real threat. The Queen, who is fundamentally opposed to the realm of enlightenment, cannot coexist with it and must be vanquished. Papageno, on the other hand, though unenlightened, might be understood to represent a necessary part of an enlightened universe, the commoner whose lot is improved by the betterment of society as a whole.

The final stage of the representation of knowledge in the opera is the ultimate reversal, the vanquishing of the Queen and her entourage. This is a moment of universal enlightenment, and one of the most remarkable visual spectacles in all opera. As the Queen's C minor is redirected toward E-flat major, the dark stage is suddenly flooded with light. The contrast of styles and of chromatic and diatonic melodic lines, and the turn from minor to major musically represent the metaphoric opposition of dark and light, which is explicitly prescribed in the stage directions: "Sogleich verwandelt sich das ganze Theater in eine Sonne" (All at once, the whole stage is transformed into a sun). The Moor and the Queen exclaim as they descend through a trap door, "Zerschmettert, zernichtet ist unsere Macht, / Wir alle gestürzet in ewige Nacht" (Smashed, destroyed is our power, / We are all plunged into eternal night). Sarastro moralizes, "Die Strahlen der Sonne vertreiben die Nacht, / Zernichten der heuchler erschlichene Macht" (The rays of the sun vanquish the night, / [and] Destroy the ill-gained power of the hypocrites). The ascendance of light is not recognition in terms of the plot. Rather, it is the dramatization of the experience of knowledge for the audience, and the symbolic fulfillment of the enlightenment the opera's recognition scenes have implied. Although Tamino and Pamina achieve enlightenment through the trials by fire and water, they have not been enlightened in our eyes until we see them enter among Sarastro's order, in priestly garb, illuminated by a great sun.

The "Scandal" of Recognition

To return to the subject of the critical literature on *Zauberflöte,* but now from the perspective of recognition as both a crucial dramatic device and a "problem" moment, the fact that Tamino's great recitative scene with the priest has been the source of a well-known critical controversy suddenly takes on a new significance. It has been taken as the key to the story by many—as, in the words of E. M. Batley, "the pivot around which the plot revolves."[18] At the same time, it has also been viewed as the greatest contrivance, the point at which the story and its characters cease to be believable. Brigid Brophy and Eric Werner (and more recent critics as well) follow Dent and Abert in believing that Schikaneder and Mozart changed the original story com-

18. See Webster, "To Understand Verdi and Wagner"; Farnsworth, "Tamino at the Temple's Portals"; and Wolff, "O ew'ge Nacht!"; see also Corse, *Opera and the Uses of Language,* 46–68; Batley, "Textual Unity in *Die Zauberflöte,*" 85; and Branscombe, *W. A. Mozart: "Die Zauberflöte,"* 205–7.

pletely in midcomposition to avoid replicating a rival production, *Kaspar der Faggotist, oder Die Zauberzither.*[19] According to this theory, which, though based on false premises,[20] has nonetheless been extraordinarily influential, Mozart and Schikaneder originally intended the Queen to be good and Sarastro evil (following the fairy tale from which the story was adapted). However, their change of plan—so the theory goes—necessitated the roles of good and evil to be reversed, creating a break in the plot (at the beginning of the act 1 finale) where their work was interrupted.[21]

How can the same moment be described by so many distinguished commentators as the dramatic crux, and by so many others as the plot's central weakness? One possible answer is that these authors are all responding to the fact of recognition (and its effect on the plot), though they are not seeing the scene as a recognition. What is at issue here is whether plots centered around reversals of this kind can be cohesive. Aristotle, for one, believed that they could be. The contrivance (and reversal) various critics have sensed in *Zauberflöte* is precisely the radical change in understanding inherent in recognition scenes, and, indeed, in fictional plots of any kind. Cave calls this the "scandal" of recognition: recognition is "also a shift *into* the implausible: the secret unfolded lies beyond the realm of the common experience; the truth discovered is 'marvellous' (*thaumaston,* to use Aristotle's term), the truth of fabulous myth or legend."[22] In hindsight, now that Peter Branscombe has shown the "change of plan" theory to have been based on false premises, it appears that the theory was invented—though certainly not self-consciously so—for the purpose of making an excuse for the "implausible" recognition around which Schikaneder and Mozart have fashioned their opera.[23] Tamino's recognition scene is the moment when he first understands his situation. This new understanding naturally reverses his former perceptions of the Queen and of Sarastro (and our perceptions as well), and it alters his quest. The reversal may appear implausible, but this need not be seen as robbing the opera of its dramatic sense or significance, still less as legitimizing the canard that the plot is foolish and unintelligible while the music is intelligible, even unified, and thus able to "redeem" or "transcend" the libretto. Such an artificial division of plot and music is even more implausible than the supposed implausibility it purports to explain.

For all its mysticism, magic talismans, and supernatural happenings, *Zauberflöte,* as we have seen, is really about themes of knowledge. Its primary concern, at multiple levels, is recognition, which represents enlightenment in plot and theme. The opera

19. Brophy, *Mozart the Dramatist,* 144–48; Werner, "Leading or Symbolic Formulas in *The Magic Flute,*" 286–93; Dent, *Mozart's Operas,* 218–19; and Abert, *W. A. Mozart,* 2:626–28.

20. See Branscombe, *W. A. Mozart: "Die Zauberflöte,"* 29–34.

21. It should be noted that Schikaneder's and Mozart's indebtedness to the fairy tale "Lulu oder die Zauberflöte" is far more limited than many have supposed. For a discussion of this and other fairy tales in the *Dschinnistan* volumes that influenced the libretto for *Zauberflöte,* see Branscombe, *W. A. Mozart: "Die Zauberflöte,"* 25–27.

22. Cave, *Recognitions,* 1–2.

23. Branscombe, *W. A. Mozart: "Die Zauberflöte,"* 29–34.

is set in a magical world in which enlightenment appears, to borrow Cave's language, both implausible and marvelous. This is the key to the opera. Recognition carries the opera into the implausible; it is the implausible truth that Tamino and Pamina discover that is marvelous, that *is* enlightenment. The opera dramatizes Kant's injunction "Sapere Aude!": to dare to depart from inherited wisdom is to dare to know. If recognition, the marvelous knowledge that comes at the end, is implausible, this only confirms the truth of the enlightenment it brings.

2

Recognition Scenes in Theory and Practice

With its rich overlay of enlightenment metaphor and symbolism, its overt treatment of knowledge as subject—knowledge of a profound, philosophical kind—and its marvelous spectacle at the end, *Die Zauberflöte* might be thought unique in its reliance on recognition in the plot and in its development of recognition as a central theme. Yet all of Mozart's operas dramatize moments of recognition, and in a rich variety of ways. Several of the operas culminate in a moment of climactic recognition, after which things are irrevocably changed; many involve the use of disguise, which must later be discovered; and all involve several scenes in which one or more characters come to some significant realization on stage. What is discovered in each case, of course, is fundamental and particular to each individual artwork. The ideological triumph of Enlightenment principles dramatized in *Zauberflöte* is very different from the exaltation of sentiment found in *La finta giardiniera* or the domestic reconciliation enacted in *Le nozze di Figaro.* What these works have in common, however, is that recognition serves as a key to the drama and brings (or attempts to bring) with it a moral, emotional, philosophical, political, or other form of enlightenment.

The special challenge of approaching recognition in Mozart's operas, as I have already suggested, is to find a way to understand it in terms appropriate to the medium. In the operatic context, in which drama is realized through a combination of text, action, and music (and in which music is generally regarded as *primus inter pares*), recognition, when it comes, is almost always realized in musical terms. As we have seen in the case of Tamino's recognition scene and its implications for *Zauberflöte,* two or more of the following features or circumstances usually figure in the dramatic working out of such moments: (1) moments of recognition are set apart by some musical means; (2) shifts in action are accompanied by shifts of key, texture, melodic line, and overall style and mood;[1] (3) the discovery is accompanied—though

1. I have adopted the word "shift" from Else's translation of Aristotle's *Poetics,* where it is used to describe the effects of both peripeteia and recognition: "'Peripety' is a shift of what is being under-

not always immediately—by an explanatory narrative; and (4) most important, perhaps, recognition is brought about or signaled by musical repetition or recollection, just as Tamino remembered and repeated the Queen's melodic phrase.

For example, at the moment in *Don Giovanni* when Donna Anna recognizes Don Giovanni as the man who attacked her in the exchange before her aria "Or sai chi l'onore" (No. 10), there is a shift in texture from *secco* to accompanied recitative at the words, "Don Ottavio, son morta!" Her discovery calls for the narrative of another episode for its explanation, and her account of that fateful night ensues. But sometimes the actual repetition of a certain action or story leads to a new discovery. In *Figaro,* for instance, when the Count interrupts the act 1 trio (No. 7) to tell the little narrative in recitative of how he found Cherubino in Barbarina's room the day before, he reenacts the moment of discovery as he retells the story, lifting the "tablecloth" and once again uncovering Cherubino. With striking visual power in *Zauberflöte,* as we have already seen, Sarastro vanquishes the Queen's darkness, as her tempestuous storm music in C minor (complete with thunder machine) is transformed into the music of Sarastro's stately proclamation in E-flat major. Recognition in opera, as in drama and fiction, often involves the unmasking of a disguise, leading to the revelation, discovery, or recovery of identity. For example, Leporello's disguise is uncovered in the sextet of *Don Giovanni* with a striking change of texture and a deceptive cadence. In the act 4 finale of *Figaro,* the texture, key, and mood change as the Count recognizes the Countess disguised in Susanna's clothing, realizes what he has done, and begs her forgiveness.

In order to explore the complex workings of recognition in Mozart's operas, it is first necessary to focus on critical thinking about the concept in literary genres, and then on the difficult question of its application in the operatic context. Although recognition raises a number of formalist questions that require attention, the workings of recognition scenes cannot be reduced to a formula, nor can the concept of recognition be applied in any mechanical way. My purpose is rather to provide a dramatic and critical context in which to understand these scenes. One way to explore the question of how to apply the critical concept of recognition is to examine the construction of individual recognition scenes to see how they are crucial to the workings of an operatic plot, as I have attempted to do in the case of Tamino's recognition scene in *Zauberflöte* in chapter 1. My aim in this chapter, by contrast, is not so much the illumination or interpretation of any individual work, but rather a consideration of what recognition does, of where it is most and least forcefully dramatized, and why. In chapter 3, I shall turn to the question of how an individual event, such as a recognition scene, functions with respect to the operatic plot as a whole. The larger challenge—to approach recognition in operatic drama more gen-

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taken to the opposite" (35); and "'recognition' is . . . a shift from ignorance to awareness" (36). "Shift" may be used in the musico-dramatic context with less confusion than Halliwell's word "change" (*Poetics* [11], 43).

erally and involve it in the goals of opera studies—I shall try to address, however briefly, in the afterword.

Recognition in Classical and Contemporary Poetics

As it is used in Aristotle's *Poetics,* the term *anagnôrisis* is primarily concerned with Greek tragedy, though some mention is also made of the genres of comedy and epic. But recognition is integral to more literature and more types of literature than were dreamt of in the *Poetics,* and the term has since been applied to many other genres of diverse literary periods, including Renaissance comedy, Romantic lyric poetry, and the Victorian novel. For these and other reasons, recognition has a long and peculiar history as a literary—and, more particularly, a dramatic—device, and it comes laden with a kind of critical baggage that is not easily unpacked. In his *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics,* Terence Cave devotes over two hundred pages to what he calls "initial exercises," in which he offers a magisterial treatment of the origin, history, translation, and usage of the term, with extensive consideration of its reception, interpretation, and rehabilitation in commentaries ranging from the literature of antiquity to present-day poststructuralism.[2] For the present study, although the initial exercises need not be as strenuous, it does seem important to consider the nature of recognition both as a plot device and as a subject for poetics.

Although the subject of recognition has in the course of its curious history engendered interpretation and discussion of various kinds, there is no overarching—let alone consistent—theory of it, even in Aristotle. The disagreement that has pervaded the literature may be traced in large measure back to the ellipses and ambiguities of the original text as we have inherited it. Philosophers, playwrights, poets, historians, and literary critics of many different periods have produced so many conflicting translations, editions, and interpretations that it is almost impossible to conceive of the text we call the *Poetics* as a single text. The resulting texts have become part of the dialogue, spawning other translations, readings, and misreadings, even to the point at which ideas that all but contradict the letter of the original document have come to be regarded as central tenets of Aristotle's argument. (One of the most influential of these misreadings, for example, is the shift of attention that began with Gotthold Lessing in the eighteenth century, from recognition and peripeteia to pathos, which came to be regarded as the hallmark of good drama. In fact, however, pathos—the third of the three constituent parts of the plot—is the one about which Aristotle says the least.) Were it not for this complicated reception history, however, the text we call the *Poetics* might well hold considerably less influence. In the context of literary theory, recognition has thus been defined and understood in different ways at different times. Similarly, it has repeatedly been redefined (and even recreated) to apply

2. Cave, *Recognitions,* 4.

to a particular body or kind of literature in a particular way. As Cave shows, these readings are now firmly embedded in the enormous number of translations and exegetical studies, from the first Renaissance translator-commentators such as Francesco Robortello and Ludovico Castelvetro to latter-day critics such as Tzvetan Todorov and Paul Ricoeur.[3] They have also exerted influence on the profusion of critical commentary that attempts to connect theory and practice.

Another central difficulty, as Cave demonstrates, is that recognition is "a topic resistant to literary criticism, a topic that doesn't want to be talked about."[4] In opera studies, has resisted more than just the language of critical discourse; it is conspicuous by its absence. Even so, one cannot get away from the fact that recognition smacks of contrivance, nor can one easily reconcile its inherent "scandal" with its recurrence in works of literature and opera of the highest order of achievement. As we have seen, recognition scenes are "problem moments," moments at which fictions are fully revealed to be fictions, moments at which literature ceases to be plausible and crosses over into the realm of artificiality and contrivance. Recognition solves the mystery or resolves the conflict, and in so doing provides closure, but recognition stretches the "suspension of disbelief" to the breaking point and the moment or circumstance of recognition becomes suspect.[5] Contrivance is an essential, defining feature of fiction with its requisite recognitions.[6] It is the key to what is "marvelous" in and about literature. As both a category of events and a vehicle for the acquisition of knowledge, recognition is the strange and scandalous place where plot, theme, and the implausibility of fiction converge. Indeed, recognition has been a hallmark of low genres as well as high. Comedies, burlesques, sensation novels, and even soap operas all turn on recognitions and reversals that twist the plot in new directions, no matter how contrived or unlikely they may appear.

I now turn to a brief but detailed consideration of recognition in the *Poetics.* The term first appears in chapter 6 of the *Poetics* as part of the argument that "the events and the plot-structure are the goal of tragedy": "tragedy's greatest means of emotional power are components of the plot-structure: namely, reversals and recognitions."[7] Here neither recognition nor peripeteia (nor plot, for that matter) is defined, but each is employed in the service of defining tragedy. Recognition is central to chapters 10 and 11, of course, in which appear two crucial definitions: that of a "complex"

3. For a survey of Renaissance commentaries, see Cave, *Recognitions,* 55–67; for Todorov, see *Introduction to Poetics;* for Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative.*

4. Cave, *Recognitions,* 4.

5. Closure, like recognition, has a curious and difficult literary history because it may be viewed as a kind of contrivance, postponed to spin a better story, and brought on somewhat artificially to provide a sense of ending. See, among others, B. H. Smith, *Poetic Closure;* Kermode, *Sense of an Ending;* D. A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents;* and Brooks, *Reading for the Plot.*

6. See Cave, *Recognitions,* 273–95.

7. *Poetics* (6), 37 and 38, respectively.

action (as "one whose transformation involves recognition or reversal, or both") and that of "recognition" (as "a change from ignorance to knowledge").[8] Chapter 11 also includes Aristotle's influential assertion that "the finest recognition occurs in direct conjunction with reversal—as with the one in the *Oedipus.*"[9] Thus the significance of recognition as a constituent element of the plot, the explanation of how recognition is essential to the complex action, and the famous definition of recognition all precede the "recognition" chapter.[10]

It is in chapter 16 of the *Poetics* that Aristotle gives his longest and most comprehensive discussion of recognition, the passage in which he offers his famous ranking of five types of recognition. Here they are, in order from poorest to finest:

First: recognition brought about by means of tokens
Second: by poetic contrivance
Third: by recollection
Fourth: by reasoning
Fifth: by the events themselves

The first two are poor in Aristotle's view because they depend upon artifice, that is, artificial intervention in the plot on the part of the poet. The first is "the least artistic and the one which is used most out of inadequacy: recognition through signs." In this type, a sign of some kind is planted in the story by the poet precisely so that it can be discovered.[11] The narrative introduced to explain this recognition is therefore required not by the events of the plot, but by this artifice. Still, Aristotle specifies that "these means can be employed either well or badly." Those recognitions that merely "confirm" what is already known are "less artistic," in his view, "while those which accompany a reversal, like the one in the washing scene of the *Odyssey,* are superior."[12] There is some irony in the fact that despite Aristotle's care to differentiate between this better sort of recognition by token and the less "artistic" kind in which the token is employed "for the sake of confirmation," Odysseus's scar has become the hallmark of the contrived recognition.[13]

The second type involves a statement or unnatural sequence of events that arises from some heavy-handed interference of the poet. Aristotle's example is drawn from *Iphigenia.* He claims that at the moment when Orestes is recognized by Iphigenia it is because "Orestes himself says what the poet, but not the plot, requires: the result is close to the fault mentioned above, since producing tokens would be equiva-

8. *Poetics* (10) 42, and (11), 43.
9. *Poetics* (11), 43.
10. The order is curious and has given rise to various problems of interpretation. See Cave, *Recognitions,* 37.
11. *Poetics* (16), 48.
12. *Poetics* (16), 49.
13. See Auerbach, *Mimesis,* 3–23; and Cave, *Recognitions,* 10–24.

lent."[14] Like the recognition of the first type, this type is weak in Aristotle's view because it is brought about by the poet. In neither the first nor the second type is recognition brought about by the events themselves.

The third type is the recognition of memory and "may depend on the sight of something," or on hearing something.[15] This is perhaps the most common type of recognition in poetry, fiction, and drama, and is also important to theories that make use of the idea of recognition—psychoanalysis, for example. The crucial element here is repetition (as we saw in the introduction), which recalls some former event that is reenacted as it is repeated and is now understood with new awareness.

The fourth type, reason, implies the protagonist's use of deductive reasoning in a way implied by or natural to the plot. Aristotle's example comes from the *Libation-Bearers:* "someone like Electra has come, and there is no one like her other than Orestes, so it is he who has come."[16] Here the protagonist comes to awareness through the piecing together of information he has gained in the course of the action. This example and others of its type emphasize the real difficulty one encounters in attempting to establish such categories since all recognitions make use of reasoning. This category seems to require that recognition is triggered primarily by reasoning, but one cannot overlook the presence of deductive reasoning when the nurse identifies her master by means of his scar, or Oedipus recognizes himself in the messenger's report. Indeed, reasoning might be thought to be a vital component of all recognition scenes, particularly those involving the discovery or recovery of knowledge, as, for example, in *Zauberflöte.* The importance of this second-best type, recognition through reasoning (*sullogismos*), was especially prized by the Renaissance Aristotelians.[17]

Fifth and finest is the type of recognition represented by *Oedipus,* which I discussed briefly in the introduction: "The best of all recognitions is the type which arises from the events themselves, where the emotional impact comes about through a probable sequence of action. There are examples in Sophocles' *Oedipus,* and in *Iphigenia. . . .* Such instances alone avoid contrived tokens."[18] As we have already seen, there are two criteria for this type of recognition: that it, in Aristotle's words, "arises from the events themselves," and that it be accompanied by a peripeteia, as explained in chapter 11 of the *Poetics.*

But how does Aristotle's use of the recognition in *Oedipus* as paradigmatic compare to a recognition that could never have been imagined at the time of the *Poetics*—for example, Tamino's recognition scene in *Zauberflöte?* There can be no doubt that Aristotle prepares the way for a consideration of recognition scenes of all kinds,

14. *Poetics* (16), 49.
15. *Poetics* (16), 49.
16. *Poetics* (16), 49.
17. Cave, *Recognitions,* 72–78.
18. *Poetics* (16), 49–50.

even though his thinking clearly favors the recognition of persons and particularly the discovery of blood ties, which of course Tamino's recognition is not. Furthermore, his division of recognition scenes into types provides a means of identifying and evaluating individual scenes and, by extension, whole artworks. Yet his typology and categorization cannot be strictly maintained. A recognition by token will necessarily involve some deductive reasoning; a recognition brought about by the events of the plot will often involve either recollection or reasoning; and more generally, a recognition of any kind—no matter how contrived it may seem—might be thought to be brought about by the events of the plot, as it is more generally conceived, simply because it takes place in the course of the action. For these and other reasons, it would be pointless to try to base an understanding of recognition scenes in opera on Aristotle's categories.

His five types do, however, have direct bearing on the literature from which he draws his examples, and which his theory attempts to explicate and evaluate. Aristotle's typology seems precisely designed to fit the practice he knew. In this way he provides a model for any attempt to apply the ideas of the *Poetics* to opera: a consideration of recognition scenes must be based on the practice found in the body of works being considered. Tamino's recognition scene therefore should be related in some ways to other recognition scenes in Mozart, not just to those central to Aristotle's (or any other) typology. In other words, there must be a clear and demonstrable compatibility between theory and practice. There is no question that Aristotle's *Poetics* is oriented toward tragedy, although he extends his concepts to comedy and epic.[19] In a broader context in which neither tragedy nor the discovery of family ties is the norm, however, the idea of recognition has developed differently, such that it is the spirit rather than the letter of his treatise that applies. Tamino's recognition is comparable to Aristotle's finest type because it is brought about by the events themselves and involves peripeteia, as Aristotle requires of good drama. At the same time, however, Tamino's recognition is very different in kind from the discovery of family ties that Aristotle favors (more on this below). Aristotle, therefore, is essential for considering recognitions, but the theory in the *Poetics* cannot be regarded as restrictive.

Two further aspects of the *Poetics* have direct bearing on the project at hand. The first of these has to do with the shift of fortune brought about by recognition and peripeteia. This shift moves in one of two directions: from good fortune to bad, as in the case of the *Oedipus* story, or from bad to good, as in the case of *Zauberflöte* and almost all eighteenth-century opera. Much of the argument in the *Poetics* supports the move from good to ill fortune. But later in the *Poetics* Aristotle speaks in favor of plots that mark the opposite shift. And here a question arises that has long been the subject of scholarly debate and will likely never admit of solution. How can the finest plots move in the direction of good fortune when the finest recognitions

19. See *Poetics* (3, 5, and 22–26), 33, 36, and 56–65, respectively.

move in the direction of bad fortune?[20] In chapter 14 Aristotle suggests a second typology for evaluating drama, namely, his "modes" of action. Here he again offers a ranked categorization of types of acts, asserting that the finest type of action in tragedy is that in which recognition *prevents* the tragic deed and thus marks a shift from ill to good fortune.[21] This is of course a shift in the opposite direction from that of the paradigmatic *Oedipus* story. Thus there is a discrepancy between the finest type of recognition (to act in ignorance and recognize it later in conjunction with a peripeteia) and the finest mode of acting (to be *about* to act in ignorance and to recognize it in time not to act). There is a similar discrepancy between the finest mode of acting, which brings about a shift of fortune from bad to good, and Aristotle's bias in favor of plots that dramatize the shift from good to bad fortune.[22] To escape ignorance in time not to perform the deed will necessarily bring about the opposite of the more desirable shift—precisely the move from bad to good fortune.

It is obvious that this system is complex—to the point of contradiction—even with respect to the literature it was designed to comment upon. Aristotle's methods of evaluating both recognition and the modes of action possible within plots are more valuable as ways of making observations about dramatic action than as a means of evaluating whole works. If taken as a set of useful observations rather than as a set of laws, his system may be drawn upon and applied in a flexible way. The questions he raises do not circumscribe and define the recognition scenes one finds in later literatures, but they do offer a way to begin considering recognition scenes of all kinds, and they emphasize the ways in which recognition scenes are centered on the loss and recovery of knowledge. These recognitions, like the ones of family identity that Aristotle favored, lie at the very heart of the works in which they play a part.

The second point, which also involves a contradiction, is central to the way in which recognition narratives work and fundamental to critical thinking about recognition in any context. It concerns the development of epic, which, Aristotle says, though it differs in length, meter, and narrative mode, is otherwise similar to tragedy. Thus in chapter 24, he asserts that the epic plot, like the tragic one, may be either simple or complex and involves the same elements of plot: "For epic has equal need of reversals, recognitions and scenes of suffering."[23] Aristotle's examples are Homer's two epic poems: "the *Iliad* in the categories of the 'simple' and the poem of suffering, the *Odyssey* in those of the complex (using recognition throughout) and the poem of character."[24] The epic form, "on account of its use of narrative, can include many simultaneous parts," and a "variety of episodes."[25] It thus possesses the ability to rep-

20. See Cave, *Recognitions,* 36.

21. See *Poetics* (14), 45–47; see also the commentaries by Halliwell (131–39) and Else (40–42 and note 99).

22. *Poetics* (13), 45.

23. *Poetics* (24), 59.

24. *Poetics* (24), 59.

25. *Poetics* (24), 59. The operatic equivalent is the musical drama based on a multiple plot, a discussion of which follows in chapter 3 of this volume.

resent more parts of the action than the ideal "unitary," or unified, drama.[26] The development of this variety of episodes and the extension of the story well beyond the confines of the dramatic structure necessarily require the poet to spin out his narrative in a way very different from that common to tragedy and comedy. (This is, of course, precisely the problem Wagner ran into in writing his *Ring* cycle, which attempts by means of the *leitmotiv* to solve the dramatic problem of combining the epic and the dramatic.)

In a narrative as long as the *Odyssey* (or *David Copperfield* or *Moby Dick*), recognition cannot have the same status in the early episodes as it will in later ones, for if it did the truth revealed by recognition in the early episodes would end the story. The consequence is that recognition scenes in epics are often false or partial ones, in which the knowledge gained is untrue, or at least misleading. Aristotle explains the technique with a bow to the great epic poet of his time: "It is above all Homer who has taught other epic poets the right way to purvey falsehoods. What is involved here is a kind of fallacy."[27] These false recognitions are a necessity of the long narrative forms, for they are the chief means by which an author may extend the story over many diverse episodes and postpone the crucial, or climactic, recognition. This is as true for epics as for narrative poems, novels, and even multiplot dramas. Cave offers a summary better adapted to modern literature: "Paralogism [false reasoning], then, is the supreme confidence trick. It allows the charade of 'consequential action,' of narrative motivation, to culminate in an astonishing reversal which the audience accepts as logical although it is based on a fallacy."[28] Herein lies another contradiction: epic recognition sanctions false reasoning. The conclusion is as inevitable as it is vital to the study of recognition: "The problem is one created by the confrontation of philosophical argument with improbable fictions. Anagnorisis cannot be fully assimilated to logic: the attempt to tame it produces warps and lapses, paradoxes and paralogisms."[29] We have returned, albeit by a circuitous route, to the conclusion of chapter 1—namely, that recognition marks the shift into the implausible. Recognition will not be governed by the logic of the plot, but rather will strike out, overcoming the restrictions of structure and plausibility to realize the implausible or marvelous—to become fiction.

When Byron comments on Aristotle's rules in his irreverent *Don Juan,* he anticipates a new poetics of his own devising, which he proposes to call "Longinus o'er a Bottle, / Or, Every Poet his *own* Aristotle."[30] But there is much truth in Byron's jest. To a great extent, Mozart and his librettists may be understood to constitute their

26. "Unity," or the notion of a "unitary and complete action," is a central tenet of Aristotle's thinking (*Poetics* [8], 40).

27. *Poetics* (24), 60. Else translates this "fallacy" as "false inference" (65).

28. Cave, *Recognitions,* 43.

29. Cave, *Recognitions,* 43.

30. Byron, *Don Juan,* I.cciv.

own Aristotle. At the same time, although Aristotle's orientation toward blood ties and the specifics of his five types are not directly applicable in this different context, the general tenor of his argument holds. Recognition scenes and the reversals they usually entail are fundamental to stories of every kind. Studying how these scenes function is the key to understanding the larger works as coherent wholes. Recognition is not merely brought about by the events of the plot; rather, it is the culmination of a process that is both product and producer of change. After the detailed exploration of examples to follow in the remainder of this chapter and later chapters, we may perhaps begin to decide with what degree of success Mozart became his own Aristotle.

Recognitions of Identity in Mozart

Bearing in mind what we have learned about recognition—that it often marks not only a shift in dramatic action but a narrative problem in stories, that false or partial recognitions are a necessary component of stories that do not observe the "unity of action" of the Greek tragedies, and that recognition was first defined by Aristotle in his *Poetics* for application to a specific set of literatures—let us return to its application to Mozart and late eighteenth-century opera. Authors in this period were well aware of the function and history of recognition scenes in dramatic plots, as we saw in the introduction. Mozart and Da Ponte, in adapting the extraordinary recognition scene in *Figaro,* seized on and emphasized the suspicion of recognition Beaumarchais had constructed in his play. Suspicion of recognition as a device was characteristic of French writers of the Neoclassical period who struggled to reconcile its "marvelous" effects with the difficulties it necessarily imposed. Some authors suggest, as André Dacier does, for example, in his *La Poetique d'Aristotle,* that playwrights of his day "have rarely used recognition as a means of denouement."[31] As Cave has shown, however, the "decline of recognition" in this period is found more in critical theory than in practice. Metastasio inveighs against the "systems" of Aristotle's *Poetics* but does not refrain from centering his libretti on recognition scenes.[32] Recognition remains essential to plots in the eighteenth century but is adapted to new philosophical and literary ideals. Diderot, for instance, advises against the use of suspense: "Let all the characters be ignorant of one another's identity, if you wish; but let the spectator know them all."[33] In Mozart's operas (and in the operas of his contemporaries), recognition is adapted in a number of ways that reflect the ideals and concerns of their age.

I shall turn first to the sort of recognition Aristotle favored, the recognition of persons, which serves to reveal hidden or unknown identity. In this way, it will be-

31. Cited in Cave, *Recognitions,* 120. For a discussion of recognition in the critical thought of this period, see 84–143.

32. Cited in Cave, *Recognitions,* 125.

33. Cited in Cave, *Recognitions,* 128.

come immediately apparent how very different the plots of Mozart's operas are from those Aristotle considers, and, in consequence, which aspects of the *Poetics* are the most illuminating and which the most problematic in this sphere. Of special interest to Aristotle are those scenes in which family ties are revealed, as in the paradigmatic stories of Odysseus and Oedipus. But in Mozart's operas, we may observe, as Cave has in the realm of literature, "the fading of the classic set of family recognitions (recognition of persons, as in *Oedipus* and the *Odyssey*) into a wider set of plots structured explicitly in terms of the loss and recovery of knowledge."[34] The tendency to celebrate individual discoveries of feeling (especially love), to favor striving for knowledge over inherited wisdom, and to center plots on themes of enlightened governance in both the political and the domestic spheres in Mozart's operas foregrounds recognition in a new way.

Family recognitions do occur in Mozart's operas, as when Marcellina and Bartolo recognize Figaro as their long-lost illegitimate son, or when Idomeneo and Idamante recognize each other on the rocky shore of Crete. But more prevalent are recognitions of identity that do not turn on the discovery of family ties—for example, when Sandrina in *Giardiniera* is recognized by her former lover to be the Marchesa Violente, whom he thought dead, or when Donna Anna recognizes Don Giovanni as the man who attacked her, or when Tamino and Pamina first meet and recognize in each other the partner of a future (and a better) life with the words "Er ist's! / Sie ist's!" (It's he! / It's she!). It is striking, however, that of the five scenes just mentioned, none may be regarded as the central climax of its surrounding drama. Anna's recognition of Don Giovanni and Tamino's and Pamina's mutual recognition are important moments in the development of their respective plots, but neither serves as the greatest point of dramatic conclusion or reversal. Similarly, those in *Giardiniera* and *Idomeneo* serve primarily as essential catalysts to later action, and the recognition of Figaro by a spatula-shaped birthmark on his arm, though it unquestionably serves a necessary plot function, seems to have been included at least in part as a clever play on the conventions of recognition.

Thus the recognition of persons, even when it participates in the central climax (as it does in the finales of *Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*), and whether it is a recognition of family ties or not, is de-emphasized in favor of recognitions of other kinds—recognitions of principles, feelings, social and human verities, and so on. Take, for example, the scene in *Idomeneo* in which father and son discover each other's identity. To the extent that it represents a recognition of identity that reveals close family ties, it is similar in some respects to examples cited in the *Poetics.* (This is hardly surprising, of course, since the opera and the plays upon which the libretto was based are all derived from the Greek legend of Idomeneus.)[35] At the same time, the way in which it functions in the drama overall does not finally conform to what Aristotle says about

34. Cave, *Recognitions,* 8–9.
35. See Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 1–13.

the significance of family ties. For these reasons, this scene makes a particularly good starting point for a consideration of how and why recognition is conceived differently in Mozart's late eighteenth-century poetics.

In the course of a sudden and violent tempest in which Idomeneo, his ship, and his men are almost lost, Idomeneo makes a vow to Neptune that he will sacrifice the first man he meets on the shore if Neptune will save him and his entourage. Neptune does what is asked of him, but no sooner has Idomeneo set foot on the shore than he begins to reflect on the peculiar nature of his vow: the cost of his rescue will be an innocent life. In fact, it is his own son, Idamante, who now appears on the shore searching for news of his father, whom he knew to be on this ship. At first, father and son do not recognize each other, for it has been many years since Idomeneo's departure, but midway through their recitative Idamante identifies himself as the son of Idomeneo. The event is akin to Aristotle's second poorest type of recognition, for Idamante simply blurts out his identity. Still, it is a necessary plot spring. Were the first man Idomeneo encountered not his own son, he might never come to hate the vow he made and to rethink the precepts by which he rules.[36]

Recognition here is almost exactly as Aristotle describes: "a change from ignorance to knowledge, bringing the characters into either a close bond, or enmity, with one another, and concerning matters which bear on their prosperity or affliction."[37] At the instant Idamante exclaims that Idomeneo is his father, the orchestra comes in all at once with a vigorous Presto on D major (see example 2.1). Julian Rushton and Daniel Heartz have both drawn attention to this moment, and the problematic implications of this recognition scene as a dramatic event become apparent when one considers how strikingly different their views of it are. Here is Rushton:

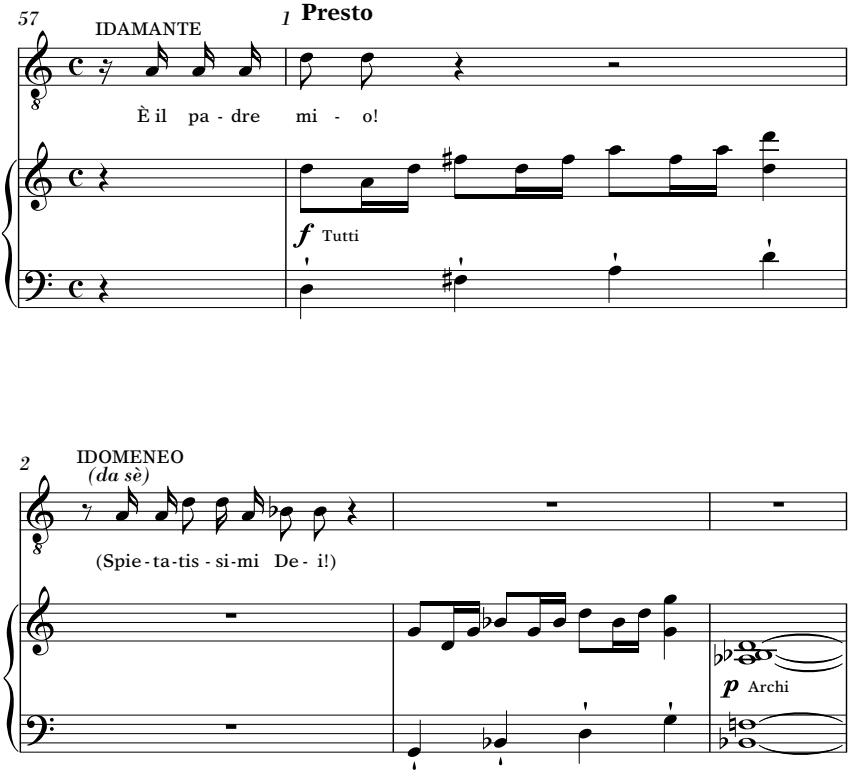
> Idamante enters . . . and approaches the stranger on the shore to offer comfort and seek news. Recognition is almost unbearably slow, the dialogue punctured by asides. It emerges that the boy has lost his father. The older man sighs; Idamante asks if he knew Idomeneo. The king does not identify himself but seeks a reason for the boy's interest. As Idamante says "He is my father" the orchestra initiates a violent Presto.[38]

Contrary to Rushton's suggestion that "recognition is almost unbearably slow," Heartz recreates the moment in his prose as anything but slow. He takes D as the "keynote" in *Idomeneo* and argues that this moment is vital to the opera's structure and meaning:

> There is often a special drama inherent in the returns to the keynote. Mozart saves it for crucial moments such as the Recognition Scene, Act 1 scene 10. When Idamantes finally, after a long dialogue of questions on both sides,

36. See Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment,* 67.
37. *Poetics* (11), 43.
38. Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: "Idomeneo,"* 12.

Example 2.1. *Idomeneo,* recitative, "Spiagge romite" (I, x), mm. 1–4.



says of Idomeneus "E il padre mio!", D major arrives with an orchestral tutti, *presto e forte* (NMA, p. 109). The string arpeggios rocketing up to high D are the same as in the overture (pp. 6–7). The similarity of the sonority, if not the pitch, ought to tell every last listener that this is, ye Gods! the keynote ("Spietatissimi Dei!", responds Idomeneus just after the D major arpeggio).[39]

Heartz's reading of the moment is persuasive, and he goes on to connect the keynote to several prominent moments in the opera, including Idomeneo's act 2 aria "Fuor del mar ho un mar in seno" (No. 12), as well as his recitative confession during the storm, "Eccoti in me, barbaro nume!"

Yet, in spite of the forcefulness of the orchestra and the striking interjection of the keynote, one feels that Rushton's reading is also in some sense right. Although this recognition is without doubt important to the drama of *Idomeneo* yet to unfold and exhibits musical connections to earlier and later moments, in its placement and

39. Heartz, "Tonality and Motif in *Idomeneo,*" 384.

working out, this moment is in certain respects underplayed, which is precisely what Rushton's reaction reflects. Recognition scenes, particularly the ones that uncover family ties in Aristotle's *Poetics,* usually come as the culmination of a complex plot, bringing about the climax of the drama and a release of dramatic tension. Idomeneo's and Idamante's recognition scene is not of this kind. Indeed, the opera is hardly begun; this moment is the very springboard for which the plot has been waiting. The full significance of this discovery is understood at this point by neither father nor son. (And one cannot help but observe here how different this moment is from the recognition in *Oedipus,* when, after the herdsman has revealed that the child he had saved many years before had been given to him by Jocasta, Oedipus comes to understand who he is and all he has done.) Contrary to Aristotle's preference, this scene is not brought about by the events themselves; it is rather a part of a larger recognition process that culminates in later scenes, including Idomeneo's crisis and confession in the storm and the final *deus ex machina* in which love and virtue triumph.

Thus while Heartz rightly shows the importance of this early recognition scene to the opera as a whole, Rushton correctly suggests that this recognition does not result in the climax one often expects from recognition scenes. It is the forerunner of discoveries yet to come. In studying this moment of familial recognition, we discover how very different are Mozart's recognitions of family identity from Aristotle's. In *Oedipus,* the moment at which filial identity is revealed is the dramatic and moral climax. Birthright, it might be argued, is *the* key to the Oedipus story. In *Idomeneo,* however, the scene that reveals son to father only begins to point to the emotional and moral content of the work. The more significant recognition—the nature of Idomeneo's terrible mistake—has yet to unfold. And herein lies the interest of this scene in the present context, for, perhaps more than any other in Mozart's oeuvre, it demonstrates the shift that Cave speaks of from recognitions of family identity to ones that emphasize the loss and recovery of knowledge. Here then is confirmation (if confirmation is needed) that while Aristotle's general concept of recognition can be usefully applied to Mozart, it is the spirit rather than the letter of his observations that proves most illuminating. What is more, as we have already seen in the case of Tamino's climactic recognition in the act 1 finale of *Zauberflöte,* a recognition scene need not be of the type Aristotle prized to produce the effect within the drama that he valued most highly.

For comparison, let us now turn to a moment in which the recognition of persons reveals something other than family ties. Since its larger recognition drama is already familiar from chapter 1, I have chosen an example from *Zauberflöte:* the moment at which, although they have never met before, Tamino and Pamina instinctively recognize each other in the act 1 finale. By this time their mutual affection is all but assured, for Tamino has already fallen in love with Pamina's portrait (the subject of "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön" [No. 3]), and Pamina with Papageno's description of the noble prince who has come to rescue her. In this way, the first encounter of these would-be lovers is prepared as a recognition scene. The feelings of love

they earlier imagined become manifest at this moment, near the end of act 1, in which they now know each other immediately. As Monostatos enters with Tamino, Pamina exclaims, "Er ist's!" (It's he!). Tamino responds by repeating her exact thought—and music—a fourth below, "Sie ist's!" (It's she!), and they continue exchanging both musical figures and text until their imitation melds into homorhythm and finally they embrace (see example 2.2).

The words here are important; the verb "sein" itself is the mark of recognition, the key to identity. Pamina does not exclaim, as she might have, "At last, I see him!" or more simply, "Tamino!" but recognizes her prince with the thought, "It *is* he." Their next lines are also paired and rhymed: "Ich glaub' es kaum!" (I can scarcely believe it!) and "Es ist kein Traum!" (It is not a dream!). They continue as if of one mind—

Pamina

Es schling' mein Arm sich um ihn her,	I will wrap my arms around him,
Und wenn es auch mein Ende wär'.	even if it means my death.

Tamino

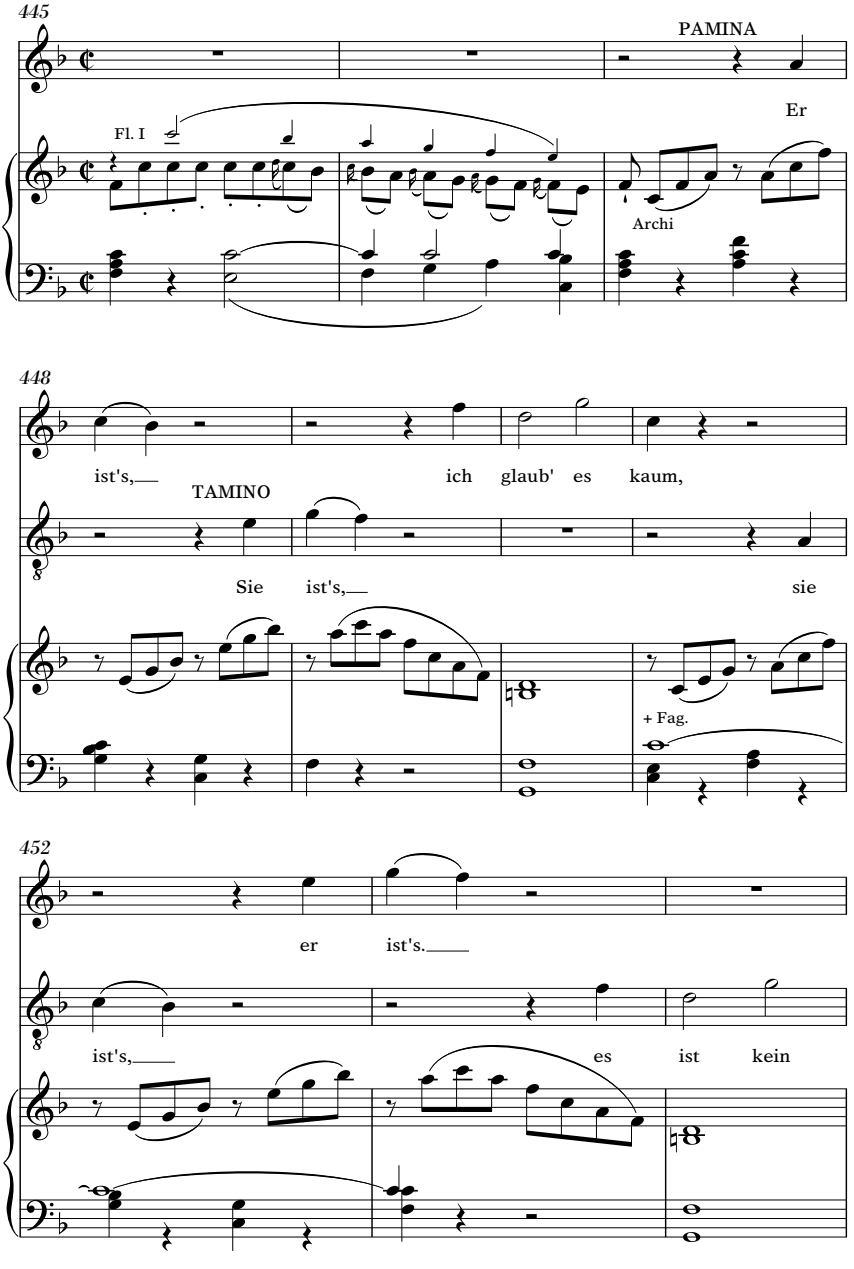
Es schling' mein Arm sich um sie her,	I will wrap my arms around her
Und wenn es auch mein Ende wär'.	even if it means my death.

—until, on the last line, they sing the same text to the same melody. The recognition here is realized in text, action, and music. Though brief, it is a remarkably vivid moment, for the music suggests that these two individuals who have never met know each other as well as each knows herself or himself.

At the parallel moment in the act 2 finale, Pamina enters to discover Tamino and the two armed men. This moment, too, is a recognition in miniature, a reunion that seems to reflect and grow out of the earlier encounter. Once again in F major one lover enters to discover the other, and both express their joy with shared text and music. While in the parallel place in act 1 each lover recognizes and identifies the other with the words "It's he/she," this second moment unfolds that earlier one to reveal the confirmation of their affection and its attendant sense of belonging: "Tamino mein! O welch ein Glück!" (My Tamino! O what good fortune!), to which Tamino responds, taking her words and music, "Pamina mein! O welch ein Glück!"[40] The musical setting recalls the earlier exchange, though in a different meter; compare, for example, Pamina's "Ich glaub' es kaum" and Tamino's "Es ist kein Traum" with their settings of "O welch ein Glück!" (see examples 2.2 and 2.3). This moment in the act 2 finale serves as both the fulfillment of the promise of the first recognition and a prediction of a deeper knowledge yet to come—when Tamino and Pamina will come to know each other as man and wife. The elective affinity here is complemented

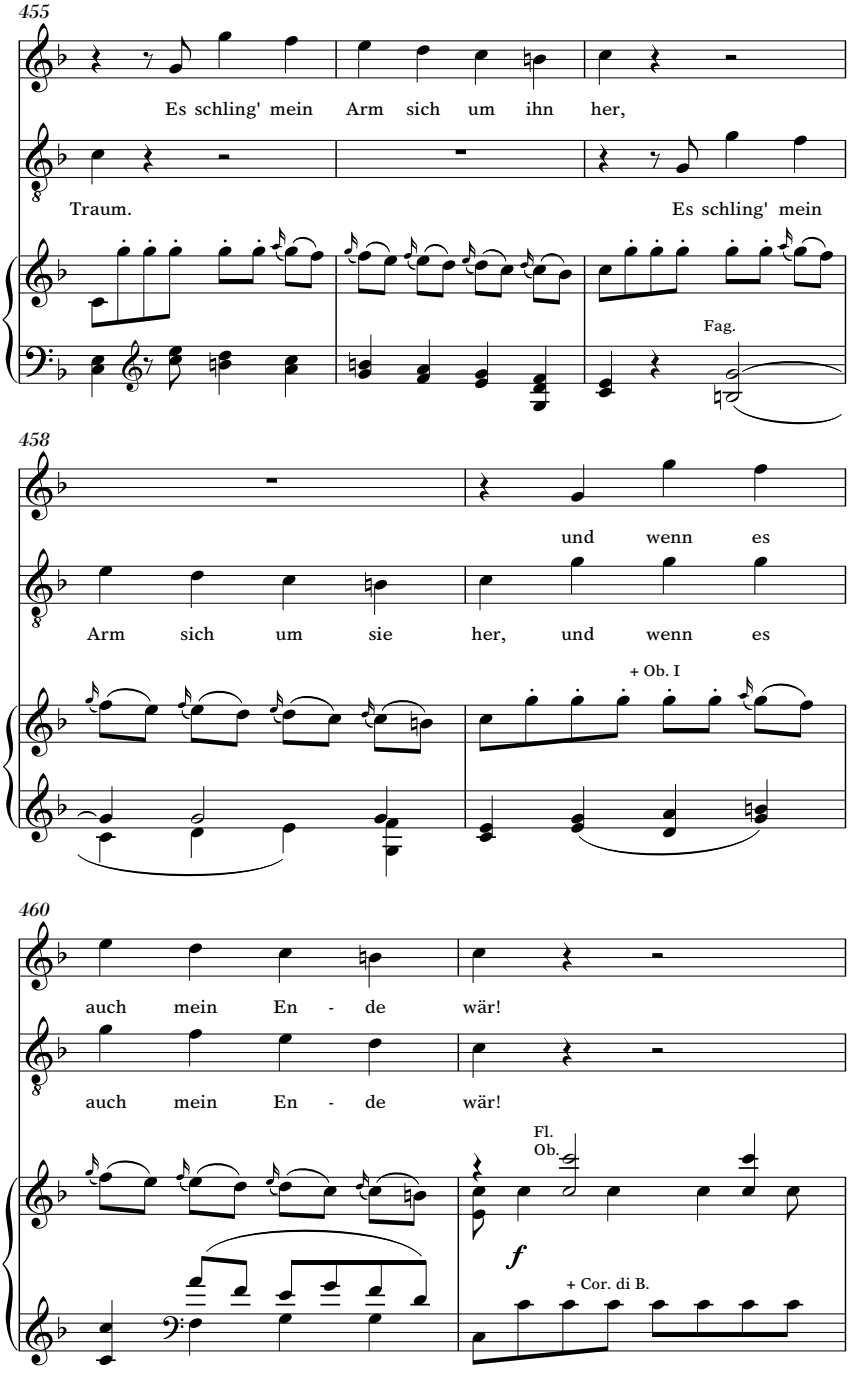
40. See Webster, "Cone's 'Personae' and the Analysis of Opera"; and Bauman, "At the North Gate," especially 278–86.

Example 2.2. *Zauberflöte,* act 1 finale, mm. 445–61.

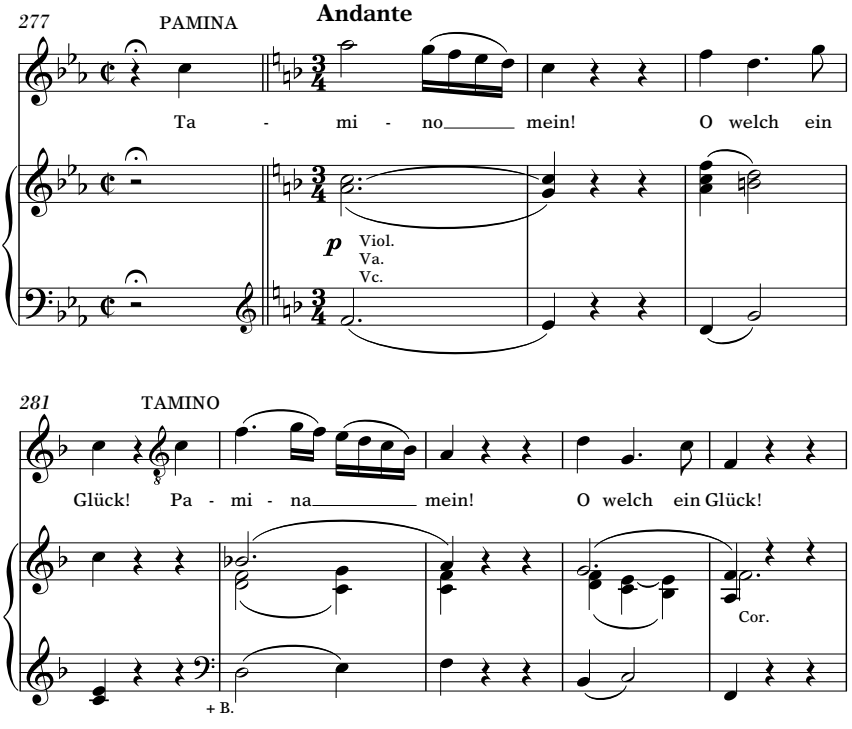


(*continued*)

Example 2.2. *Continued*



Example 2.3. *Zauberflöte,* act 2 finale, mm. 277–85.



later in the same finale by the one between Papageno and Papagena: Mozart and Schikaneder convey both the surprise and significance of recognition by having each lover struggle to utter the other's name, "Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Papagena"/"Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Papageno."

Although recognition serves the common goal of revealing identity in each case, these scenes from *Idomeneo* and *Zauberflöte* could hardly be more dissimilar. It is not merely that the nature of the identity discovered is different (kinship in one case, love in the other), but that identity functions within the two plots with different emphases and in different ways. In the opera seria, father and son do not at first recognize each other, and even after they do they remain unable to communicate with or understand one another (not only for the remainder of the scene, but for most of the opera). What recognition reveals here is birthright and its legacy; its significance derives from a familial and political context. What is more, the recognition of blood relation, which might seem to be a recognition of the highest order, is, in fact, only preparatory to the real drama of *Idomeneo,* which turns on the discoveries Idomeneo makes later about the kind of ruler he would like to be. In *Zauberflöte,* by contrast, Tamino and Pamina, though they have never met and are not related, recog-

nize each other instantly and immediately appear to be one in mind and heart. They discover who they are not in familial but in social and psychological terms, and the emphasis is on who they are to become. The key to understanding therefore lies not in birthright or social identity, but in the acquisition of philosophical and sentimental knowledge. Pamina, we learn from Sarastro at the beginning of act 2, is destined for Tamino, and their union is as important to the future of the temple and the precepts for which it stands as Tamino's trials of initiation. Thus the trials and the philosophical knowledge they represent are inextricably tied to the more fundamental human experience the lovers' union implies. It is only after passing the trials of fire and water that Tamino and Pamina, secure in their newly gained knowledge, are free to become man and wife and to rule jointly in the enlightened temple.

Like *Zauberflöte,* Mozart's first German opera for Vienna de-emphasizes the recognition of persons in favor of that of enlightened principles. In order to do this, Stephanie and Mozart deliberately removed a crucial recognition of family ties from Christoph Friedrich Bretzner and Johann André's *Belmont und Constanze* of 1780 upon which they based their own libretto.[41] As a result, they altered the climax and dénouement of the story in a profound and striking way. Near the end of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail,* Belmonte and Pedrillo are thwarted in their attempt to rescue Constanze and Blonde; the Pasha arrives to discover their plot to escape. When Belmonte gives the name of his family and offers to pay any ransom that might be desired for his and Constanze's freedom, the Pasha learns that Belmonte is none other than the son of the commandant of Oran, who years earlier had robbed him of his own beloved, his honor, and his wealth. The Pasha realizes his good fortune; he holds in his hands the fate of his most hated enemy's son. And his first inclination is to have his revenge: "Wie er mit mir verfahren ist, will ich mit dir verfahren" (As he dealt with me, so shall I deal with you).

The Pasha finally chooses enlightened benevolence over impassioned revenge, however. He returns in the last scene to free his prisoners, despite Belmonte's statement that retribution in kind would be warranted: "Kühle deine Rache an mir, tilge das Unrecht, so mein Vater dir angetan;—ich erwarte alles, und tadle dich nicht" (Take your revenge on me; correct this wrong, which my father did to you. I am prepared for everything and cannot criticize you). But revenge is neither a theme of this opera nor a goal of its plot. In explaining his decision, the Pasha provides the enlightened moral of the opera:

> Ich habe deinen Vater viel zu sehr verabscheut, als daß ich je in seine Fußstapfen treten könnte. Nimm deine Freiheit, nimm Konstanzen, segle in dein Vaterland, sage deinem Vater, daß du in meiner Gewalt warst, daß ich dich freigelassen, um ihm sagen zu können, es wäre ein weit größer Vergnügen, eine erlittene Ungerechtigkeit durch Wohltaten zu vergelten, als Laster mit Lastern [zu] tilgen.

41. See Bauman, *W. A. Mozart:* "*Die Entführung aus dem Serail,*" 6–11, 32–35, and 36–61.

> I hold your father in far too much contempt ever to follow in his footsteps. Take your freedom, take Constanze, sail back to your fatherland, and tell your father that you were in my power and that I set you free so that you could tell him that it is a greater pleasure to reward a suffered injustice with good deeds than to repay vice with vice.

Although the earlier recognition disclosed the identity of Belmonte, this final scene is the more important recognition moment. In it the Pasha delivers his speech of enlightened clemency. Most striking here is the fact that the Pasha decides in favor of forgiveness and leniency in spite of his captive's identity, not because of it. As it did in *Idomeneo,* the recognition of persons takes a place of secondary importance to the discovery of the Enlightenment tenets and principles that support the opera's main action and theme.

The full extent to which Stephanie and Mozart de-emphasize recognitions of identity in their opera becomes apparent only when one compares their libretto to Bretzner's *Belmont und Constanze.* At the end of this earlier version Belmont is revealed to be the Pasha's long-lost son (who had been left at a monastery when he was only four years old). The Pasha's forgiveness is therefore motivated entirely by the discovery of blood relation. He spares not his enemy's but his *own* son. The enlightened benevolence that defines Stephanie's and Mozart's opera is not at issue at all. This substitution in *Entführung* of enlightened goodwill for familial feeling was judged by at least one contemporary critic to be even more contrived and unlikely than the recognition of kinship. Johann Friedrich Schink, who reviewed the premiere of *Entführung,* found the Pasha's forgiveness of his enemy's son to be a much nobler conclusion than the recognition in Bretzner's version, but "incomparably more unnatural." Schink goes on to attribute the change in the story to fashion: "In general these endless acts of magnanimity are a wretched thing, and in fashion on scarcely a single stage any more save the one here. And one can almost be sure that such a work containing handsome feats of magnanimity, generosity, recognition, and forgiveness will make a great splash, even if these things are brought about in the most unnatural way."[42]

While Schink regrets the change of plot, regarding the opera's climactic recognition scene as a problem, we might be inclined to judge it less harshly. The two versions of the story center on different improbabilities. Bretzner's recognition provides the Pasha with a motive for forgiveness and brings about a shift from bad to good fortune. The recovery of a long-lost son easily explains the action, but the improbability strains belief. Stephanie's recognition, by contrast, provides the Pasha with a further motive for revenge. In this context, the Pasha's morally enlightened decision represents a reversal that, though it too strains belief, dramatizes the ideal of forgiveness, as well as the shift from bad to good fortune, in a much more compelling

42. Cited in Bauman, *W. A. Mozart, "Die Entführung aus dem Serail,"* 34.

manner. These two endings represent very different ways of employing recognition and illuminate the shift from the recognition of persons to the discovery of knowledge that I mentioned earlier. The ending of *Belmont und Constanze* is a tried and true dénouement: what had appeared to be the inevitable conclusion toward which the events were pointing is averted at the last moment by the revelation of hidden identity. The ending of *Entführung* reconfigures recognition to dramatize the efficacy of the opera's theme of enlightened benevolence, and might be thought in this way to anticipate the powerful final scenes of *Zauberflöte* and *La clemenza di Tito.*

What does this brief consideration of recognitions of identity in *Idomeneo, Zauberflöte,* and *Entführung* reveal about the relevance of Aristotle's poetics to Mozart's operas? Recognitions of persons do occur and with some frequency, but they do not usually reveal close blood ties. When they do, as in the case of *Idomeneo,* they do not necessarily hold the privileged position with respect to the overall action that reading Aristotle might lead us to expect. Indeed, the examples we have considered here suggest that, because the recognition that reveals close blood ties is not dominant, the new paradigm conceives of the individual as a more independent figure in society, one whose actions are not governed by his or her family identity. Recognition is thus redirected toward the gaining of knowledge and affirming of contemporaneous values. In *Entführung,* as we have seen, the family recognition has actually been rejected by librettist and composer, who substitute a recognition scene of an entirely different kind in its place.

This is not to say that the simple recognition of identity cannot play a crucial role in the drama of a Mozart opera, only that the role it most often plays is not the one Aristotle imagined. Not surprisingly, the operas of the late eighteenth century on the one hand, and the plays of antiquity on the other, reflect very different cultures, separated by more than two thousand years, and dramatize very different kinds of themes. While Greek tragedy tends to be oriented toward family relationships and discoveries of individual identity, whatever other knowledge or new understanding the discovery may bring, Mozart's operas are oriented toward the Enlightenment precepts of relationships within society (marriage, rulership, membership, and so on). In this context, love and its social and moral confirmation in marriage take precedence over birthright. (In contrast, one cannot help but remember that it is the discovery of his birthright that *undoes* Oedipus's marriage.) Even where familial relationships exist, then, the fact of the relationship is not necessarily of paramount importance. In *Idomeneo,* as we have seen, the early discovery of family ties is eclipsed by later and more important discoveries of relationships within society: Idomeneo's recognition of the kind of ruler he should have been, the realization of Idamante's and Ilia's affection, and Neptune's benevolent decree that the happy couple shall rule over Crete. With the passing of old to new, the self-interest of Idomeneo's vow gives way to the more important late eighteenth-century concern for the common

good. The opera dramatizes a shift from inherited wisdom and faith in gods to self-reliance and human truth. The plots of Mozart's operas might be thought to have been created on the cusp of this change, melding issues of family identity and status with the emerging Enlightenment concern for the beliefs, feelings, and human potential of the individual.

Disguise and Its Discovery

Recognition brought about by the removal of disguise, like other kinds of recognition, may be incidental or vital to its plot—and of little or great thematic significance—depending on how it is prepared and worked out. This sort of recognition, however, in which hidden identities are simply revealed once cloaks, hats, moustaches, spectacles, and other impediments to discovery have been removed, has often been thought of as a jaded convention. And those subplots most dependent on such artifice are often criticized as weak aspects of their respective dramas.

Take, for example, the episode in which master and servant switch cloaks and hats in act 2 of *Don Giovanni.* The imbroglio deepens and several new complications arise, but this entire series of scenes, which concludes when the two would-be seducers meet again in the cemetery, might be thought tangential to the larger plot. As a result, though not only for this reason, one often reads that the second act of this opera is far less well constructed than the first. But the unmasking of disguise, even in this case, is more complex than it might at first seem. It is of some consequence to the plot to see the servant dressed up as the master; indeed it is a fulfillment of the wish Leporello expressed in the *introduzione,* "Voglio far il gentil uomo" (I would like to be the gentleman). In the event, however, Leporello proves unable to play the part of Don Giovanni. When confronted by his master's accusers in the sextet No. 19, he gladly reveals himself. It is difficult to imagine that the experience of disguise and discovery moves Leporello, a character little given to reflection, to any profound realization, but the episode draws an important contrast between servant and master. While Don Giovanni wears his disguise easily, Leporello does not. While Don Giovanni stands up to and outwits his human adversaries, Leporello cannot. At the same time, while Don Giovanni will die for his crimes, Leporello will not.

Even when it appears to be an unnecessary contrivance, disguise often proves important to the psychological development and motivations of the characters as well as to the design and preparation of the plot. The opening of *Don Giovanni* illustrates how disguise may facilitate the drama in a special way, for it is quite clear that Don Giovanni would not have attacked Donna Anna—and in her father's house—without the cover of a mask. The events that ensue during the *introduzione,* then, engender the entire action of the opera. But the mask itself, in this case, is quite transparent. The fact that Don Giovanni is a ruthless libertine, one who will try to force a woman if he cannot persuade her, is finally more central to his story than the fact of his

name or his noble heritage or his position in the society of Seville. He thus appears to be more himself in the *introduzione* with his mask on than he appears in the street scene later in act 1 when he greets Donna Anna and Don Ottavio with his mask off. Indeed, he has betrayed these social marks of identity with his actions, which are unmasked long before he is.

Disguise is a stock device of comedies, of course, and common to the opera buffa of Mozart's day. Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Il re Teodoro in Venezia* and also Haydn's *Il mondo della luna* are familiar examples, but there are many others. I use the term "disguise" in this context to designate the act of consciously concealing identity. For the purposes of this discussion, the use of veils in *Zauberflöte,* the madness of Violante and Count Belfiore in *Giardiniera,* the pastoral existence of the shepherd king in *Il re pastore* who does not know his true identity, and other episodes involving hidden, changed, or uncertain identity, while surely related, are not considered examples of disguise. In the service of farce, a mask may conceal identity and nothing more. In Mozart, however, recognition scenes that center on uncovering a disguise often bring about a new understanding of circumstances or even an entirely new situation. In Mozart's operas, as in Shakespeare's comedies, the removal of the mask reveals the familiar in a new aspect. That which was known is discovered and *recovered,* and in the process a new significance is recognized and new understanding achieved. That the Da Ponte operas center to such a degree on disguise is perhaps borne of the fact that these works are Mozart's most complex multiple-plot comedies, examples of a genre in which disguise is a common device.

It might be thought that recognitions involving disguise constitute a special case, but they appear to function with as much variability and unpredictability as other recognitions of persons. And, like the examples we explored in the previous section, recognitions of persons that depend on disguise often privilege not merely the discovery of identity but the discoveries of other kinds that are either made possible by it or are attendant upon it. The crux of *Giardiniera,* for example, turns on the identity of the "pretend" garden girl. The discovery that Sandrina is really the Marchesa Violante, however, does not halt the action but rather propels it forward toward the later and more important discoveries of mutual affection and reconciliation among several parties. Even at the close of the opera, questions of identity raised by the fact of disguise remain: What does it mean to be a "pretend" garden girl? Why does this particular disguise facilitate the drama in ways others would not? Disguise itself is often the sign of a deeper recognition, waiting to be brought to the surface. Though disguise may conceal the identity of persons who would otherwise be recognized, the revelation made when the disguise is removed typically uncovers more than merely the identity hidden behind the mask.

For example, in the act 4 finale of *Figaro,* the Count pursues a woman he believes to be Susanna (Susanna and her mistress have switched dresses, just as Leporello and his master switched cloaks) but who is in fact the Countess in disguise. When, at the

end, "Susanna" reveals herself as the Countess, the Count recognizes in his wife two identities he had insisted were separate: the loving wife for whom his passion has long subsided and the exciting new conquest (Susanna) for whom his passion has been all but unstoppable. Suddenly revealed to her estranged husband as the object of his desire, the Countess has become the very thing he had refused to recognize in her. The unmasking of disguise here reveals the familiar in a new way, making possible both the powerful reconciliation of husband and wife and the general rejoicing in the power of love and the institution of marriage with which the opera ends. Thus the dénouement uncovers not merely concealed identity and the trick the two women have played but leads, as recognition often does, to a more significant discovery. Whether or not one is willing to believe the Count has truly reformed, the end of the opera shows us a world in which husband and wife are reunited with new understanding, and in which the social order is restored. Count Almaviva's castle has become a better place than it was, a place in which human affection, fidelity, and forgiveness prevail.

In *Così,* the basic outline of the story requires three of the six characters to appear repeatedly incognito, and disguise, it might be argued, functions as the mainspring of the plot. For Despina it is a simple matter of impersonation; she first assumes the guise of a mesmeric doctor and then that of a notary, as much for the sake of action and imbroglio as such a thing may be. She certainly does not discover anything of *her* true nature in such playacting (although we are perhaps meant to learn something about how charlatanism may be practiced as mesmeric healing). For Ferrando and Guglielmo, however, it is significantly more complicated and compromising: they discover much about their fiancées, themselves, and the nature of love in the course of maintaining their absurd Albanian disguises. The two young men who emerge from their colorful costumes and extravagant mustaches at the conclusion to act 2 are no longer the idealistic youths they were when the opera began. Likewise, disguise has not merely concealed from Fiordiligi and Dorabella the identities of their two lovers. The sisters, who do not suspect hidden identity, have accepted the Albanians as the suitors they have appeared to be, and have been changed by them. The playacting, which at first appeared to wear the aspect of harmless saturnalian revelry, has its effect on "real life" (more on this in chapters 6 and 7). When the carnival ends, things are not what they once were.[43]

In Mozart's operas, the unmasking of disguise almost always reveals more than the simple fact of deception, for identity is not fixed in these operas, but develops and changes even while the masks are on. The discovery, implications, and consequences of disguise are thus far reaching and depend for their realization on recognition scenes in which identity is not so much revealed as newly discovered.

43. For a discussion of the concept of carnival and its implications for opera buffa, see Hunter, *Culture of Opera Buffa,* especially 72–79.

The Quest for Self-Discovery

One aspect of Aristotle's paradigmatic recognition scene still remains unexplored: the extent to which recognition may also represent a profound moment of self-discovery. In his climactic recognition scene, Oedipus discovers not only the nature of his family ties but, more significantly, comes to a new understanding of who he is and what he has done:

> Now, shedder of father's blood,
> Husband of mother, is my name;
> Godless and child of shame;
> Begetter of brother-sons;
> What infamy remains
> That is not spoken of Oedipus?[44]

The devastating effect of his discovery is not due to the recognition of family ties per se, but rather to the deeper knowledge that this recognition reveals and the complete and tragic reversal of fortune that it necessarily implies. In this moment Oedipus discovers, for the first time, the truth about himself.

In Mozart, recognitions in which discovery is also self-discovery—though such moments are generally not attendant upon family recognitions and though they never bring the kind of devastation seen in *Oedipus*—are equally crucial to the dramatic action in his operas. Recognition scenes that culminate in a climactic moment of self-awareness are central to these operas, as when Tamino recognizes that his destiny lies within Sarastro's sacred order, or when near the end of *Tito* Vitellia confronts the horror of her own actions and resolves to go to the Emperor and confess all. This type of recognition scene feeds, as it does in *Oedipus,* directly into a drama's themes of discovery and knowledge. As in the case of *Zauberflöte,* recognition is thus crucial to both the theme of the work and the goal of its plot. Oedipus actively sought knowledge; he knew of the oracle and, like Hamlet, feared to discover and yet desired to know the truth he already suspected in his "prophetic soul." In the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, self-discovery in recognition scenes becomes increasingly central, as it does in the twentieth century in the theory and practice of psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the narrative and interpretation of a life. In the vastly different contexts of Oedipus's story and the psychoanalyst's office, we find a common element connecting recognitions across centuries: recognitions of self lying at the heart of significant narratives are typically made by individuals who are driven to know, who strive to interpret and understand experience, and who are, inevitably, changed by the consequences. Not all characters in Greek tragedy or in Mozart's operas, or individuals in the analyst's waiting room, are likely to make such discoveries—only those, like Oedipus and Tamino, who resolve to seek them.

44. Sophocles, *King Oedipus,* lines 1362–67.

What do characters as different as Vitellia and Fiordiligi, Sesto and Tamino, or Tito and Idomeneo—all of whom have important scenes of self-discovery in their respective operas—have in common? They undergo an intense moment of self-reflection and discovery on stage that impels them toward change and development of a fundamental and psychologically complex kind. Many characters in Mozart's operas do not change: Idamante, whose unswerving filial loyalty and love are essential to *Idomeneo;* Constanze, who never questions her love of Belmonte, even in the face of death; Sarastro, who is represented as all-knowing and utterly constant in his goodness; the Queen of the Night, who never once wavers in her plan to thwart Sarastro, not even when the welfare of her daughter is the price she must pay to secure her wish (she promises Pamina to Monostatos in exchange for his loyalty). None of these characters experiences a moment of intense reflection resulting in new awareness.

In marked contrast stand those characters who do experience such moments of self-discovery: Idomeneo, whose inner struggle over the vow he pledged to Neptune finally gives way to recognition during the storm in his act 2 accompanied recitative "Eccoti in me, barbaro Nume!"; Elvira, who wrestles with her feelings throughout *Don Giovanni,* but most effectively in her accompanied recitative and aria "In quali eccessi, O Numi . . . Mi tradì quell'alma ingrata" (No. 21b); Fiordiligi, who is not only torn between two lovers but plagued by a terrible feeling of being untrue to herself as she sings in her accompanied recitative and *rondò* "Ei parte . . . senti . . . ah no . . . partir si lasci . . . Per pietà, ben mio, perdona" (No. 25); Vitellia, who, in her solo *scena* (Nos. 22 and 23) near the very end of the opera, undergoes a remarkable self-transformation in which she faces her own villainy to emerge a heroine; and Tito, who upon learning of the betrayal of his dearest friend and confidant considers abandoning his usual leniency, but in the end discovers renewed faith in his enlightened clemency in the recitative "Ove s'intese mai" and the aria to follow, "Se all'impero, amici Dei" (No. 20).

These characters are the most vulnerable, but also the most likely to learn or recover from their mistakes; they are the most changeable and complex in their emotions, the most susceptible to strong feelings—in other words, the most human. As a result, they are the most difficult—if also the most rewarding—characters to study. The Enlightenment themes of these operas often reach points of climax in scenes of confusion, recognition, and reversal that are centered on these characters, as we have already seen in *Zauberflöte.* Tamino's climactic recognition was, of course, a scene of this kind. Bearing in mind that in this context self-discovery is a complex operatic process that culminates in a powerful recognition, I now turn to a detailed analysis of another scene from the same opera: Pamina's despair and new awareness at the beginning of the act 2 finale. I choose this moment partly because the details of plot and theme related to recognition are already familiar from chapter 1. But I also choose it because a comparison of Pamina's recognition to Tamino's will introduce into my discussion aspects of knowledge and attitudes toward the display of

feeling in what was, after all, the Age of Sensibility that play a crucial role elsewhere in Mozart's operas, particularly in *Giardiniera* and *Così.*

Although Pamina's scene at the beginning of the act 2 finale is short, it comes at a crucial moment in the plot and represents the last point of individual reversal in the opera's enlightenment quest. Pamina has been ordered by her mother to kill Sarastro; she has been subjected to a silent and resistant Tamino; in her aria "Ach, ich fühl's" (No. 17), she has begun to contemplate suicide; and shortly thereafter in the trio "Soll ich dich, Teurer nicht mehr sehn?" (No. 19) she is forced to pay Tamino a "last farewell." Understandably distressed by these events, Pamina succumbs to despair. At the start of the finale the three boys find her "out of her senses" ("Sie ist von Sinnen") and preparing to kill herself. Pamina's vision of despair is very different in character from that which Tamino faced in the act 1 finale, for hers has manifested itself in her body, where its presence has overwhelmed all other thoughts and feelings. When the three boys interrupt Pamina's attempt on her life, they challenge her perception of reality, just as the priest earlier challenged Tamino's (see chapter 1, especially figures 1.3 and 1.4). She seeks the reason for Tamino's silence and receives the same answer he received from the priest: it is forbidden for the three boys to explain the reasons to her ("Dieses müssen wir verschweigen"). But when they assure her that Tamino loves her, this knowledge gives her hope. As was the case for Tamino, who took hope from the knowledge that Pamina was alive, the discovery has an empowering effect. Pamina now resolves to seek out Tamino, and, when she finds him, they pass the trials of fire and water together.

Unlike Tamino, who enters his recognition scene as a young hero full of courage and hope, Pamina enters hers almost completely lost to despair and, to all appearances, quite mad (the three boys use the word "Wahnsinn" to describe her state of mind). At the opera's premiere, Pamina's appearance here—alone on stage (or so she thinks), driven to madness by having been abandoned by her lover (again, as she thinks), so deranged by the depth of her feeling and so lost to reason that she plans to kill herself—must have suggested the sentimental heroine of popular fiction, painting, and opera, who claimed the sympathy of a vast contemporary audience. The explicitly sentimental characterization of Pamina as "virtue in distress"—the "virtue" Pamina's and the "distress" caused by Tamino's apparent abandonment of her—could not be more clear.[45] Schikaneder and Mozart mark their heroine with all the signs of sensibility—an acute susceptibility to emotion, an inability to suppress her feelings, and an innately sensitive body on which the spontaneous signs of emotional life may be readily observed.

In choosing to characterize Pamina's scene with an excess of feeling—in stark contrast to the reason that governs Tamino's behavior—Schikaneder and Mozart draw upon both a culture of sensibility and notions about women it helped to de-

45. See Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* xviii.

velop and popularize.[46] "Women," Janet Todd writes in *Sensibility: An Introduction,* "were thought to express emotions with their bodies more sincerely and spontaneously than men; hence their propensity to crying, blushing and fainting. At the same time, such a susceptible organism could easily become erratic and deranged."[47] In this context, Pamina's madness should be understood as a spontaneous reaction, an appropriate though excessive response engendered by deep feeling. Believing Tamino no longer loves her, and unable to turn her thoughts from this conviction, she loses herself, mind and body, to despair. The opera thus reflects—and in characteristically gendered terms—one of the central contradictions of the Age of Enlightenment: that at the same time various philosophies valued reason and thought as the highest motivators of human action, the culture of sensibility celebrated instinct and feeling as the primary inducements to virtue. While Tamino's recognition scene involves Socratic dialogue, a hallmark of rational thinking, and transforms him into a seeker of enlightenment, Pamina's opens her to profound sorrow and thoughts of suicide, developing her as a figure of distress and an object of sympathy to the audience. In their characterization of Pamina, Schikaneder and Mozart even show a keen awareness of the direction the sentimental was currently taking in opera. In 1790, the sentimental *Nina,* an Italian opera by Giambattista Lorenzi and Giovanni Paisiello of 1789, reached Vienna; its heroine, whose plight inspired sympathy in audiences all over Europe, has been driven to madness by the apparent loss of her beloved and is restored to her senses only with his return.[48]

As a gendered moment of self-discovery, Pamina's recognition scene dramatizes a familiar moment in the life of an eighteenth-century heroine, one that needs to be understood in the context of the culture of sensibility. As the act 2 finale begins, Pamina, believing she has lost Tamino's love and unwilling to do her mother's bidding, plans to use the dagger the Queen of the Night left with her to kill herself. Her soliloquy—she does not realize that the three boys are watching her—is dark and brooding. She addresses the dagger, "Du also bist mein Bräutigam? / Durch dich vollend' ich meinen Gram" (So then you are to be my bridegroom? Through you I shall end my grief). In keeping with the mood of her text, she modulates quickly from C minor to F minor. Moved by her distress, the three boys imagine in an aside that she has succumbed to madness: "Wahnsinn tobt ihr im Gehirne; / Selbstmord steht auf ihrer Stirne" (Madness is raging in her mind; suicide shows upon her brow). They introduce A-flat major unexpectedly at the moment they make themselves

46. Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* 301–2 and 334–36.

47. Todd, *Sensibility,* 19; see also Foucault, *Madness and Civilization,* 153–54.

48. The Italian version of *Nina,* which premiered in Caserta in 1789, and in its better-known two-act version in Naples in 1790, was based on a translation of Benoît-Joseph Marsollier des Vivetières' *Nina, ou La folle par amour,* which had premiered in Paris in 1786 in a setting of Nicolas-Marie Dalayrac. The version performed in Vienna in 1790 included a text revised by Da Ponte and eight additional arias composed by Joseph Wiegl.

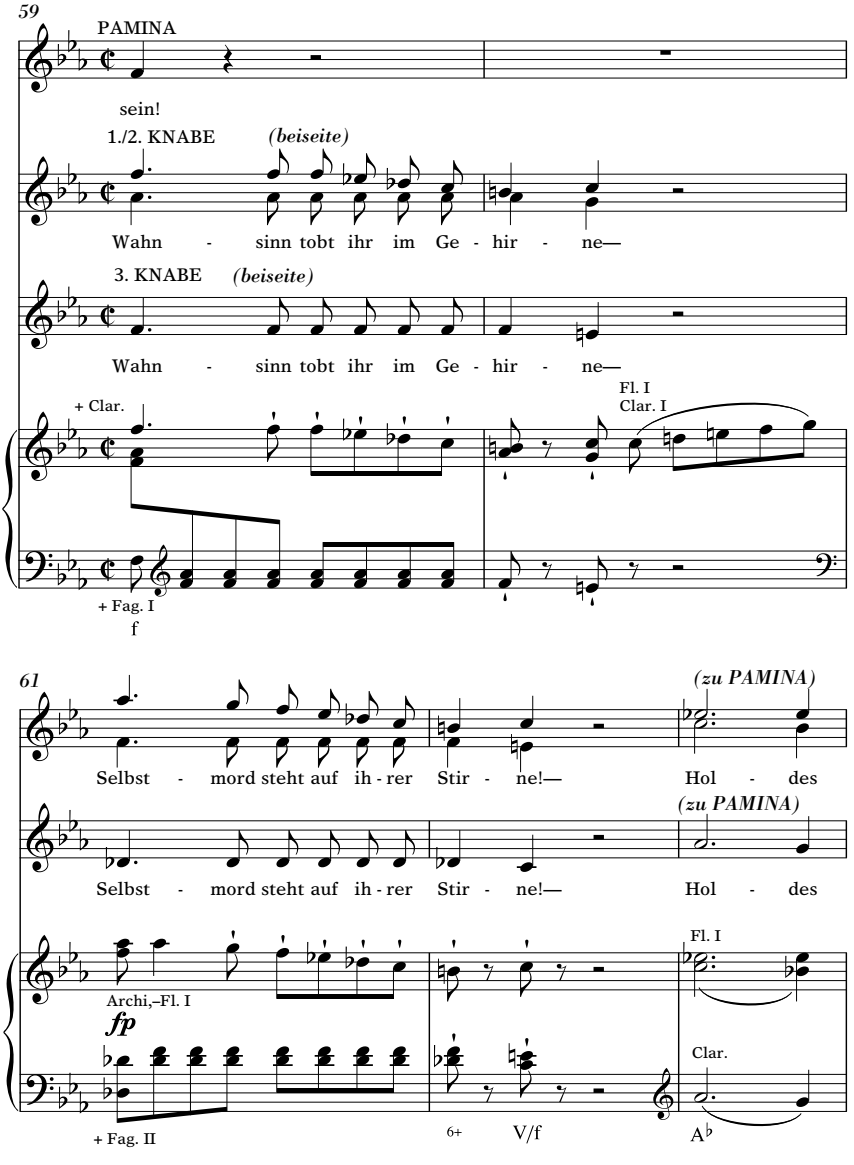
known to her: "Holdes Mädchen, sieh uns an!" (see example 2.4). The jarring move from V/f to A-flat (V/ii to IV in the context of the tonic E-flat, or, more locally, V/vi to I) effectively dramatizes their juxtaposed states of mind.

Pamina acknowledges her suicidal thoughts and describes herself as abandoned by Tamino: "Sterben will ich, weil der Mann, / Den ich nimmermehr kann hassen, / Seine Traute kann verlassen" (I seek death, because he, whom I can never hate, can abandon his beloved). She resists the three boys' admonitions and punctuates her despair with a familiar gesture of lament, the descending tetrachord (m. 85) and the cry, "Ja des Jammers Maß ist voll!" (Yes the cup of woe is full!). With dark, chromatic harmonies she prepares to take her own life. Such a reaction to distress, as John Mullan points out, is a hallmark of sentimental culture: "A putative feminine 'sensibility,'" physicians and scientists such as Richard Whytt believed, "exists on the edge of an abyss which is 'the too great sensibility of the nervous system', the excess [of] which is dangerous affliction. The woman's body, collapsing or beyond control, is the very register of disorder."[49] The musical signs of this disorder are several: the pervading chromaticism, the descending tetrachord, the presence of diminished seventh chords and tritone leaps. The key is G minor (a key already associated with the Queen of the Night and her desire for revenge). As Pamina raises the dagger, the three boys intervene. A harmonic juxtaposition related to the one we saw at measure 63—this time of V/g to E-flat (a deceptive cadence)—marks the moment at which the three boys save Pamina from herself at measure 93.

The harmonic juxtaposition of G minor (a key associated primarily with the Queen) and E-flat major (a key associated with Sarastro and the sacred order in this opera and associated more generally with Freemasonry in this period) is surely significant here. The juxtaposition plays itself out at many levels; the shift from the dominant of G minor to E-flat (the key in which this opera begins and ends) signals more than just a move from minor to major. It also marks a shift from despair to hope, from ignorance to knowledge, from the dark world of the Queen's vengeance and Pamina's own despair to the enlightened realm of Sarastro's order. What follows discovery is knowledge: the three boys now tell Pamina that Tamino does love her—"Denn er liebet dich allein" (For he loves you alone). The power of this knowledge does not lie in the meaning of the words alone. The boys' musical line contains an allusion to an earlier contemplation of conjugal happiness, involving reminiscence in the process of recognition. In both the assonance of the text and the formulaic cadence on E-flat, this line recollects one heard in Pamina's duet with Papageno "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen" (No. 7). (Compare examples 2.5a and b.) The repetition in the text is striking: "Denn er liebet dich allein" recalls both the thought and the language of the earlier number "Wir leben durch die Lieb' allein." Not only do these lines rhyme, even ending with the same word, but they also form a kind of musical rhyme, each sketching out similar cadential formulas in E-flat.

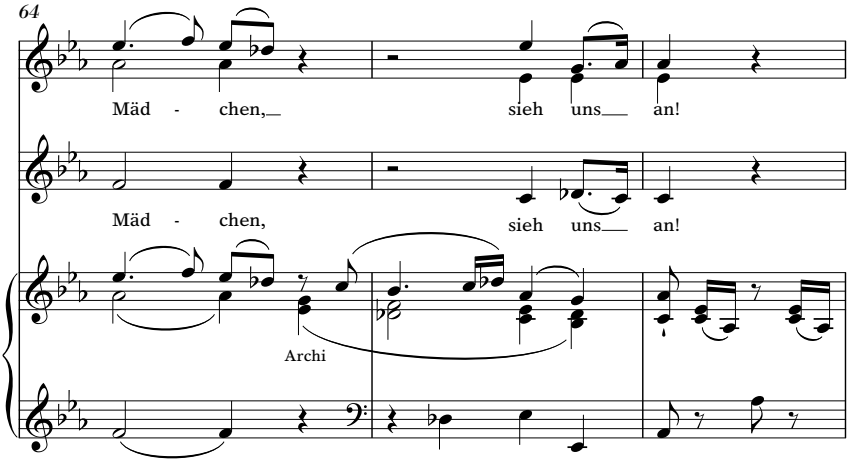
49. Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability,* 217.

Example 2.4. *Zauberflöte,* act 2 finale, mm. 59–66.



(*continued*)

Example 2.4. *Continued*



(E-flat is the tonic of both numbers in question [Nos. 7 and 21] as well as of the entire first section of the act 2 finale [mm. 1–189].) Thus the moment seems to recall the import of the earlier duet, where Pamina and Papageno sang of an idealized matrimonial state in which man and woman live by means of love alone, a state to which the three boys implicitly refer when they assure Pamina of Tamino's affection.

This repetition recalls that earlier wish and represents for Pamina the crux of the recognition process, just as the recollection of the Queen's line did for Tamino. The desire expressed in "Bei Männern" was a wish for conjugal knowledge—Pamina had not yet seen Tamino; she did not yet know feelings of love, merely the desire for it. As the line repeats itself in this new context, Pamina recognizes the love she earlier longed for and has already begun to experience. Her understanding of love is now different from what it was. Indeed, it is the experience of love that both makes her susceptible to despair and gives her the means to overcome it. Something already known repeats itself and is both recognized and recovered in the process. Pamina's recognition scene, like Tamino's, upon which it is clearly modeled, is crucial to the dramatic workings of this opera and in ways that have not previously been acknowledged. Both scenes feature the repetition of a moment heard earlier in the opera that culminates in a moment of recognition, the promise of an explanatory narrative not yet revealed, the confirmation of a major tonality after a passage of despair characterized by minor, the presence of the three boys, the conquering of doubt by dialogue and reasoning, and finally the gaining of hope given expression by the playing of the flute (to come in the next section of the act 2 finale). In Pamina's case, however, and in a way appropriate to her sex and characteristic of the sentimental heroine, the knowledge gained makes possible a restoration of mind and body. Her quest for self-discovery culminates, as Tamino's does, in the trials of fire

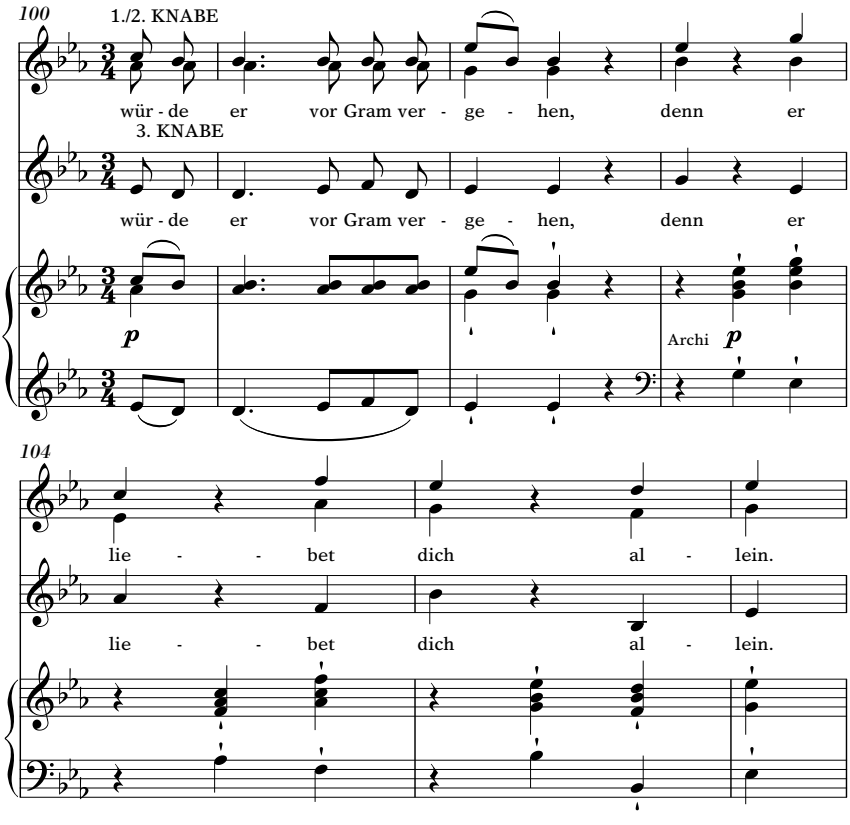
and water and in the concluding scene's spectacular and triumphant representation of their enlightenment.

A final word about the status of self-discovery and identity in Mozart's operas is warranted here. As we have seen, recognitions of self, of purpose, or of some human truth take precedence over the recognitions of family ties. One sees this not only in the works where there are no recognitions of family ties to be found, but more importantly in a work such as *Idomeneo,* where the recognition of blood relation is superseded in significance by later recognitions of enlightened governance and human feeling. Although it would be a mistake to take Mozart as a standard for the age, his works may be taken as representative of a shift in the meaning of recognition in eighteenth-century culture toward the idea that human destiny was no longer controlled by birthright, and that all men could attain equality through education, industry, and individual merit. While it is no doubt true that Enlightenment ideologies are at best only a partial reflection of the realities of the age (one cannot help but observe, for example, that the period's idealism in practice included neither all men, nor any women), it cannot be denied that they reflect its ideals and aspirations. The individual and social freedoms represented on the stage may not have been pervasive in everyday life, but they were essential to contemporaneous thinking. The shift in recognition from the revelation of family ties to discoveries of knowledge was thus fundamental to conceptions of identity in this period more generally. The social and emotional bonds one chooses for oneself—marriage, for example—are of equal or greater importance than the bonds into which one was born. Most important, identity cannot simply be revealed as it was in the *Oedipus* story because it can no longer be understood as predetermined and static. Identity has become the province of the individual, and it is confirmed by deeds rather than by inheritance or birthright. While Oedipus's recognition uncovers the secret of his past, Tamino's holds the key to his future. This new freedom on the part of the individual to make discoveries—whether of moral purpose, philosophy, or feeling—and to be improved by them emerges from an atmosphere of optimism and prosperity that defined the Age of Enlightenment.

What Recognition Brings in the End

In Mozart's operas, in accordance with the ideals of his age, recognition tends to bring a resolution of the imbroglio and a conclusion of the drama in which happiness, contentment, and prosperity prevail. The enlightenment these operas dramatize—whether born of philosophical, political, or sentimental knowledge—is represented as leading to a betterment of society as a whole. This sense of ending is not unique to Mozart; compare Piccinni's *La buona figliuola* (1760), Haydn's *Il mondo della luna* (1777), Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1782), Martín y Soler's *Una cosa rara* (1786), Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto* (1792), and a host of other contemporary

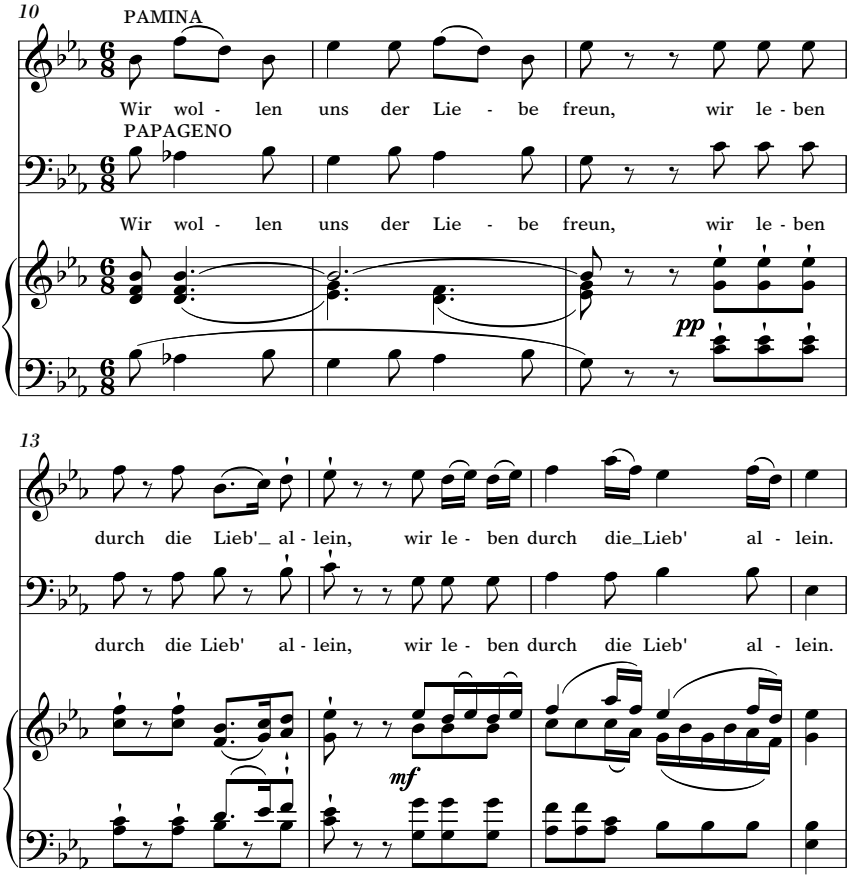
Example 2.5a. *Zauberflöte,* act 2 finale, mm. 100–106.



works. Operas of this period, whether seria, buffa, or German, seek to represent the potential of the human spirit in the direction of knowledge, affection, and progress, and, more often than not, with unfailing optimism. Rulers who have abused their power (or have been tempted to) learn the virtues of benevolent rule; individuals who were motivated by rage or revenge confess their feelings and become reconciled to the world they have wronged; noblemen who have pursued innocent young women they never intended to marry are stopped before any irrevocable harm is done; lovers who were unfaithful (or very nearly so) return to their partners with new commitment. For the most part, these operas seek to reform the selfish, capricious, and foolish as well as the schemers, libertines, and traitors. There are a few exceptions, of course, characters who will not be reformed or reconciled to the general good—Electra in *Idomeneo* and the Queen of the Night in *Zauberflöte* are especially interesting examples.[50] But even in these cases, the threat the character poses

50. Electra's resistance to the opera's conclusion is heightened when her rage aria "D'Oreste, d'Aiace" (which Mozart cut from the first performance) is reinstated.

Example 2.5b. *Zauberflöte,* "Bei Männern" (No. 7), mm. 10–16.



to the social and moral order is eventually removed in some other way. Indeed, in *Zauberflöte,* the defeat of the Queen and the darkness she represents is central to the opera's enlightenment allegory. At the ends of these operas, then, recognition plays a crucial role in the dramatization of an Arcadian vision in which reconciliation and restitution are imminently possible, and in which those who have the courage to follow Kant's injunction "Sapere aude!" are hardly ever disappointed.

This fundamental optimism, even when surrounded by contradictions, appears to have been a requisite of Mozart's musical theater, for convention dictates that all operas of this period (again, whether buffa, seria, or German), end with a celebratory *lieto fine.* In the largest sense the *lieto fine* may be understood as the happy ending and all that goes with it. It may constitute an entirely separate scene, as it does in *Don Giovanni;* it may contain the aftermath of a *deus ex machina,* as in *Idomeneo;* or it may even encompass the dénouement itself, as in *Figaro.* The term *lieto*

fine as it is commonly used in the criticism thus refers both to the fact of the happy ending and to the final celebratory tutti. The slippage lies in the term itself, and often, as in the case of *Don Giovanni,* both senses of the term are relevant. (In what follows, I shall distinguish between these two meanings, with "*lieto fine*" referring to the happy ending, and "tutti" to its culmination.) Although the conventions governing the relation of dénouement to *lieto fine* in late eighteenth-century opera have not been codified,[51] it is generally the case that the dénouement unfolds into the *lieto fine,* which culminates in—but must not be seen as restricted to—its final tutti. Functioning in some ways like the chorus at the end of a Greek play, this final tutti often breaks the fourth wall of the stage, directly acknowledging the presence of the audience with a clear statement of joyous celebration. Some final choruses, like that in *Don Giovanni,* emphasize the moral of the drama, but often the final tutti is focused on the characters' communal expression of pleasure at the happy ending and in situations in which music making is explicit.[52]

What recognition brings in this context, then, is almost the complete opposite of what it brings in the works upon which Aristotle centered his *Poetics.* In Greek tragedies, in many of Shakespeare's histories and tragedies, and in many nineteenth-century novels and operas, recognition uncovers truths that separate lovers, unseat monarchs, and ruin lives. In these genres recognition is often to be feared, for knowledge, when it comes, brings reversals with disaster and destruction. It is perhaps for this reason that the *lieto fine* with its attendant optimism, like the recognition scene that precedes it and makes it possible, has come under suspicion in Mozart studies. As Wye Jamison Allanbrook has argued, "We romantic moderns all too often make the tacit judgement that the conventions of eighteenth-century opera buffa are hollow devices—'mere convention.'"[53] Yet it must be acknowledged that this reaction to opera buffa predates the romantic moderns.[54] In this context, the number of critics and commentators who have suggested that the endings of Mozart's operas are problematic is of special significance.[55] Many examples come to mind. Earlier in this chapter we observed how Schink, who reviewed the premiere of *Entführung,* thought the opera's concluding act of benevolence was "brought about in the most unnatural way." One often reads that the end of *Figaro* is difficult to believe. As Allanbrook suggests, "Surely the future holds more pain for the gentle Count-

51. See Sternfeld, "Birth of Opera," 30–47; Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart,* 322–25; Allanbrook, "Mozart's Happy Endings"; Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 325–30; and Williams, "Mozart's Comedies and the Sense of an Ending."

52. For example, Hunter has shown that final tutti in which the texts make "explicit references to pleasure for its own sake and (typically) without moral justification" are more common to the Viennese opera buffa repertoire of this period than are tutti that confirm the drama's moral. See *Culture of Opera Buffa,* 28.

53. Allanbrook, "Mozart's Happy Endings," 1.

54. Hunter, *Culture of Opera Buffa,* 6–13.

55. See, among others, Williams, "Mozart's Comedies and the Sense of an Ending"; and Hunter, *Culture of Opera Buffa,* especially 28–30.

ess from her husband's hard and philandering nature."[56] The end of *Don Giovanni* has long been thought a problem, and many in the nineteenth century chose to stage the opera without its final sextet. Even Rushton, whose discussion of the ending is in other ways invaluable, characterizes the *scena ultima* (in which the other characters enter to discover the Don's fate and to bring their own stories to conclusion) as a "trivialization of the action."[57] *Così,* too, it has long been claimed, suffers dramatically from the difficulties associated with its problematic ending, something Peter Sellars has reconceived to such an extent in his controversial staging that, in the opera's final bars, it remains unclear who belongs with whom.

Upon reflection, it seems that the very different endings of these diverse operas may be considered as a single representative case. What these operas have in common at the end is their dependence on recognition, a "scandal" that, though it has not been acknowledged as such, has engendered a controversy all its own. And it is not merely the fact of the happy ending that makes these endings appear suspect; nor is it primarily the conventions governing the ubiquitous *lieto fine,* although these have garnered more than their fair share of criticism. These endings and the recognition scenes that bring them about are regarded with suspicion for the same reason recognitions in genres of all kinds are regarded with suspicion: because they are problem moments that raise questions and pose difficulties in the very scenes that attempt to provide solutions and a sense of a satisfactory conclusion. One needs to understand the problematic nature of these recognition moments in Mozart's operas in order to understand the operas themselves.

56. Allanbrook, "Mozart's Happy Endings," 5.
57. Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: "Don Giovanni,"* 65.

3

Reading Opera for the Plot

In his *Reading for the Plot,* Peter Brooks addresses a formalist topic that, like recognition, has been strangely neglected, and for many of the same reasons: "Plot is so basic to our experience of reading, and indeed to our very articulation of experience in general, that criticism has often passed it over in silence, as too obvious to bear discussion. Yet the obvious can often be the most interesting, as well as the most difficult, to talk about."[1] Plot is equally basic to the experience of opera. We have long considered the "plot" to be the story of an opera—that is, merely the story. We are accustomed to reading plot summaries in our theater programs as if they could be easily separated from the text and music that bring operas to life on the stage. But it is only the plot summary, and never the plot itself, that may be thus extracted, for plot is the very substance of operatic drama. Every opera acts out a story; every opera involves characters in action on the stage who have motivations and goals and who become embroiled in conflicts that depend for their resolution on the course of events; and every opera turns on recognitions, reversals, climaxes, dénouements, and other standard features of dramatic plots. Plot, however, is more than a matter of story alone; it is also a matter of how the story is worked out, how it is "plotted." In opera, the processes by which the plot works itself out can only be understood in terms of what is unique to the art form: opera's complex dynamic of action, text, and music. These processes are what I shall term "operatic plotting."

One way to approach the question of how opera can be good drama, as we have seen, is to ask many of the same questions we would ask of drama (questions of plot and theme, for example), but to insist in doing so that the answers reflect the textual, theatrical, and musical dimensions of opera. If we accept the notion that plot is fundamental to opera, then critical thinking about plot should prove a rich context for opera studies—notwithstanding the obvious distinctive features and particularities of an essentially musical theater. In this way, there is every reason to expect that it will

1. Brooks, *Reading for the Plot,* xi.

prove useful to foreground a concept from the realm of literature. Literary theory—so long as it is not taken as restrictive or prescriptive—provides an important critical context for any discussion of plot, from its first definition in Aristotle's *Poetics* to its recent rehabilitation as a point of departure in studies of narrative. Once these issues have been rethought and recontextualized for application to opera, considerations of plot should prove as relevant to the appreciation of libretti as to the vexed question of large-scale musical organization. For although the various aspects of opera—action, text, music—are always present, always joined, their configurations in individual operas are fundamentally mutable and cannot be predetermined. Any approach to the issues raised by the plot must take into account the constant shifting in the focus of critical interest that is inevitable. What is more, it must do so without obscuring the complexity of relationship among action, text, and music: a delicate and ever-changing balance of autonomy and interdependence.

In what follows, I shall explore the nature of critical thinking about plot and plotting in both literature and opera, after which I shall turn to the implications and complications of the multiple-plot form common to opera buffa (drawing on *Le nozze di Figaro* for an example), and finally to Mozart's own comments about plot in his letters.

Plot in Contemporary Poetics and Opera

Although almost no one pretends to be able to dispense with it altogether, plot has generally been viewed as the necessary evil responsible for much of what is found distasteful in literature (and opera), including coincidence, contrivance, sensationalism, and sentimentality. "Plot has been disdained," Brooks suggests, "as the element of narrative that least sets off and defines high art." His very title—*Reading for the Plot*—plays with the commonplace, familiar to schoolchildren and scholars alike, that reading for the plot is "a low form of activity." "Plot is why we read *Jaws,* but not Henry James." But his sense of "reading" is no ordinary one. His in-depth analytical readings of works such as Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* demonstrate that, contrary to popular belief, "plot is somehow prior to those elements most discussed by most critics, since it is the very organizing line, the thread of design, that makes narrative possible."[2] Plot, in other words, is the basis for everything; it can no more be separated from the more highly valued aspects of literature, such as theme, pathos, and character, than from the "scandal" of recognition (as we have already seen).

As his own story unfolds, Brooks argues that our modern disprivileging of plot is in fact born of our very reliance upon it. Plot is central not only to our reception of literary works, and in ways we have not fully appreciated, but also—and this is crucial to his argument—to the ways in which we reconstruct and thus make sense of

2. Brooks, *Reading for the Plot,* 4.

experience. It is central to the ways in which our very understanding of experience is "dependent on the logic we use to shape and to understand stories, which is to say, dependent on plot."[3] It is in terms of plot that we both receive and recount experience.

Of course, despite his carefully reasoned opposition to conventional wisdom, Brooks is scarcely writing in a vacuum. As every student of literature knows, Aristotle valued plot (*mythos*) as the most important of the six constituent elements of tragedy. Here is his famous definition:

> The most important of these elements is the structure of events, because tragedy is a representation not of people as such but of actions and life, and both happiness and unhappiness rest on action. The goal is a certain activity, not a qualitative state; and while men do have certain qualities by virtue of their character, it is in their actions that they [dramatis personae] achieve, or fail to achieve, happiness. It is not, therefore, the function of the agents' actions to allow the portrayal of their characters; it is, rather, for the sake of their actions that characterisation is included. So, the events and the plot-structure are the goal of tragedy, and the goal is what matters most of all.[4]

Plot is essential because it is the one thing without which tragedy cannot exist: "tragedy's greatest means of emotional power are components of the plot-structure: namely, reversals and recognitions."[5] Although the *Poetics* is primarily concerned with tragedy, when Aristotle extends his discussion to comedy and epic,[6] by implication he argues the centrality of plot for all forms of narrative—all storytelling—including genres developed in times and places he could not have imagined, constantly changing critical perspectives notwithstanding.

It follows that opera can no more exist without plot than can spoken drama or epic. Nonetheless, the musicological literature has marginalized plot, and in a double sense. Although opera plots have as a matter of course been regarded as too "obvious" to warrant serious discussion, they have scarcely been passed over in silence; the "stories of the great operas"—along with other collections like Milton Cross's well-known volume, which practically gave rise to the genre—are considered well worth the trouble to disparage.[7] Many operas, even those of the first rank, are as notorious

3. Brooks, *Reading for the Plot,* 7.

4. *Poetics* (6), 37. Where the referent for "they" is unclear (the text is corrupt), I have provided a gloss that seems called for by the sense and agrees with the translations by Janko, 8–9 and 86; Hubbard, 98; and Golden and Hardison, 12 and 127–28. These three translations are listed within the Works Cited section under Aristotle.

5. *Poetics* (6), 38.

6. *Poetics* (5), 36; see also (23–26), 58–65.

7. See, for example, Cross, *Milton Cross' Complete Stories of the Great Operas.* Not all such books claim to take the exercise seriously. Deaver's *Opera Plots Made Easy,* for example, which measures only four by five inches and contains a mere seventy pages, reduces each opera to a page and each act to one or two sentences.

for their supposedly absurd plots as they are renowned for their musical expression. Indeed, the literary establishment's embarrassment over plot has hardly touched our discipline, which has traditionally refused to take opera plots seriously at all.

Although a number of recent scholars have demonstrated the value of studying Mozart's libretti and librettists, as well as theatrical conventions and contexts, the dominant analytical tradition, as I suggested in my introduction, has been grounded in a bias against the libretto, which is to say, against both text and plot.[8] In Mozart studies, this view has often involved a focus either on the construction of individual numbers taken out of context, or on large-scale tonal, formal, and motivic patterns. The disposition of such musical features has often been regarded as the basis of overall organization, or even the source of dramatic "unity," as if it were possible to conceive of whole operas in terms of this exquisite aria, or that flawless ensemble.[9] But this conclusion is as dubious as the means employed to reach it. Conceiving of opera as quintessentially musical, many critics have transformed musical *drama* into dramatic *music* (a tendency that was perhaps unthinkable before Wagner's music dramas).[10] Denying opera's dramatic foundation, they by and large overlook plot, theme, text, and other matters thought to be the proper domain of the libretto in order to focus on music as if it were a separate and autonomous agent. A prime example is Hermann Abert, who argues that "in musical drama music sets the tone and constitutes the ultimate source of the creative act. Music also forms a new type of drama peculiar to itself. . . . The realm of music, however, is not the world of external, concrete events but the world of the psyche and immaterial things, of affects and moods."[11] Accordingly, he holds an idealistic view of Mozart as a dramatist who "singles out the decisive moments and portrays in them the development of the individual characters, in large, richly elaborated soul-portraits"—that is, in closed musical numbers that may be considered as if independent of one another and their context.[12]

A second example of the pure-music approach, derived from the early Romantics' exaltation of instrumental music as the highest form of art via the idea of "absolute music," is represented by Donald Francis Tovey's belief that instrumental music in sonata style was "more dramatic" than music for the stage.[13] Following suit, many critics have written about opera in terms of musical values alone, choosing to

8. Important studies by Heartz, Hunter, Platoff, Rice, Bauman, and others, though they have not eliminated this bias altogether, have done much to counteract it and to contextualize Mozart's operatic theater.

9. This is true most notably in Levarie, *Mozart's "Le nozze di Figaro."* For a critique of this approach, see Webster, "Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity."

10. For a discussion of this problem with respect to Wagner, see Abbate, "Opera as Symphony, a Wagnerian Myth."

11. Abert, *Grundprobleme der Operngeschichte,* 18.

12. Abert, *W. A. Mozart,* 1:770–76 (especially 775, the source for the quoted passage); on *Figaro,* see 2:240–42.

13. See, for example, Tovey, "Musical Form and Matter," 172–73.

imbue the music, especially Mozart's ensembles and finales, with this notion of instrumental "drama."[14] Ironically, this metaphor came to dominate opera studies, at times even to replace the literal sense of drama necessarily attached to the performance of opera on the stage. The result was not only a distortion of the drama that opera always entails, but a privileging of those numbers closest to instrumental ideals of tonal planning and formal development and a disprivileging of what many have since demonstrated are the norms in opera buffa: arias of various types, *introduzioni* and other ensembles that do not follow sonata principles, chain finales that begin and end in different keys, and so on.[15]

But these two senses of drama are by no means mutually exclusive. When addressing the question of opera's "dramatic potential" in his influential *Opera as Drama,* Joseph Kerman gives both the metaphorical and the actual their due.[16] Invoking Tovey, he is as eloquent in asserting the "primary" importance of Mozart's "dramatic symphonic technique" for his "dramaturgy"—"only a great symphonist could have written *Don Giovanni*"—as he is attentive to the stage action when analyzing the act 1 trio No. 7 from *Figaro.*[17] Far from condoning or adopting the pure-music view, Kerman asserts that opera "is properly a musical form of drama, with its own individual dignity and force"; he also explicitly describes the dangers of relying on the metaphorical, instrumental sense of "drama."[18] Yet, notwithstanding his genuine interest in opera "as drama," Kerman's readings implicitly privilege the metaphorical sense of the term. His thesis, expressed repeatedly and in diverse contexts, is that in opera, "the dramatist is the composer"—that is, *the* dramatist, singular.[19] His conclusion that the music of *Figaro* "transforms" Da Ponte's text and even "transcends" Beaumarchais's action effectively subordinates both text and plot—not to mention the "other" dramatist, the librettist.[20] Mozart's music, however, is designed not to overcome the text but to set it, to bring it to life on the stage.

A different manner of privileging music is found in Carolyn Abbate's *Unsung Voices,* which espouses a postmodernist aesthetics of "voice" and "voice-object": "the [listener's] attention is thus drawn away from words, plot, character, and even from music."[21] For example, about the Queen of the Night's coloratura in her act 2 aria "Der Hölle Rache Kocht in meinem Herzen" (No. 14) Abbate writes:

14. See, for example, Rosen, *Classical Style,* 290–312.

15. See, among others, Webster, "Analysis of Mozart's Arias"; Hunter, *Culture of Opera Buffa,* 196–210 (on *introduzioni*) and 156–95 (on ensembles); Heartz, "Creation of the Buffo Finale in Italian Opera"; and Platoff, "Tonal Organization in 'Buffo' Finales."

16. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* ix.

17. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 60–61 and 69–70, respectively.

18. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 1.

19. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* xv.

20. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 90–91.

21. Abbate, *Unsung Voices,* 10; compare her introductory discussion of *Lakmé* (5–9). Her perspective is indebted to Poizat, *Angel's Cry.* For Abbate's most recent thoughts on the Queen of the Night, see her *In Search of Opera,* 55–106.

> I would read the aria rather as oscillating between drama—the angry tirade by the character—and voice-object that comes to the fore *precisely* in the melismatic vocalises, for the melismas, by splitting words ("nimmermehr," "Bande") and separating syllable from syllable, destroy language. So the Queen, by killing language, also kills plot, and herself as a character.[22]

No matter how much it may draw the listener's attention away from the immediate context, however, vocal display cannot eliminate plot; nothing can.

Moreover, the interests of voice and plot do not need to be seen as incompatible. In his 1972 essay, "The Grain of the Voice," for example, Roland Barthes offers an alternative view when he considers the "grain" in terms of the "*signifiance* it opens": "The 'grain' of the voice is not—or is not merely—its timbre; the *signifiance* it opens cannot better be defined, indeed, than by the very friction between the music and something else, which something else is the particular language (and nowise the message)."[23] Like Abbate's, Barthes's approach to vocal music is here centered on the voice and voice object, indeed on the most visceral aspects of sound production. But his is an ultimate poststructuralist perspective, fundamentally nonexclusory, as the word "opens" suggests. In the operatic context, coloratura may be thought of as a normal resource (especially, as in this case, for a seria character); indeed, far from "killing language," it may be heard as emphasizing the words it sets. In an eighteenth-century number the words set to melismas have almost always been heard clearly beforehand. Thus the Queen sings "Bande" and "nimmermehr" twice each, syllabically and with great force, before each of the respective coloratura passages Abbate mentions, and she reiterates each word syllabically at the ensuing cadence. Elsewhere in the same opera, Pamina sings a long, expressive melisma in "Ach ich fühl's, es ist verschwunden!" (No. 17) on the key word "Herzen," thus precisely drawing the listener's attention to the situation of the character at this moment in the plot.

As extraordinary as the Queen's vocalises are—and they are perhaps unique in the repertory—they may be understood in context as part of how "Der Hölle Rache" does whatever it is that it does; both the gesture (the melisma) and its immediate context (the aria) are integral to the operatic plot. The Queen, desperate and furious, employs all the arts at her command—including coloratura—in her attempt to persuade Pamina to murder Sarastro. (In her act 1 aria, "Zum Leiden bin ich auserkoren" [No. 4], she also uses coloratura in her persuasion of Tamino.) It is of

22. Abbate, *In Search of Opera,* 10–11.

23. Barthes, "Grain of the Voice," 185. Barthes defines his term: "The 'grain' is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs. If I perceive the 'grain' in a piece of music and accord this 'grain' a theoretical value (the emergence of the text in the work), I inevitably set up a new scheme of evaluation which will certainly be individual" ("Grain of the Voice," 188). Barthes's term *signifiance,* in contradistinction to *signification,* privileges the role of the signifier and emphasizes the impossibility of fixing meaning in a simple relationship of signifier and signified. A subject, the "grain" in the passage quoted, is thus viewed as engaged in a process of language, a struggle with meaning in which the subject itself is "open."

some interest in this connection that Mozart not only took coloratura for granted in all these ways, but in a letter concerning *Idomeneo* testified to its expressive function as well. When queried regarding Idomeneo's act 2 aria "Fuor del mar ho un mar in sento" (No. 12), he responded, "The aria is very well adapted to the words. You hear the *mare* and the *mare funesto* and the coloratura passages [*Paßagen*] suit *minacciar,* for they entirely express *minacciar* (threatening)."[24] Mozart's words, of course, cannot govern the way we hear a passage such as the one he describes, let alone a passage such as the Queen's, which at the time of this letter's writing had not yet been written, but they attest to the fact that the dramatic efficacy of coloratura was valued and appreciated in the period.

The pure-music view, Kerman's new-critical focus on drama, Abbate's postmodernist emphasis on voice—these are only a few of the many and varied approaches to operatic criticism that have proven influential in recent decades. Yet even at their most original and persuasive, even where their critical discourse is most expansive, the emphasis is on musically conceived notions of "drama" rather than on dramatic action. Unwittingly, these critics confirm Brooks's thesis that plot tends to be overlooked as "too obvious to bear discussion." In opera, no less than in spoken drama, the most basic element—that without which it hardly seems possible to address questions of dramatic effectiveness—is plot. Plot is everywhere; it cannot be streamlined because it points in every direction and subsumes all other elements. Janus-faced, it influences and is influenced by all aspects of a work. In opera, as in drama or prose fiction, structure and meaning are governed, even as they are prepared, by the events themselves; in this context, however, such events must be understood as operatic events, which are of a special kind. As I have already suggested, they result from opera's complex and ever-changing dynamic of text, action, and music, a dynamic in which the relations among these elements cannot be predetermined, and in which any and every configuration is possible. Anything that happens may be understood as an operatic event: an action in recitative, a contemplative aria, a complex ensemble; a horn call, a melisma, a reminiscence; a seduction, a duel, an act of forgiveness, and, of course, a recognition. With respect to this multifarious system of relations, the plot is product and producer both.

That all operas have plots is not itself a thesis, of course, merely the premise for one. As I have suggested above, the real interest lies not in the story, but rather in its working out as dramatic action in the theater. This difference is captured in the slippage between the terms "plot" and "plotting." Plot, in Aristotle's definition (quoted above), is "the structure of the events," the story as a whole, the plan or basis of a drama. As Brooks points out, the sense of plot as structure is related to its oldest

24. W. A. Mozart, 27 December 1780, *Letters,* 698, slightly amended.

range of meanings in English: a bounded space, as in a "plot" of ground.[25] By contrast, "plotting" is active. Like Brooks, I am primarily concerned with plotting, "with the activity of shaping, with the dynamic aspect of narrative—that which makes a plot 'move forward.'"[26] Plotting is process, propelling the work through time for the reader or audience, just as it does for the author in the act of creation (exemplified by Mozart's insistence on having a plan that is "well worked out" when composing an opera, as we shall see below). It conveys the sense that dramatic events are not merely elements of a structure, but are set in motion, dynamic, goal-oriented. Plot and plotting are mutually dependent; plotting is the means through which plot is articulated, but plot is the cause as well as the effect of plotting. The same dialectic applies in opera; plotting is the means by which operatic events become manifest in the theater. Although my approach is very different from Wagner's theories of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and of "music-drama," this echo of his prose is still appropriate. In many respects, Wagner was an Aristotelian. The "acts of music" of his famous dictum that musical drama ought to comprise "acts of music made visible" ("ersichtlich gewordene Taten der Musik") may be understood as what I have called operatic events.[27] Indeed, the temporal dynamism implied by this expression perfectly complements the concept of operatic plotting.

Of course, it is precisely the presence of music that distinguishes opera from spoken drama. This presence radically affects the kinds of actions operas portray, as well as the ways in which their plots are realized (not to mention their power to affect us emotionally). Nor can it be denied that operatic music at times appears to create its own values, to complete its own forms, even to be indulged in for its own sake. This free and flexible functioning of the music has wide-ranging implications for opera analysis. Insofar as opera is a species of drama, the music necessarily functions with respect to the articulation of theme and plot; it remains one aspect of operatic plotting in general. As was the case in considering the parallel recognition scenes and finale structures in *Die Zauberflöte,* even large-scale musical organization can often best be approached in terms of dramatic units, such as the development of subplots, or the "segments" of action created by the comings and goings of the characters and changes of scene.[28] At the same time, however, individual events, particular lines of action, and scenes of discovery and self-discovery are often realized and understood in primarily musical terms, as we have seen. This aspect of operatic plotting is at one and the same time primarily musical, and more than musical. In opera, analytical interest in the music always implies more; every conceivable relation among music, action, and text serves the operatic plot.

25. Brooks, *Reading for the Plot,* 11–12.

26. Brooks, *Reading for the Plot,* xiii.

27. Wagner, "Über die Benennung 'Musikdrama,'" 306.

28. On dramatic segmentation, see Scherer, *La dramaturgie classique en France,* 214–24; and Pfister, *Theory and Analysis of Drama,* chap. 6.

Plotting in *Le nozze di Figaro*

Let me now turn to a topic fundamental to the workings of plot and recognition in Mozart's operas: the multiple-plot action. A multiple plot was the lifeblood of opera buffa during the late eighteenth century. To be sure, from Aristotle's time to our own, critics have tended to associate multiple plots with what has been viewed as objectionable, even defective, in drama, and especially comedy. Some of the most important operatic "reforms"—by Lully, Metastasio, Gluck, and Wagner, among others—have reflected this very concern and represent a return to some notion of a single plot that preserves the so-called "three unities" of action, time, and place.[29] Nevertheless, multiple-plot operas have been common since the mid-seventeenth century, just as multiple-plot stage dramas have flourished since the Italian Renaissance and the Elizabethan period.[30]

A multiple-plot action, to review briefly, involves either (1) a main plot with one or more subplots, or (2) a double plot (two or more main plots of equal weight), often with one or more subplots as well. Most literary theorists require of a subplot that, first, it involve at least one character not centrally involved in any other plot, and, second, that it constitute (at least potentially) a coherent dramatic action in its own right. As one might well suppose, there is plenty of room for disagreement on this latter point. Although an "action" may be equivalent to a plot or subplot (or part of one), it may also be understood as comprising, for example, a series of temporally contiguous events in different subplots, or a set of parallel developments in two or more plot strands, or even a number of temporally separate but related events. But the stipulation that by some logic the events must constitute a "line of action" is in agreement with Aristotle's criterion regarding all plots: that they should represent actions that are "complete, whole and of a certain magnitude," whereby "whole" is that "possessing a beginning, middle and end."[31]

In opera, as in spoken drama, the relationships among the various plots in an individual work are fluid and open to interpretation. A given plot strand comes and goes, affecting others in various ways; two or more subplots often overlap or even dissolve into each other. The action as a whole may be analyzed primarily in terms of the characters and their motivations. At the same time, all the plots are essential to understanding the action, and consequently to interpretations of its themes and meanings. In this section I shall take as an example *Figaro,* which involves as many as four distinct but convergent plots that together constitute a complex action. In addition, as critical thinking about plot would lead one to expect, it exemplifies the primacy of recognition. It is recognition that dramatizes the opera's central theme

29. It will be remembered that only one of these "unities"—that of action—originates in Aristotle. The others were added by Italian and French writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

30. See Clubb, "Italian Renaissance Comedy"; Levin, *Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama;* and Pfister, *Theory and Analysis of Drama,* chap. 6.

31. *Poetics* (7), 39.

in scenes of new awareness that reconfirm the social order to which all the characters are finally reconciled at the conclusion of the opera.

By this way of thinking, the action comprises four "plots": three involving couples—Figaro and Susanna, the Count and Countess, Marcellina and Bartolo—and one centering on Cherubino and his desire. Each of the three involving a couple culminates in a prominent scene of reconciliation. The last, though it does pair Cherubino with Barbarina (who wishes to marry him), does not reach a parallel moment of reconciliation. The mainspring of the action is Figaro and Susanna's wish to be married, which by definition encounters obstacles (and without which there would be no drama). The Count, hoping to seduce Susanna, seeks to delay the wedding; hence she and Figaro must oppose him, and they do so by various stratagems. Meanwhile, a second aspect of the Figaro/Susanna plot comes to the fore in act 4: his jealousy and lack of trust, and her "teaching him a lesson." This is no gratuitous comic enrichment; on the contrary, because it necessitates their making up in the finale, it is crucial to the opera's dramatization of its central theme.

Da Ponte's and Mozart's sympathetic portrayal of the Countess elevates the conjugal relationship between her and the Count into a second main plot, comparable in importance to that involving Figaro and Susanna. As is common with such paired plots, the two are at once analogous and contrasted. Among many points of similarity, a few are of special interest: that both Figaro and the Count are in love with Susanna, that both women are victims of the Count's rakish behavior, and that every member of the foursome except the Countess is jealous without cause. In addition, it might be observed that both Figaro and the Countess conspire against the Count by means of assignation letters and disguise, and that both women excite greater sympathy than their men, each using disguise to teach her man a lesson about trust. On the other hand, the points of contrast are equally strong. Not only are the two couples of different classes, but their relationships are fundamentally dissimilar: Figaro's and Susanna's motives for the most part coincide, and he ultimately proves worthy of her; the Count's philandering and unmotivated jealousy, however, are strongly contrasted to the Countess's long-suffering constancy.[32] (For example, while Figaro attempts to make Susanna jealous in the act 4 finale by pretending to woo the "Countess," whom he has by now recognized as Susanna in her mistress's clothes, the Count's attentions to other women, including Barbarina and Susanna, more than justify his wife's sense of betrayal.) To all this it might be added that the Count and Countess, as an estranged married couple, face a challenge of constancy that Susanna and Figaro, whose love is still new and untried, do not.

The lines of action involving Marcellina and Bartolo on one hand, and Cherubino on the other, are not equal in importance to the two, paired plots, but for the purposes of this study they are still interesting. The action in the first of these subplots centers on two characters who are not primary to any other plot strand; they

32. See Hunter, "Rousseau, the Countess, and the Female Domain."

initiate an action, conspiring to force Figaro to marry Marcellina, and with the Count's help they move within sight of their goal. When Figaro is revealed as their long-lost illegitimate son, not only do they reconcile with him but they also resolve to marry each other. What is more, it is the discovery of Figaro's birthright that makes their goal impossible—recognition thereby brings about a shift to the opposite. Although this dénouement is comical, it is based squarely on Aristotle's defining criteria for the complex plot: recognition and peripeteia. Equally important, and again in agreement with Aristotle, the subplot is a coherent action and here reaches a stable end; with the sextet it has become "complete."

The action involving Cherubino does not end in a reconciliation of the same kind or that brings the same degree of satisfaction. It is brought to a point of resolution when Figaro solves the riddle of the commission in the act 2 finale, which might be thought at least a partial reconciliation since it allows Cherubino to remain at the castle to pursue Barbarina and to try his luck with Susanna and the Countess in the act 4 finale. Cherubino's desire is an obstacle in the way of both Figaro and the Count (though it is something he also has in common with them). His attentions to the Countess and Susanna are represented in this opera as harmless flights of boyish enthusiasm, but anyone who has read the third play of the trilogy knows that Cherubino will eventually grow old (and worldly) enough to realize the threat he here represents.

Overall, then, the action of *Figaro* is both structured around and plotted toward numerous and prominent moments of recognition in which the knowledge discovered is an affirmation of human feeling and the reconciliation it brings. Its theme, to modify slightly Wye Jamison Allanbrook's attractive reading, is the realization of human affection in society.[33] And its plot, which serves as a dramatization of this theme at multiple levels, is effective in part because the entire action is represented within a social context (eighteenth-century feudalism) that is dominated by conflicts of class and gender.[34] As one might expect in a work so centrally organized around moments of reconciliation, the development and representation of various types of conflict are central to the opera's dramatic workings.

Notwithstanding Da Ponte's and Mozart's de-emphasizing of the overtly political aspects of Beaumarchais's play, class distinctions remain at the heart of the opera—for example, the Count's exploitation of his rank to foster his attempted seduction of Susanna and to manipulate the outcome of Marcellina's suit against Figaro, and the Countess's ambivalence at having to enlist her maidservant's aid in scheming to regain the Count's affection in her accompanied recitative and aria "E Susanna non vien! . . . Dove sono i bei momenti" (No. 20). Mozart inscribes such distinctions di-

33. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart,* 73–75, 103–16, 127–31, 145–48, 170–85, and 193–94.

34. See Reiss, "Die Thematik der Komödie"; and Noske, *Signifier and the Signified,* chap. 2.

rectly into the music. For example, in "Se vuol ballare signor Contino" (No. 3), Figaro's vow to foil the Count is dramatized by his juxtaposition of a relatively crude minuet (normally an upper-class dance) and a middle-class contredanse.[35] Susanna's triumph over the Count in the act 2 finale is similarly expressed in "his" terms (at the Molto andante) by her emerging from the locked closet (in which the Count expected to find Cherubino) to the tune of a minuet. Conflict between the sexes is equally important in various guises: power (the Count's desire for Susanna, and her vulnerability), jealousy (the Count's for the Countess and, in act 4, Figaro's for Susanna), female solidarity (the Countess and Susanna working together against the Count; also, in act 4, Marcellina and Susanna in agreement about Figaro), the challenge legal and financial obligations make against affection (Marcellina versus Figaro), and so forth. Many of these rivalries and alliances are also inscribed directly into the music. For example, the solidarity between Susanna and the Countess is plotted in musical terms, perhaps most explicitly in the duet "Sull' aria" (No. 21), in which mistress and servant share text and music, the latter completing the former's thoughts, in the course of jointly writing a letter. As I have argued elsewhere with James Webster, various elements of melody and texture that this duet shares with the Countess's "Dove sono" and Susanna's "Deh vieni non tardar" (No. 28), especially the presence and function of the solo oboe and bassoon in dialogue with the voices, suggest the understanding and mutual affection that mistress and servant share.[36] Cherubino's desire is suggested by a number of textual, tonal, and motivic cues that distinguish his role in the plot. The best known of these musical connections is surely Basilio's appropriation, or "recomposition," of Cherubino's "Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio" (No. 6) in the trio No. 7, but other points of interest include the association of the rather unusual poetic meter *decasillabo* and a distinct, recurring progression first given in the trio No. 7 with the line of action concerning Cherubino.[37]

Owing to the deep-seated nature of these conflicts, as well as to the complexity of the action, the moments of reconciliation in *Figaro* are profoundly satisfying as dramatic resolutions. Indeed, the opera includes more reconciliation scenes—all brought about by moments of recognition of various types—than have yet been acknowledged in any single reading. The three primary, large-scale ones—those between Figaro and his parents (which also brings about the reunion of Marcellina and Bartolo) in the act 3 sextet, and between the two central couples, Figaro and Susanna, and the Count and Countess, both in the act 4 finale—are carefully prepared by earlier events. For example, the often discussed opening duettino "Cinque . . . dieci . . . venti . . . trenta," a drama in miniature, tells us much about Susanna and Figaro's relationship

35. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart,* 79–82 and 123–24; Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 240–45.

36. See Waldoff and Webster, "Operatic Plotting in *Le nozze di Figaro,*" 269–74.

37. See Waldoff and Webster, "Operatic Plotting in *Le nozze di Figaro,*" 274–94. The significance of *decasillabo* in this context was first advanced by Traupman in "Study of *decasillabo* in *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*" (unpublished typescript).

when it moves from disagreement to harmony, on "her" terms.[38] (In a parallel moment, they "make up" in the act 3 sextet.) Similarly, the Countess's pardon of the Count at the end, which is prefigured in the third section of the act 2 finale (the Allegro in B-flat), when he begs her forgiveness and calls her "Rosina," is prepared in the second tempo of her aria "Dove sono," in which she expresses the hope that her constancy could win back her husband's affections:

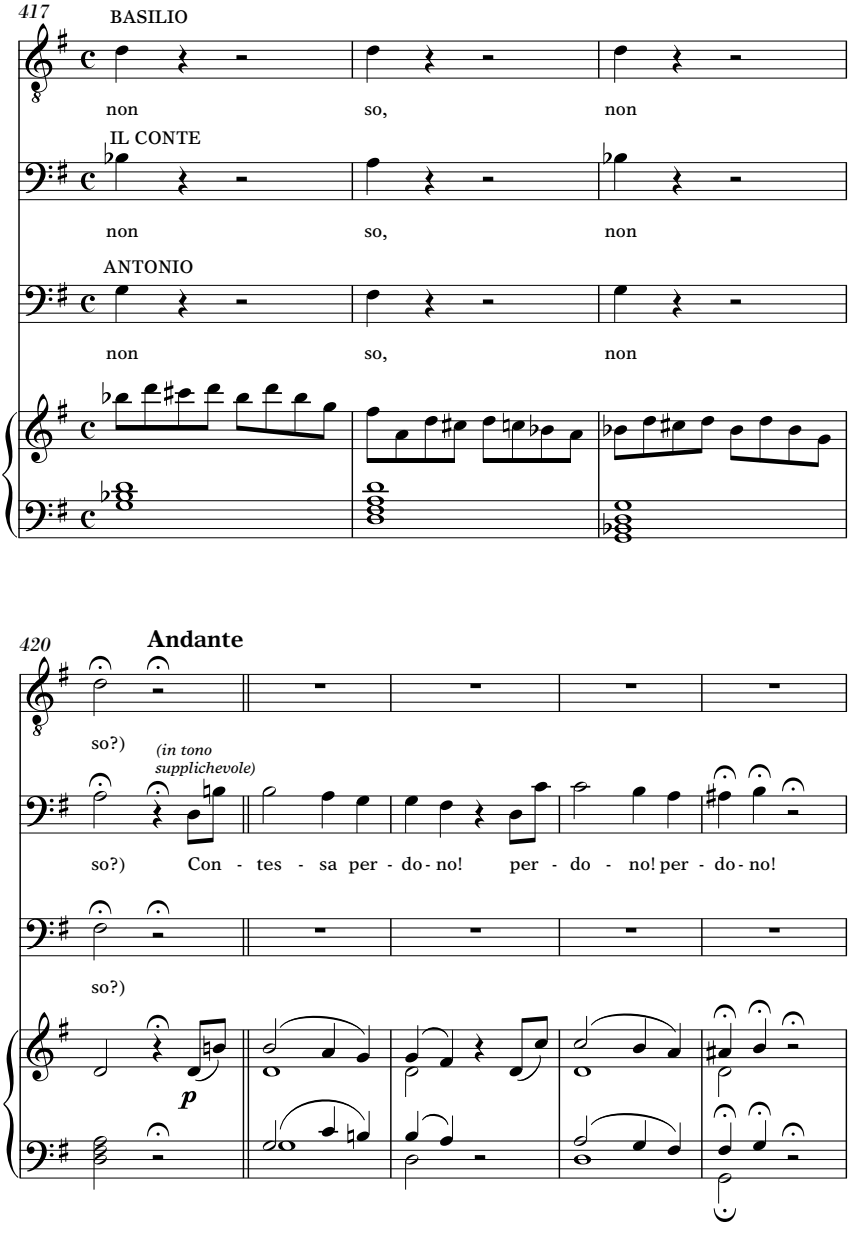
Ah se almen la mia costanza	Ah, if only my constancy
Nel languire amando ognor,	in yearning lovingly for him always
Mi portasse una speranza	could bring me some hope
Di cangiar l'ingrato cor.	of changing his ungrateful heart.

The wish expressed here finds fulfillment in the opera's final dénouement.

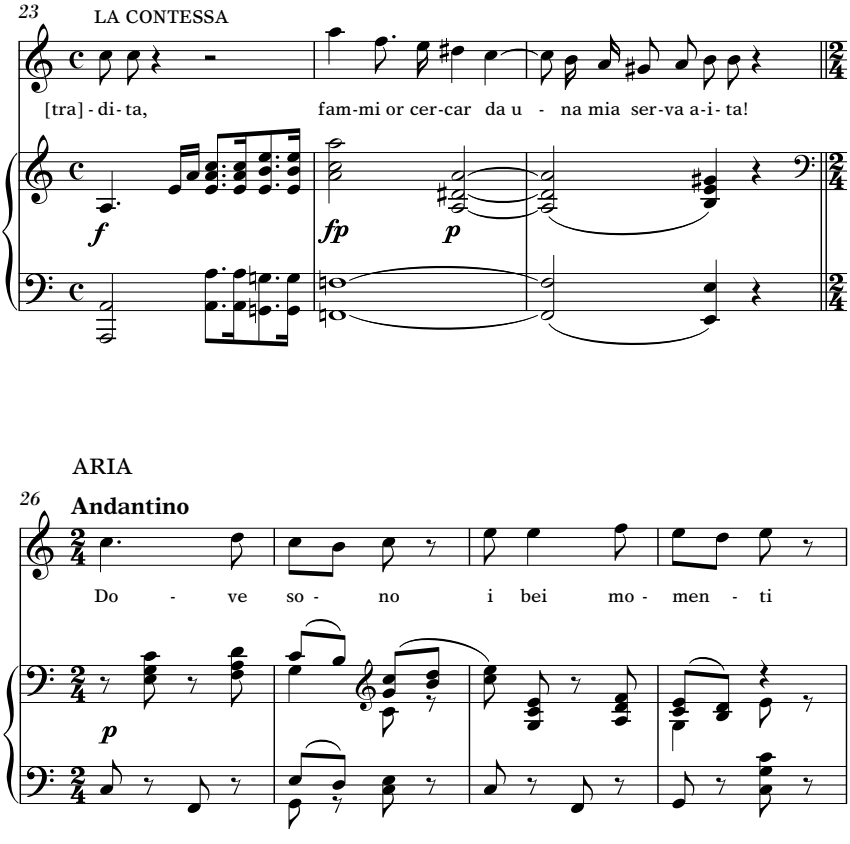
The climatic reconciliation of the act 4 finale at the Count's unforgettable utterance, "Contessa perdono," signals the triumph of constancy and hope for which the Countess has longed. At the moment of recognition that confirms his guilt, he responds to the Countess's plea that he forgive the conspirators by begging *her* forgiveness, turning abruptly from a prepared half-cadence in G minor to address his wife in G major (see example 3.1). This tonal juxtaposition effectively dramatizes the shock of the situation. Reconciliation is plotted in musical terms: the moment for which the Countess longed in her aria—the recovery of her husband's affection—is marked here in the finale by a musical gesture related to the one that earlier characterized her recollection of the affection they once shared ("Dove sono i bei momenti / Di dolcezza, e di piacer?" [Where are the beautiful moments of sweetness, and of pleasure?]). The *accompagnato* preceding "Dove sono" culminates in the outburst that the Count "Fammi or cercar da una mia serva aita!" (forces me now to seek help from my own servant!). The Countess's complex move from a troubled present to the recollection of a happier past is dramatized by the affective juxtaposition of her expressive half-cadence in A minor with the beginning of the aria in C major (see example 3.2). The unprepared shift to a new and unexpected key in each case marks the recovery of affection: the sudden arrival of the relative major suggests the Countess's recovery of hers for her estranged husband, and his turn to the parallel major at the moment when he both admits his guilt and begs her forgiveness suggests a recovery of his for her. One often reads that the Count's reform is not to be believed, but in musical terms his recovery is perhaps even stronger than hers. She turns from the minor to the relative major, while he turns from the minor to the parallel major, and thus from the anticipation of tragedy to the reconciliation of comedy. Here is the change of heart for which she longed in act 3. Each of these moments of reconciliation is marked as the culmination of a series of events that has

38. Levarie, *Mozart's "Le nozze di Figaro,"* 17–19; Noske, "Verbal to Musical Drama," 143–52; Webster, "To Understand Verdi and Wagner," 183–84.

Example 3.1. *Figaro,* act 4 finale, mm. 417–24.



Example 3.2. *Figaro,* the end of the Countess's preceding *accompagnato* through the opening of "Dove sono i bei momenti" (No. 20), mm. 23–29.



been dynamically directed toward it. Individually and collectively, these scenes dramatize the realization of human affection in society. The last and most powerful of all, the Countess's pardon of her errant husband, would not be nearly as affecting out of context.[39]

These moments of reconciliation are concentrated toward the end, just as my discussion of recognition so far has tried to suggest they should be; even many preliminary ones, such as those in the finale of act 2 and the sextet in act 3, occur at, or are articulated as, points of culmination. The final reconciliation of both primary couples at the end is a long-awaited completion of the whole action. What is more, the differences of class, gender, and characterization among the three couples enable their actions collectively to represent an entire society, circumscribed within the

39. See Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 88.

little world of Count Almaviva's castle. As a result, the successive reconciliations of the two main couples at the end—and in quick succession—create an overwhelming climax. Although *Figaro* is anything but Wagnerian, this climax, which makes manifest the theme of the opera as a whole, satisfies Wagner's desideratum for musical drama: "acts of music made visible" in the theater. For all these reasons of plotting—and not owing to Mozart's music alone—the achievement of human affection is thus the fulfillment of what the recognition scenes have implied: reconciliation prevails.

Mozart and the Plot That Is "Well Worked Out"

It is clear from his letters to his father during the early 1780s that Mozart often concerned himself with plot. For example, in the familiar letter of 13 October 1781 defending Stephanie's libretto for *Die Entführung aus dem Serail,* he muses on the success of many *opere buffe,* "in spite of their miserable libretti," and then exclaims, "Why, an opera is sure of success when the plot [*Plan des Stücks*] is well worked out." While Mozart's *Plan des Stücks* cannot be equated with "plot" in the sense of Aristotle's usage, it does include a basic concern with overall design, particularly with respect to the logic by which the actions and events in a dramatic work are connected. Mozart did not produce extensive writings on the subject, of course, but his letters from this period do offer us a glimpse of his thinking about plot, staging, and composition, and about other issues related to operatic drama. It goes without saying that these letters do not necessarily have a bearing on our interpretations of individual operas, but when considered collectively they do provide a vivid and welcome account of what one late eighteenth-century opera composer thought about plot.

I begin with the letter cited above, in which Mozart suggests that "in an opera the poetry must be altogether the obedient daughter of the music." What is not cited as often as it should be is the context for this comment in which Mozart makes it clear that the quality of the plot is essential for success:

> Besides, I should say that in an opera the poetry must be altogether the obedient daughter of the music. Why do Italian comic operas please everywhere—in spite of their miserable libretti—even in Paris, where I myself witnessed their success? Just because there the music reigns supreme and when one listens to it all else is forgotten. Why, an opera is sure of success when the plot [*Plan des Stücks*] is well worked out, the words written solely for the music and not shoved in here and there to suit some miserable rhyme. . . . The best thing of all is when a good composer, who understands the stage and is talented enough to make sound suggestions, meets an able poet, that true phoenix; in that case no fears need be entertained as to the applause even of the ignorant.[40]

40. W. A. Mozart, letter of 13 October 1781, *Letters,* 773. See also Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Vienna,* 78.

It is noteworthy that Mozart's recipe for a successful opera makes allowance for a "miserable" libretto but requires a plot that is "well worked out." In a modern critical context we might assume that plot is a natural and inseparable part of the libretto, but Mozart distinguishes carefully between the libretto (with its poetry) and the plot. The poetry should not set up interference with the music or be contrived for the sake of "some miserable rhyme," but Mozart explicitly states that even "miserable libretti" may succeed. The plot is the overall plan upon which the entire structure of the opera—including its music—depends.

In his many letters regarding the composition of *Idomeneo, Entführung,* and the fragment *L'oca del Cairo,* Mozart reveals an active interest in plotting. He takes a central role in the adaptation of these stories to the operatic stage, from the composition of individual arias to the construction of the whole action. He demonstrates concern about a wide variety of issues ranging from the most basic aspects of the plot through the length, placement, and character of individual musical numbers (including recitatives) to questions of overall dramatic effect and verisimilitude.[41]

If it is accepted that the plot must be well worked out, in what would such a collaborative *Plan des Stücks,* a plan of the whole—say, his and Da Ponte's plan for *Figaro*—have consisted? Da Ponte himself suggests an answer in his preface to the printed libretto:

> I have not simply translated this [Beaumarchais's] excellent comedy, but rather made an imitation, or better put, an extract. . . . In spite of all the study, diligence, and care taken by the composer and by me to be brief, the opera will still not be the shortest one ever put on in our theater, for which we hope that excuse enough will be found in the variety of threads with which the action of this drama is woven, the vastness and greatness of the same, and the multiplicity of musical numbers that had to be made . . . to express step by step with diverse colors the diverse passions that rival each other.[42]

This account indicates that his and Mozart's "study, diligence, and care" indeed focused primarily on plotting the overall musical and theatrical action—on the condensation and rearrangement of Beaumarchais's play so as to maintain, in operatic form, both its "variety of threads" and its "vastness and greatness." Particular attention was given to the division of the action between the recitatives and the "multiplicity" of set pieces, which would have had their own varying prerequisites. For example, a paramount concern regarding arias would have been their fitness for and

41. On Mozart's concept of the operatic "plan," see Abert, *W. A. Mozart,* 1:768–77, especially 773–74; and Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 17, 28, 103–5, 139–40, 145–55. Helpful commentary on the letters may also be found in Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera,* 465–68.

42. This translation is from Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 121. A facsimile of this preface is included in Warburton, *Librettos of Mozart's Operas,* 3:5–6.

distribution among the singers, whereas ensembles and finales would have been governed primarily by dramatic situation and imbroglio.[43]

Indeed, Mozart distinguished between aria and ensemble along just these lines, and with explicit reference to stage performance. In composing arias for singers, Mozart considered as a matter of course both the dramatic role and the status of the singer for whom the role was created. He also made it his business to produce compositions that particularly favored the individual qualities of each voice. His comment to that effect is well known: "I like an aria to fit a singer as perfectly as a well-made suit of clothes."[44] This practice of composing arias particularly for individual singers is not unique to Mozart, of course. In fact, the common practice of composing substitution arias (when operas that had already premiered were staged again, or when one singer was to take over a role created for another) may be thought to have developed at least in part out of the aesthetic concern to fit the aria to the singer. Mozart wrote several substitution arias for productions in Vienna, including the Vienna premiere of his own *Don Giovanni* (1788) and the revival of *Figaro* (1789).

On more than one occasion Mozart seemed to regret the necessity of creating his music explicitly for a particular singer. While creating the role of Constanze in *Entführung,* for instance, he writes, "I have sacrificed Constanze's aria a little to the flexible throat of Mlle Cavalieri."[45] But more often than not, the singer's voice must be understood as an asset on which Mozart attempts to capitalize. Take, for example, the following passage from the same letter:

> As we have intended the part of Osmin for Herr Fischer, who certainly has an excellent bass voice[,] . . . we must take advantage of it, particularly as he has the whole Viennese public on his side. But in the original libretto Osmin has only this short song and nothing else to sing, except in the trio and the finale; so he has been given an aria in Act I, and he is to have another in Act II. I have explained to Stephanie the words I require for the aria—indeed I had finished composing most of the music for it before Stephanie knew anything whatever about it.[46]

While the composition and placement of arias was largely governed by considerations specific to the singers, the composition of ensembles was determined chiefly by dramatic considerations. Mozart suggests as much to his father when he reports

43. It is worth noting that buffa finales in Viennese operas of the 1780s were constructed at least as much on the basis of dramatic structure and prosody as on musical factors; see Platoff, "Music and Drama in the Opera Buffa Finale," chap. 3; and Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure in the Opera Buffa Finale."

44. W. A. Mozart, letter of 28 February 1778, *Letters,* 497. For a discussion of Mozart's compositions for individual singers, see, among others, Bauman, "Mozart's Belmonte"; and Gidwitz, "'Ich bin die erste Sängerin.'"

45. W. A. Mozart, letter of 26 September 1781, *Letters,* 769.

46. W. A. Mozart, letter of 26 September 1781, *Letters* , 768–69, amended slightly.

that Anton Raaff, the first Idomeneo, dislikes the now famous act 3 quartet: "Raaff alone thinks it will produce no effect whatever. He said to me when we were by ourselves: '*Non c'è da spianar la voce. It gives me no scope.*['] As if in a quartet the words should not be spoken much more than sung."[47] The difficulty is rooted in the very different perceptions composer and singer hold about the virtues of ensemble as opposed to solo aria writing. Raaff thinks of the effect of his voice, but Mozart focuses on the effect of the drama, and in the same letter reports how he defended his compositional choices to the famous tenor:

> All I said was: 'My very dear friend, if I knew of one single note which ought to be altered in this quartet, I would alter it at once. But so far there is nothing in my opera with which I am so pleased as with this quartet; and when you have once heard it sung as a whole, you will talk very differently. I have taken great pains to serve you well in your two arias; I shall do the same with your third one—and shall hope to succeed. But as far as trios and quartets are concerned, the composer must have a free hand.'[48]

Leopold's answer to this letter suggests how contemporary and apropos were his son's dramatic views: "I need not say anything about the quartets, and so forth, for which declamation and action are far more essential than great singing ability or his [Raaff's] everlasting '*spianar la voce.*' In this case action and diction are the necessary qualities."[49] Father and son agree: what is at issue in the composition of ensembles (and by implication finales) is the working out of the plot.

On the larger level of the action as a whole, Mozart claimed that the plot should be worked out even before the librettist drafted the text, even before the composer plotted the successions of aria types and key areas, or began to set down the "musical ideas which were already buzzing in [his] ear" (as he writes in the letter of 13 October 1781).[50] He implied as much in 1783 when commenting on the possibility of setting a libretto by Abbé Varesco (who had previously written the libretto for *Idomeneo*):

> I like his plan [*Plan*] quite well. . . . If then the opera is to be a success and Varesco hopes to be rewarded, he must alter and recast the libretto as much and as often as I wish and he must not follow his own inclinations, for he has not the slightest knowledge or experience of the theatre. You may even give him to understand that it doesn't much matter whether he writes the opera or not. I know the plot [*Plan*] now; and therefore anyone can write it as well as he can.[51]

47. W. A. Mozart, letter of 27 December 1780, *Letters,* 699.
48. W. A. Mozart, letter of 27 December 1780, *Letters,* 699.
49. L. Mozart, letter of 29 December 1780, *Letters,* 700.
50. W. A. Mozart, letter of 13 October 1781, *Letters,* 773, amended slightly.
51. W. A. Mozart, letter of 21 June 1783, *Letters,* 853, amended slightly. This letter and that of 5 July have traditionally been thought to refer to *L'oca del Cairo,* but Tyson has suggested that the

The value Mozart placed on the *Plan* is clear not only from his twofold reference to it, but from his assertion that it is more important than the actual words—that once he had such a plan in mind he could, if necessary, commission someone else to write the text. Several months later, after having composed most of the first act of *L'oca del Cairo,* he chafed at Varesco's inability to provide a clear outline of the action:

> As it is, the impression I have gained from Varesco's text is that he has hurried too much, and I hope that in time he will realize this himself. That is why I should like to see the opera *as a whole* (he need only jot it down in rough and ready fashion). Then we can make fundamental criticisms.[52]

Mozart's point is clear enough: plot is basic.

Equally striking in Mozart's letters is the concrete and detailed sense of what was involved in the working out of an operatic plan in the theater. He was willing to engage in major revisions, even when they represented unwelcome delays. For example, he initiated a major revision of the *Entführung* plot, in which what is now the quartet-finale of act 2 was moved from its original position (as a quintet) in act 3 and an "entirely new plot" (*ganz Neue intrigue*) inserted in its place:[53]

> Now comes the rub! The first act was finished more than three weeks ago, as was also one aria in Act II and the drunken duet (*per i signori viennesi*) which consists entirely of *my Turkish tattoo.* But I cannot compose any more, because the whole story is being altered—and, to tell the truth, at my own request. At the beginning of Act III there is a charming quintet or rather finale, but I should prefer to have it at the end of Act II. In order to make this practicable, great changes must be made, in fact an entirely new plot must be introduced—and Stephanie is up to the eyes in other work. So we must have a little patience.[54]

His proposals for *L'oca del Cairo* were even more extensive; they entailed a complete rewriting of the second act to avoid excessive delay in the appearance of the two main female characters:

> Neither you nor Abbate Varesco nor I have noticed that it will have a very bad effect and even cause the entire failure of the opera if neither of the two principal female singers appear on the stage until the very last moment, but keep

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project referred to in these letters might have been a different one entirely. See his *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores,* 77–79.

52. W. A. Mozart, letter of 10 February 1784, *Letters,* 866–67. I have modified Anderson's translation of the last phrase (*gründliche ausstellungen machen*) from "drastic alterations" to "fundamental criticisms."

53. W. A. Mozart, letter of 26 September 1781, *Letters,* 770. Compare Abert, *W. A. Mozart,* 1:769–70; and Bauman, *W. A. Mozart: "Die Entführung ans dem Serail,"* 17, 21–22.

54. W. A. Mozart, letter of 26 September 1781, *Letters,* 770.

> on walking about on the bastions or on the ramparts of the fortress. The patience of the audience might hold out for one act, but certainly not for a second one—that is quite out of the question.[55]

Mozart objects to the delay because it is too great, although, as we see clearly in his later works, he recognizes the value of suspense. (One thinks inevitably of *Figaro,* where the Countess indeed never appears in act 1, precisely in order to maximize the effect of her "Porgi amor qualche ristoro" [No. 11] at the beginning of act 2.) But Mozart has already begun to work out a solution for this delay, and continues with elaborate, detailed, and rather colorful suggestions for an entirely new scene. Indeed, Mozart's willingness to engage in the creative process of constructing a plot—and in spite of his apparent reservations about this plot overall—is nothing short of remarkable.

The following passage, which I cite at length from the same letter of 6 December 1783, offers a rare picture of Mozart as dramatist:

> it seems to me that the only solution is to contrive that some of the scenes in the second act shall take place in the fortress—*camera della fortezza.* The scene could be so arranged that when Don Pippo gives orders for the goose to be brought into the fortress, the stage should represent a room where Celidora and Lavina are. Pantea comes in with the goose and Biondello slips out. They hear Don Pippo coming and Biondello again becomes a goose. At this point a good quintet would be very suitable, which would be the more comic as the goose would be singing along with the others. I must tell you, however, that my only reason for not objecting to this goose story altogether was because two people of greater insight and judgment than myself have not disapproved of it, I mean yourself and Varesco. But there is still time to think of other arrangements. Biondello has vowed to make his way into the tower; how he manages to do so, whether in the form of a goose or by some other ruse, does not really matter. I should have thought that effects far more natural and amusing might be produced, if he were to remain in human form. For example, the news that in despair at not being able to make his way into the fortress he has thrown himself into the sea, could be brought in at the very beginning of Act II. He might then disguise himself as a Turk or anyone he chose and bring Pantea with him as a slave (a Moorish girl, of course). Don Pippo is willing to purchase the slave for his bride. Therefore the slave-dealer and the Moorish girl must enter the fortress in order to be inspected. In this way Pantea has an opportunity of bullying her husband and addressing all sorts of impertinent remarks to him, which would greatly improve her part, for the more comic an Italian opera is the better.[56]

55. W. A. Mozart, letter of 6 December 1783, *Letters,* 861.
56. W. A. Mozart, letter of 6 December 1783, *Letters,* 861–62.

The details of the story are hardly out of the ordinary for opera buffa (and we do not know how Mozart might have realized them in music), but it is instructive to see the tremendous interest, energy, and ingenuity he brings to the working out of new possibilities. His efforts here more than bear out his earlier insistence that "an opera is sure of success when the plot is well worked out." In addition, they attest to his concern with plausibility ("effects far more natural and amusing might be produced") and offer a vivid portrait of Mozart's dramatic imagination.

Perhaps the most interesting and detailed evidence of Mozart's concern with plotting is found in the alterations he made during the preparation of *Idomeneo,* which premiered in Munich on 29 January 1781. Mozart's letters are full of the opera, recounting numerous matters of varying importance, even down to the need to have trumpet and horn mutes sent from Salzburg. Changes were to be made to the plot, the libretto altered, singers placated, pieces cut, and new ones written. Again and again, and in a variety of ways, these letters reveal that Mozart was principally concerned with the dramatic effect of his opera overall. They also reveal Mozart insisting on a kind of operatic verisimilitude. He is constantly questioning aspects of the drama and suggesting alterations to the libretto. For example, he worries that Idomeneo cannot enter in act 1, as Varesco has proposed, by himself in his ship:

> it is not fitting that the king should be quite alone in the ship. If the Abbé thinks that he [Idomeneo] can be reasonably represented in the terrible storm, forsaken by everyone, without [another] ship, quite alone and exposed to the greatest peril, then let it stand; but please cut out the ship, for he cannot be alone in one; but if the other situation is adopted, a few generals, who are in his confidence, must land with him. Then he must address a few words to his people and desire them to leave him alone, which in his present melancholy situation is quite natural.[57]

Mozart here not only offers his objections, but also proposes a better solution, choosing a "natural" dramatic situation over scenic spectacle. This scene was altered according to his suggestion. Only a fortnight later, Mozart writes again to his father with concerns about the dramatic effect, this time about the scene with the subterranean voice in *Idomeneo.* In the course of his letter, he offers what is by our standards a rather bold piece of literary criticism to support his view:

> Tell me, don't you think that the speech of the subterranean voice is too long? Consider it carefully. Picture to yourself the theatre, and remember that the voice must be terrifying—must penetrate—that the audience must believe that it really exists. Well, how can this effect be produced if the speech is too long, for in this case the listeners will become more and more convinced that it means nothing. If the speech of the Ghost in Hamlet were not so long, it

57. W. A. Mozart, letter of 13 November 1780, *Letters,* 663.

> would be far more effective. It is quite easy to shorten the speech of the subterranean voice and it will gain thereby more than it will lose.[58]

As the opera takes shape, Mozart begins to worry that it too is too long and, in the following passage, instructs his father to ask Varesco to make cuts to two scenes:

> The scene between father and son in Act I and the first scene in Act II between Idomeneo and Arbace are both too long. They would certainly bore the audience, particularly as in the first scene both the actors are bad, and in the second, one of them is; besides, they only contain a narrative of what the spectators have already seen with their own eyes. These scenes are being printed as they stand. But I should like the Abbate to indicate how they may be shortened—and as drastically as possible,—for otherwise I shall have to shorten them myself.[59]

A month later, Mozart writes to Salzburg with proposals for further cuts, not only of recitative but of main musical numbers as well:

> the libretto is too long and consequently the music also (an opinion which I have always held). Therefore Idamante's aria, "*No, la morte io non pavento,*" is to be omitted; in any case it is out of place there. But those who have heard it with the music deplore this. The omission of Raaff's last aria too is even more regretted; but we must make a virtue of necessity. The speech of the oracle is still far too long and I have therefore shortened it.[60]

In these letters, and many others, Mozart demonstrates a keen intuition for the theater. He introduces further changes in the scenes for Electra, Ilia, and Idomeneo, and he appears resolutely fixed on the dramatic aspects of the opera, even when the concerns of the plot and its working out on the stage require him to cut music he has already composed.[61] A most revealing instance is found in a letter of 15 November 1780 in which he insists on the removal of an act 2 aria for Idomeneo, which, were it set to music, would interrupt the great storm scene. Mozart demonstrates the strength of his dramatic convictions with characteristic wit:

> In the last scene of Act II Idomeneo has an aria or rather a sort of cavatina between the choruses. Here it will be *better* to have a mere recitative, well

58. W. A. Mozart, letter of 29 November 1780, *Letters,* 674.

59. W. A. Mozart, letter of 19 December 1780, *Letters,* 693.

60. W. A. Mozart, letter of 18 January 1781, *Letters,* 708. Mozart continues, "Varesco need not know anything of this, because it will all be printed just as he wrote it." See also Leopold's insistence that omitted lines remain in the printed libretto (L. Mozart, letter of 29 December 1780, *Letters,* 699).

61. Among others, see W. A. Mozart, letters of 22 December 1780, 3 January 1781, and 18 January 1781, *Letters,* 694–96, 703–4, and 708–9, respectively.

> supported by the instruments. For in this scene which will be the finest in the whole opera (on account of the action and grouping which were settled recently with Le Grand [master of the ballet in Munich]), there will be so much noise and confusion on the stage that an aria at this particular point would cut a poor figure—and moreover there is the thunderstorm, which is not likely to subside because of Herr Raaff's aria, is it? The effect, therefore, of a recitative between the choruses will be infinitely better.[62]

The vividness of Mozart's theatrical imagination, his sense of what will and will not work dramatically, more than justifies his claim in the letter of 13 October 1781 to be someone "who understands the stage and is talented enough to make sound suggestions." When he sacrifices musical numbers to dramatic considerations or substitutes an accompanied recitative for an aria, when he criticizes the acting abilities of his singers or points to an implausibility in the plot or in some bit of stage business, when he insists dialogues be shortened in *Idomeneo,* requests an entirely new line of action for act 3 of *Entführung,* and even begins to rework the basic plot of *L'oca del Cairo* himself—Mozart reveals himself to be a master not merely of musical but of stage drama. Plot and plotting—everything implied by the "plot that is well worked out"—were central to his operatic thinking.[63]

Perhaps it goes without saying that this chapter is only a beginning, for critical thinking about plot has further implications not only for Mozart, as I hope the following chapters devoted to the analysis and discussion of individual operas will demonstrate, but also for opera in general. As I have already suggested, analytical interest in the music always implies more. At times the primary vehicle of expression, at others subsidiary, the music must always be understood in terms of its relation to text and action, which may be one of correspondence, conflict, or even apparent independence. What music does not—cannot—do is dissociate itself completely from its context. After all, even so "absolute" a musician as Tovey insisted that significant events in instrumental music, say the beginning of a recapitulation, were hardly ever articulated by tonality alone, but always in correlation with other features that could be grasped by his famous "naive listener."[64] How much more must this principle apply to dramatic music in the theater, where the music is but one aspect of the work as a whole, and where significant events—in the most general sense—are all part of the story. For all these reasons, operas too should be read for the plot.

62. W. A. Mozart, letter of 15 November 1780, *Letters,* 664, amended slightly.

63. It is worth noting that Salieri also described the musical "planning" of an opera; see Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 138–40 (for discussion) and 154–55 (for a citation of Salieri's letter); see also Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera,* 120–24.

64. See, for example, Tovey, *Beethoven,* 10–11.

4

Sentimental Knowledge in *La finta giardiniera*

With disguise and discovery implicit in its title, *La finta giardiniera* (The Pretend Garden Girl) calls attention to its recognition drama. Much of the action may be deduced from the title even before the opera opens. The protagonist is obviously a young woman who has disguised herself as a garden girl; the plot must center on some imbroglio her disguise has set in motion and will presumably culminate in the discovery of her true identity. Reversal, too, seems inevitable; any course of action undertaken on the assumption that the heroine is a garden girl will necessarily be interrupted—if not undone—by the discovery that she is someone else. The presence of a hidden narrative may be deduced as well since the heroine no doubt has some reason for concealing her identity. The single word *finta* (pretend) creates suspense and seems to promise a moment of climactic recognition when all will be revealed. Indeed, the word may have functioned as something of a signal in Mozart's day; the titles of several comic operas of the period feature it—Niccolò Piccinni's *La finta baronessa* (1767) and *Le finte gemelle* (1771), Domenico Cimarosa's *La finta parigina* (1773), Giovanni Paisiello's *La finta amante* (1780), and Mozart's own *La finta semplice* (1769), to name only five.[1] The distinction of Mozart's title, however, is that while *contessa, baronessa, parigina,* and *semplice* are familiar but nonspecific types, *giardiniera* suggests not only a specific type but also a single heroine: Cecchina, the *giardiniera* of Piccinni's *La buona figliuola* (1760).

The sentimental story of *La buona figliuola* derives from Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740). This novel, arguably the most popular of the eighteenth century, centers on a servant girl, Pamela Andrews, who successfully resists her master's repeated attempts to seduce her. When he marries her over his sister's objections, virtue is rewarded not only by love but also by the very considerable social advantages of such a match. The intimacy of the epistolary novel allows the

1. Titles of this sort date back at least as far as Strozzi and Sacrati's *La finta pazza,* which premiered in Venice in 1641.

story to unfold in Pamela's own words, giving the reader direct access to the heroine's innermost thoughts and feelings (a hallmark of the sentimental genres). Within a year of publication, *Pamela* was already in its fifth edition; it had been translated into French, had engendered four plays and several versions in poetry, and had been answered by such works as Henry Fielding's parody, *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews.* The popularity of the novel, in its turn, gave rise to a veritable "Pamela" industry that included "Pamela" hats (flat straw hats), fans painted with scenes from the novel, and the famous series of prints by Joseph Highmore.[2] The growing eighteenth-century interest in sentiment had found a heroine in Pamela. Since Italian opera buffa has a very different origin and modus operandi from the epistolary novel, however, it must be observed that the sentimental heroine did not spring fully formed from the head of Richardson into Italian opera. The operatic Pamela was influenced by national and generic considerations as much as by her English model.

It was Carlo Goldoni who first introduced the "Pamela" story to the Italian stage as a play, *Pamela fanciulla,* for Venice in 1750,[3] and then as a libretto, *La buona figliuola,* for Parma in 1756, where it premiered in a setting by Edgidio Duni.[4] In adapting the story as a libretto, Goldoni introduced a number of significant changes, including the transformation of the sentimental heroine from chambermaid Pamela to garden girl Cecchina, and from member of the lower orders to foundling. In this way he brought her closer to nature and its protean associations in a culture of sensibility. At the same time, he legitimized her inner nobility and her marriage to her master with the discovery of her birthright when she is revealed—in a crucial recognition scene—to be the long-lost daughter of a German baron. It was Piccinni's setting in 1760, however, that was taken up by opera houses all over Europe. By the time Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* premiered in Munich on January 13, 1775, no opera buffa was better known than *La buona figliuola.* From its premiere to 1790 it received over seventy productions in Italian, English, French, and German, and remained in production through the turn of the century. Many operas influenced by this one, particularly by the explicitly sentimental characterization of its heroine, soon followed, including, among others, Giacomo Rust's *La contadina in corte* (1763), Piccinni's *L'incognita perseguitata* (1764), Pasquale Anfossi's *La finta giardiniera* (1774) and *La vera costanza* (1776), Antonio Salieri's *La dama pastorella* (1780) and *La cifra* (1789), Pietro Guglielmi's *La pastorella nobile* (1788), and Paisiello's *Nina* (1790).[5]

2. See Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* 168.

3. This play premiered as *La Pamela,* but since Goldoni later wrote a sequel entitled *Pamela maritata,* the original play came to be known by the titles *Pamela fanciulla* and *Pamela nubile.*

4. An operatic setting of this libretto by Perillo for Venice in 1760 also precedes Piccinni's setting, but both Duni's and Perillo's settings were eclipsed by the success of Piccinni's version.

5. Although Paisiello's first setting of *Nina* dates from 1789, it was the enlarged, two-act version of 1790 that became popular throughout Europe.

The librettist of *Giardiniera,* whether Giuseppe Petrosellini or one of his contemporaries, must have been well aware of the rage for everything "Pamela" that followed the unprecedented success of Richardson's novel on the continent. When viewed in this light, the libretto the Bavarian court sent Mozart, though it has often been dismissed as, in the words of one critic, "a clumsily-written, confused and confusing potboiler,"[6] appears rather modish and up-to-date. It offered the eighteen-year-old composer a protagonist based on a popular figure, a plot steeped in the literary cult of sensibility, and a chance to engage some of the notions and images celebrated by the larger culture of sensibility.[7] It also offered a chance to compose in the new sentimental singing style. In this, the first opera buffa of his adult career (his only previous attempt in the genre being *La finta semplice,* composed when he was twelve), Mozart demonstrates his subtle mastery of the musical language of the sentimental genres; at the same time, he also makes noteworthy departures from earlier realizations of the sentimental heroine (including Anfossi's creation of Sandrina for the first setting of *La finta giardiniera,* which premiered in Rome in 1774). The result is a compelling portrait of an unusual sentimental heroine and a recognition drama in which identity is more closely allied with feeling and experience than birthright, position, or title.

That the themes of recognition and identity have gone largely unnoticed in Mozart's *Giardiniera* is hardly surprising; they have also been overlooked in Mozart's later and more famous operas. That the implications of the title's "*giardiniera*" and much else of sentimental interest in this work have been almost entirely neglected, however, is more difficult to understand.[8] The uneven reception of the opera has centered on a dismissive attitude toward the libretto and a general sense that the music is inferior to that of the great Italian operas yet to come, but this may be attributed, at least in part, to a modern resistance to its immersion in sentimental culture.[9] Much of what has been found objectionable in the story, I would argue, is due to its em-

6. Osborne, *Complete Operas of Mozart,* 94. Heartz also uses the word "clumsy" to describe this opera in his *Mozart's Operas,* 199.

7. On the distinction between "cult of sensibility," which is generally used to characterize "the relationship between writers and readers of sentimental literature," and the larger "culture of sensibility" of which that "cult" was both product and producer, see Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* xix.

8. Awareness of this connection can be traced back at least as far as Abert, but Till is the only author known to me who devotes any serious attention to this libretto's literary precedents. See Abert, *W. A. Mozart,* 1:384; and Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment,* 17–37.

9. Study of this work has also been hindered by unusual source problems. (1) The authorship of the libretto is still a matter of dispute; the attribution to Calzabigi, as revised by Coltellini, has long been doubted. Angermüller has suggested Petrosellini as the author (see his "Wer war der Librettist von *La finta giardiniera?*"), although this attribution has been challenged on stylistic grounds. (2) The autograph (or any other full score) for the Italian first act was missing until very recently (see Angermüller and Berke, preface to *La finta giardiniera* [*NMA* II/5/8]). (3) From its premiere to its first modern revival in Italian in 1979, then, *La finta giardiniera* was known only in a German singspiel version, *Die verstellte Gärtnerin,* first performed in Augsburg in 1780. It is generally believed that Mozart assisted with the transformation of his opera buffa into a singspiel for Böhm's company (see Münster, "Die verstellte Gärtnerin").

phasis on pathetic feeling and emotional immediacy.[10] The sentimental plot imposes its own generic demands on the operatic form. The most important of these is that the climactic recognition scenes center on feeling and sentiment rather than action. This point is crucial for understanding the opera. The frustration these scenes have engendered may be due in part to their not having been acknowledged as recognition scenes, which may in turn account for the attitude toward *Giardiniera* one finds in the criticism. This opera's emotionally indulgent moments, its strained misunderstandings and coincidences, and especially its series of mad scenes for both male and female protagonist need to be understood as features of its recognition drama, features belonging to the culture of sensibility that had made *La buona figliuola* the most popular opera buffa of its day and had created the demand for other operas, such as Mozart's *Giardiniera,* on the "Pamela" theme.

La "vera" and *la "finta" giardiniera*

Perhaps more than any other of Mozart's operas, *Giardiniera* draws upon a culture and an archetype that, though well known in Mozart's day, are all but unknown to present-day audiences. The opera cannot be understood apart from the sentimental culture that defines it. Nor can its sentimental heroine be understood apart from the progenitor of the type, the *vera giardiniera* to whom its title refers. Violante's immersion in this culture underlies the entire sequence of events. Although an emphasis on natural settings (including gardens, landscapes, and seascapes) is common to the larger circle of "Pamela" operas, the sentimental heroine in these works is usually a shepherdess, a village girl, or a fisherwoman. Of the many operas to capitalize on the success of *La buona figliuola,* only *Giardiniera* centers on a young woman of noble blood who is not a foundling and who disguises herself as a member of the lower orders. It is as if Violante (whose privileged situation in life would almost certainly have included a familiarity with, if not an affinity for, opera) has chosen to disguise herself not just as *a* garden girl, but as *the* garden girl, the quintessential sentimental heroine of opera buffa, whose capacity for suffering and ability to arouse pathos were as well known as her eventual marriage to the man of her heart.

The characterization of Cecchina as a garden girl is central to Goldoni and Piccinni's *La buona figliuola,* which opens in the garden with a "song-like entrance aria" in which Cecchina soliloquizes on the pleasure she takes in tending her flowers:[11]

Che piacer, che bel diletto	What pleasure, what great delight
È il vedere in sul mattino	in the morning to see
Colla rosa il gelsomino	the jasmine competing
In bellezza gareggiar!	with the rose in beauty!

10. See, for example, Heartz, *Haydn, Mozart, and the Viennese School,* 597.
11. Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna,* 87.

E potere all'erbe e ai fiori
Dir: Son io, coi freschi umori,
Che vi vengo ad inaffiar.

And to be able to say
to the grasses and flowers:
it is I who come with fresh dews
to water you.

Mary Hunter has suggested that, in part on account of its placement, this aria possesses the "affective immediacy" of the epistolary style; the audience is given access to Cecchina's private thoughts and feelings here, much as readers are given access to Pamela's through her letters.[12] With its simple but elegant melody, its balanced phrases, and its sighing suspensions (on "piacer," "diletto," "veder," and "mattino," for example), this aria is comparable in melody and affect to seria arias of the period, such as Gluck's "Che farò," that express tender emotions[13] (see example 4.1). But it lacks other marks of high style, such as elevated language, apostrophe, ornamentation, or coloratura. Cecchina's subject matter (her work in the garden) and her key (F major) also clearly associate her with the lower orders. She identifies with both classes, it seems, but belongs to neither. When she reveals in her subsequent recitative that she does not know who her parents are, it becomes clear that her isolation in the garden appropriately reflects her situation in society.

The singing style that becomes characteristic of the sentimental heroine is perhaps best exemplified by Cecchina's next aria, "Una povera ragazza," in which she solicits audience sympathy on the question of her identity:

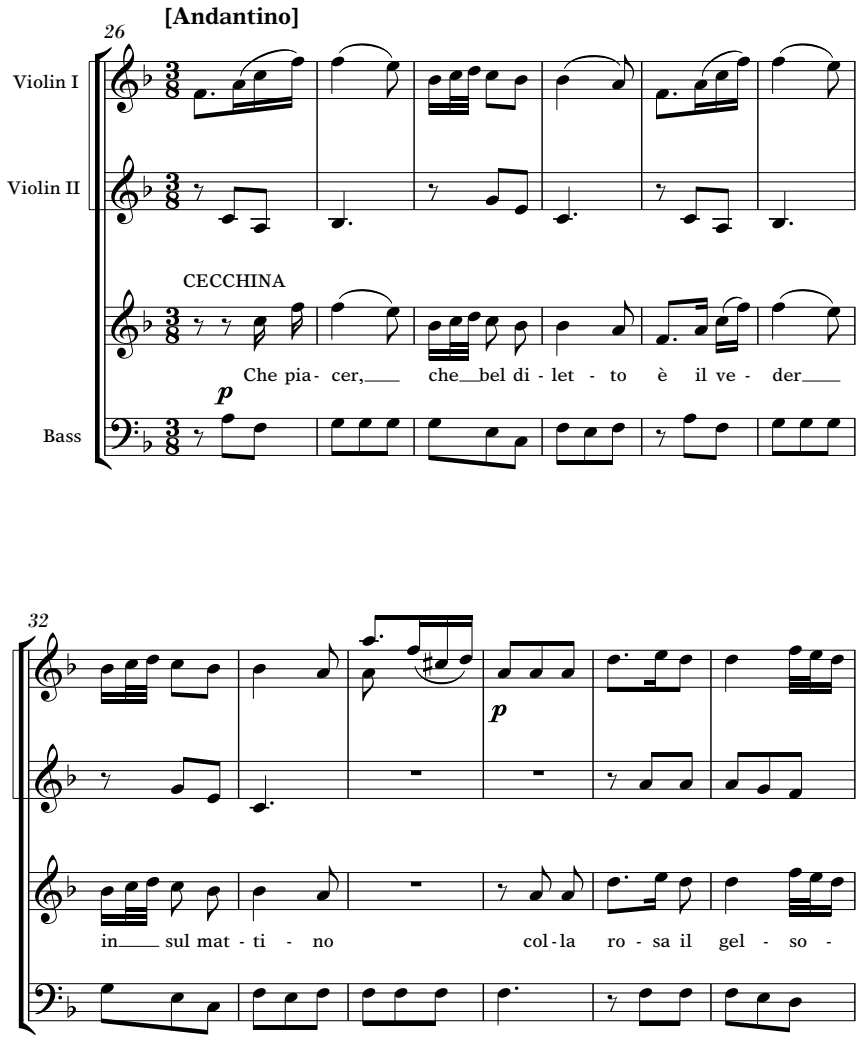
Una povera ragazza,
Padre e madre che non ha,
Si maltratta, si strapazza . . .
Questa è troppa crudeltà.
Sì, signora, sì, padrone,
Che con vostra permissione
Voglio andarmene di qua.
Partirò . . . me ne andrò
A cercar la carità.
Poverina, la Cecchina.
Qualche cosa troverà.
Sì, signore, sì, padrona,
So che il Ciel non abbandona
L'innocenza e l'onestà.

A poor girl,
without father or mother,
so mistreated, so abused . . .
this is too much cruelty.
Yes, my lady, yes, my master,
and, with your permission, I
would like to depart from here.
I shall leave . . . go away
to find charity.
Poor Cecchina,
she will find something.
Yes, sir, yes mistress,
I know that Heaven will not abandon
innocence and honesty.

Her music here, once again, draws upon the traditions of both seria and buffa, but places her in neither category. She possesses the nobility of the high seria style without a hint of its complexity; at the same time she makes a direct and immediate ap-

12. Hunter, "'Pamela': The Offspring of Richardson's Heroine," 65.
13. Hunter, "'Pamela': The Offspring of Richardson's Heroine," 65.

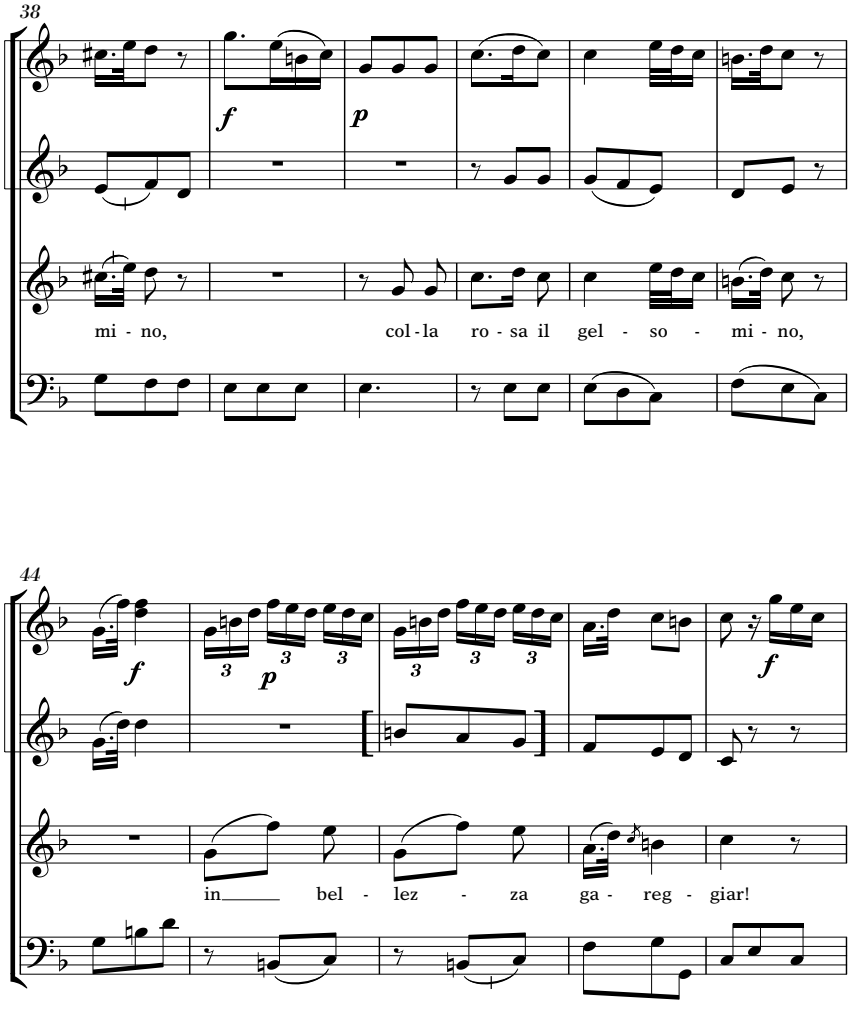
Example 4.1. *La buona figliuola,* "Che piacer, che bel diletto," mm. 26–48.



(*continued*)

peal that is neither comic nor simple. Several features are characteristic: the exposed, sweet melody, the andante tempo, the muted strings, and the overall effect of the accompaniment—constant in its materials and mood yet at a distinct remove from the voice (see example 4.2). Not all of these characteristics need be present for a sentimental characterization, of course, but the quality of melody and its appropriateness to the "genuine" sentiments expressed may be considered essential to the sentimental style. In the second verse, Cecchina turns very effectively to G minor (ii

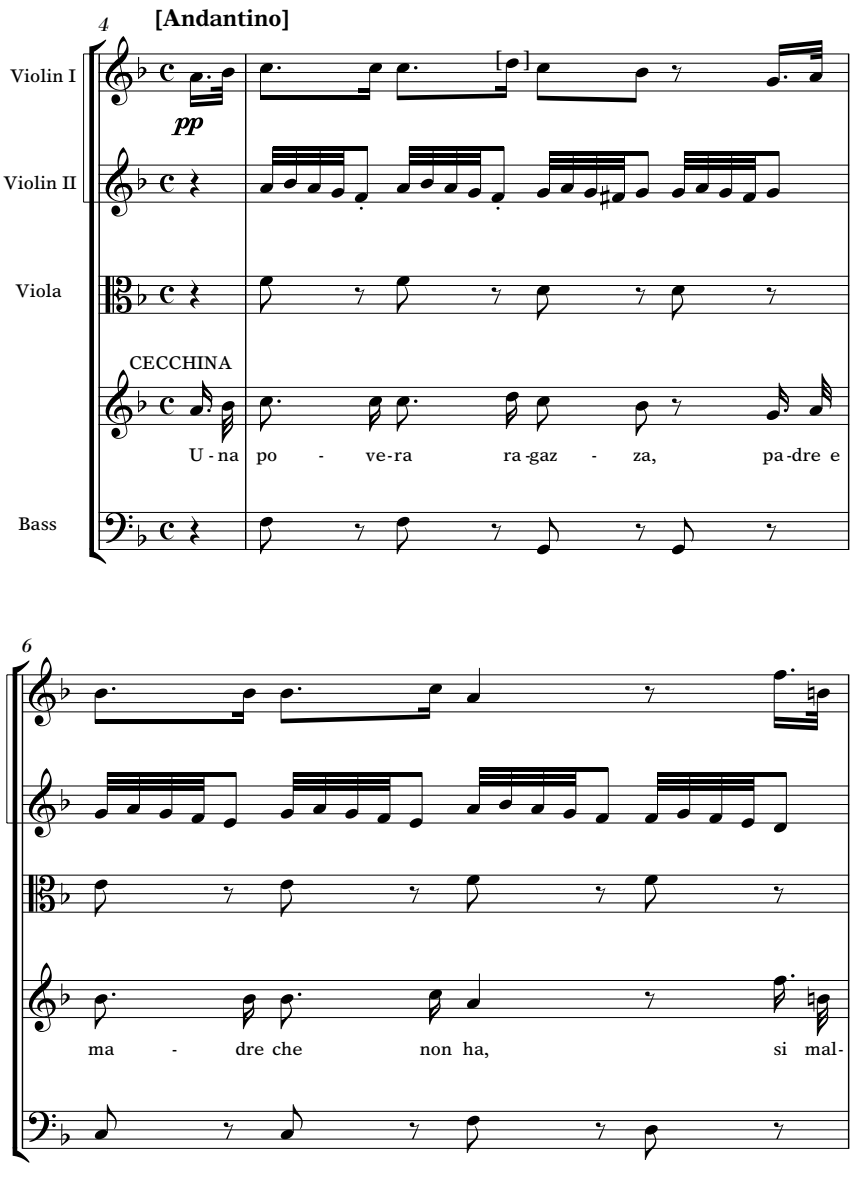
Example 4.1. *Continued*



in the tonic of F). The gesture is simple, but the pathos it creates, especially on the words "Poverina, la Cecchina," must have been one reason for the dramatic success of the number (see mm. 15–16 in example 4.3).

Like Piccinni's heroine, Mozart's *giardiniera* describes herself in the opera's second scene as "una povera villanella" (a poor country girl) and "una donzella onestà" (an honest maiden)—an echo of Cecchina's famous description of herself as "L'innocenza e l'onestà," as well as, perhaps, a play on her own name, Violante Onesti. She characterizes her situation as the one most deserving of pity in the sentimental

Example 4.2. *La buona figliuola,* "Una povera ragazza," mm. 4–9.



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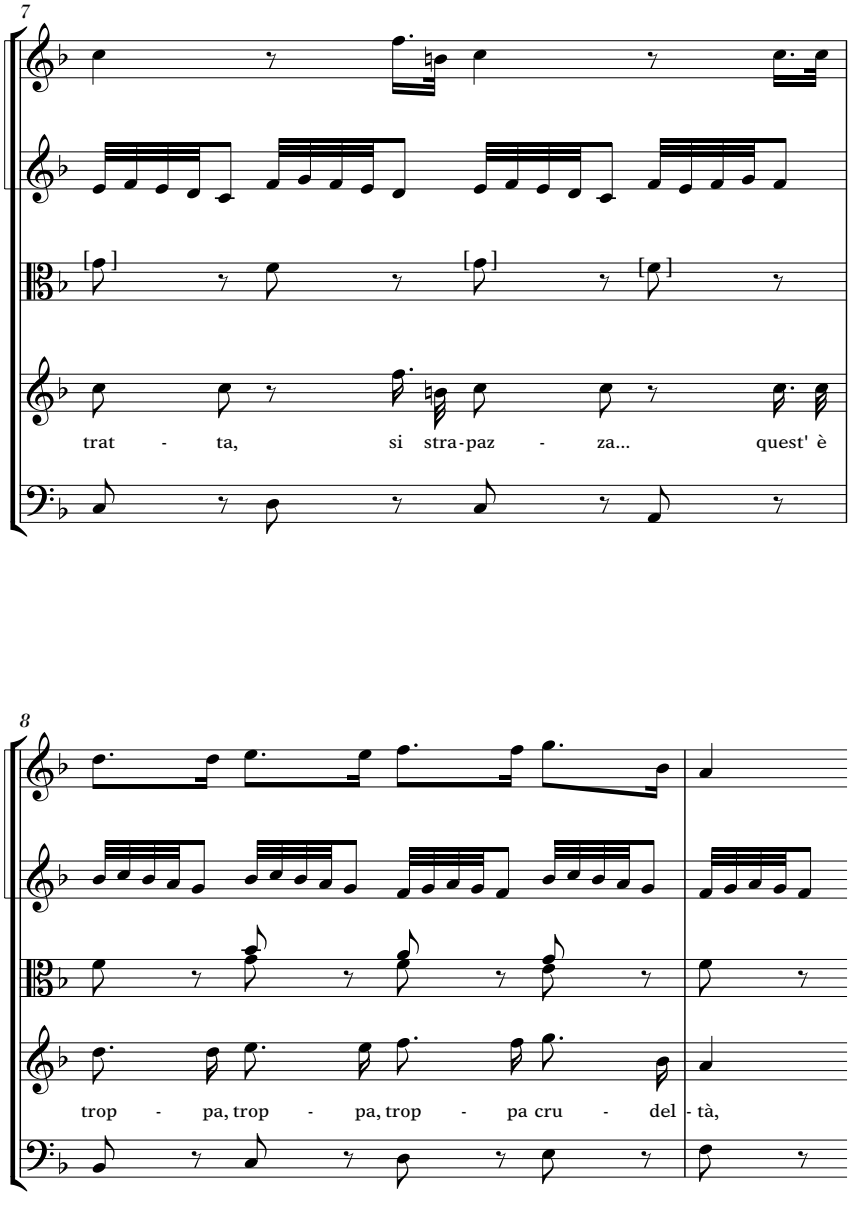
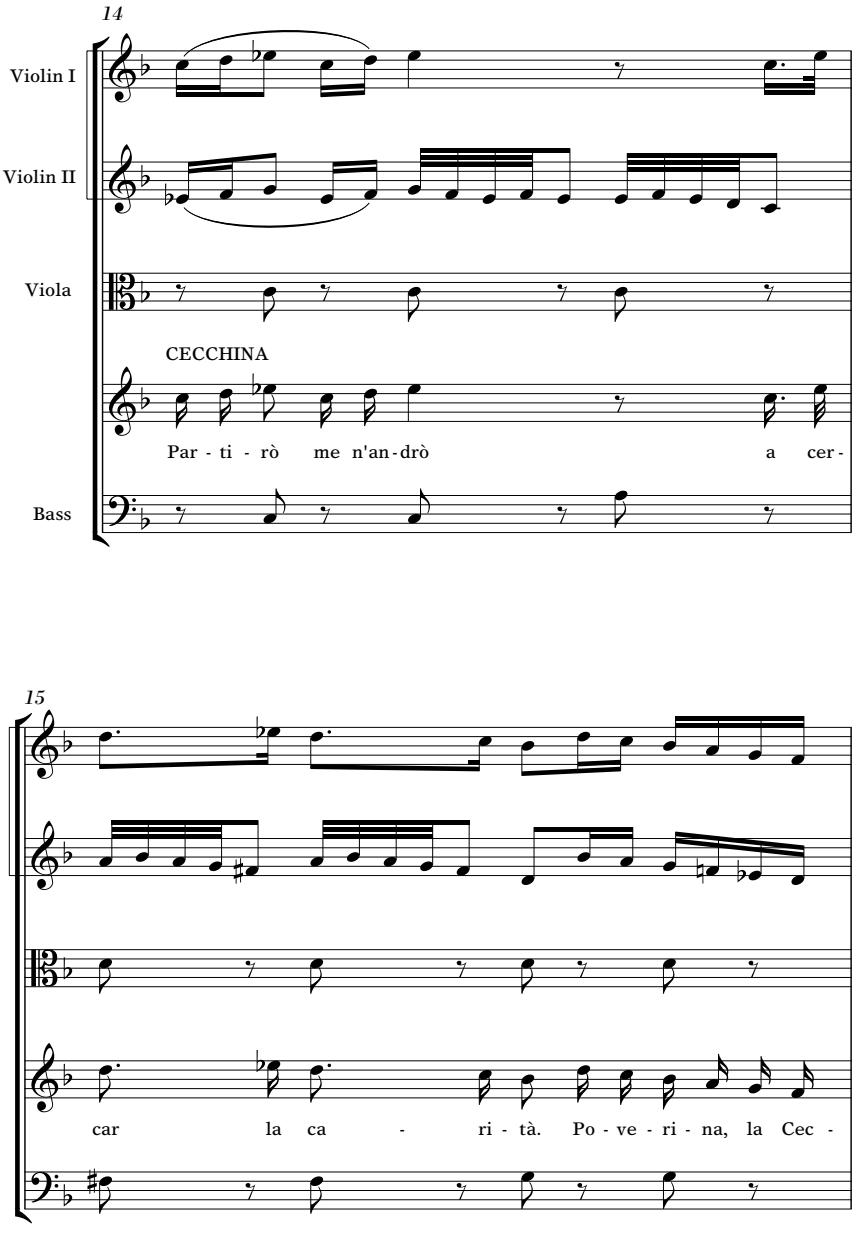
Example 4.2. *Continued*



Example 4.3. *La buona figliuola,* "Una povera ragazza," mm. 14–17.



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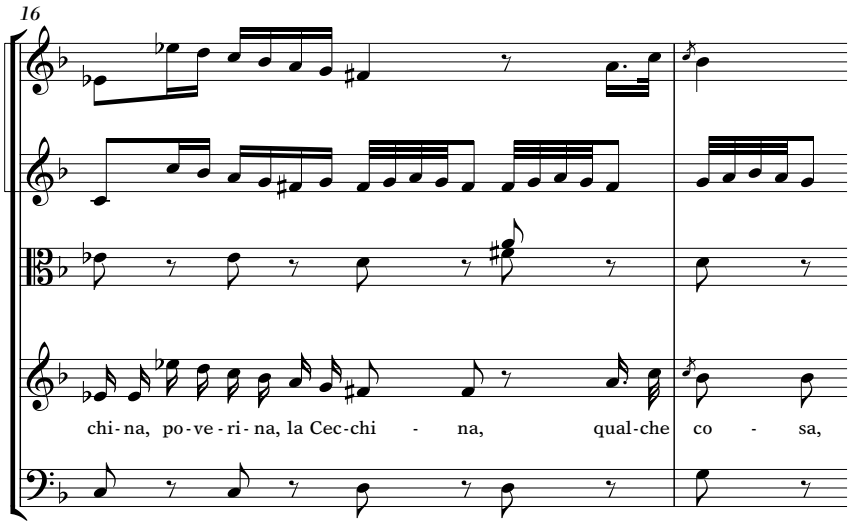
Example 4.3. *Continued*



genres, "abbandonata dall'amante" (abandoned by my lover). In her aria "Noi donne poverine" (No. 4), she recounts the fate of women like herself who are tormented by love:

Noi donne poverine,	We poor women,
Tapine, sfortunate,	wretched, unfortunate,
Appena siamo nate	we are only just born
Ch'abbiamo da penar.	when we begin to suffer.
Disgrazie da bambine,	Misfortunes in childhood,
Strapazzi grandicelle,	excessive work while growing up,
E dell'età nel fiore,	and in the bloom of our lives,
O siamo brutte o belle	whether we are ugly or beautiful,
Il maledetto amore	accursed love
Ci viene a tormentar.	come to torment us.
Ah donne poverine,	Ah, poor women,
Meglio saria per noi	it would be better for us
Non nascere o morir.	never to be born or to die.

Revealing her awareness of the class of sentimental *poverine* to which she belongs, as well as a characteristic identification with others who suffer (see her affective extension on "tormentar" at m. 38, for example), Violante (as Sandrina) here associates herself with Cecchina's famous self-characterizations: "poverina," "povera me," "povera ragazza," and "povera sfortunata." Her identification with the type is evident in the predominantly syllabic setting, the simple accompaniment for strings only,

and especially in the brief hints of the parallel minor on the words "sì da penar" and "poverine sfortunate." In distress in the act 1 finale and elsewhere, Sandrina cries out for "pietà." She also demonstrates an awareness of her ability to inspire sympathetic feeling in others in her aria "Una voce sento al core" (No. 16), when she addresses the audience:

Fanciulette che m'udite,	Girls who hear me,
Se pietà di me sentite,	if you feel pity for me,
Una figlia sventurata,	an unhappy maiden,
Infelice, abbandonata,	unfortunate, abandoned,
Deh venite a consolar.	pray come to console [me].

The failure of the Podestà to be moved by her entreaty to him in the first part of this aria reflects his lack of sentimental feeling (a theme developed elsewhere in the opera) rather than any deficiency on her part. The *buffo* Nardo, for instance, offers touching proof of Sandrina's ability to inspire sympathetic feeling in others; when she refers to the fateful night a year earlier on which Belfiore had stabbed her and fled, Nardo exclaims:

Che brutto caso!	What a terrible event!
In ripensarlo solo	The mere thought of it
Mi scappano le lagrime.	reduces me to tears.

Even the cold-hearted Arminda recognizes Sandrina as a type. She exclaims, "Questa sarà la bella giardiniera" (This must be the beautiful garden girl) on first seeing Sandrina near the end of act 1, expresses pity for her ("Ti compatisco"), and, later in the same scene, describes her with sympathy as "quest' infelice giovane" (this unhappy young woman).

If her role as *giardiniera,* her description of herself as "infelice" and "sventurata" in the *introduzione,* and her sympathy with *poverine* in "Noi donne poverine" have not yet established Sandrina as the sentimental heroine, her aria "Geme la tortorella" (No. 11) near the end of act 1 leaves no room for doubt. It is a sad, soulful aria much indebted to the sentimental style of Cecchina's paradigmatic "Una povera ragazza," and given similar placement in the drama just before the act 1 finale, as the heroine's second aria. The text is an allegory of Sandrina's situation.[14]

Geme la tortorella	The turtle dove sighs
Lungi dalla compagna,	far away from her mate;
Del suo destin si lagna,	she laments her fate,
E par che in sua favella	and it seems that in her own tongue
Vogli destar pietà.	she wishes to arouse pity.

14. Sandrina confirms the import of the allegory, rather unnecessarily, in the recitative immediately afterward when she exclaims, "Io son la tortorella" (I am the turtle dove).

It is set simply, almost entirely syllabically, with brief, poignant melismas to emphasize "pietà" (mm. 32–34) and, in closing, the entire line "Vogli destar pietà" (mm. 61ff.). Although the rank and situation of the pretend *giardiniera* might be thought to set her apart from the original heroine whose identity she has assumed, her command of the sentimental style here signals her deep affinity with the first operatic Pamela, complete with the characteristic exposed melody, andante tempo, muted strings, and overall effect of the accompaniment (see example 4.4). Even the affective turn to the parallel minor on the words "Del suo destin si lagna," which suggest the turtledove's languishing, is reminiscent of the poignant turn to the minor mode in Piccinni's setting on the words "Poverina, la Cecchina" (compare m. 22 in example 4.4 to mm. 15–16 in example 4.3).[15] Only two features perhaps betray Sandrina's noble status and thus elevate this aria slightly above Cecchina's: the key of C major (a key area often associated with seria characters) and the use of allegory (the allegory aria being a seria type).[16] Still, the sweet melancholy of this aria, with its indirect text, makes an immediate appeal to the audience and establishes Sandrina unmistakably as the sentimental heroine. To identify Sandrina as an object of sympathy, Mozart draws on a musical language of sentiment in opera that was already well established.

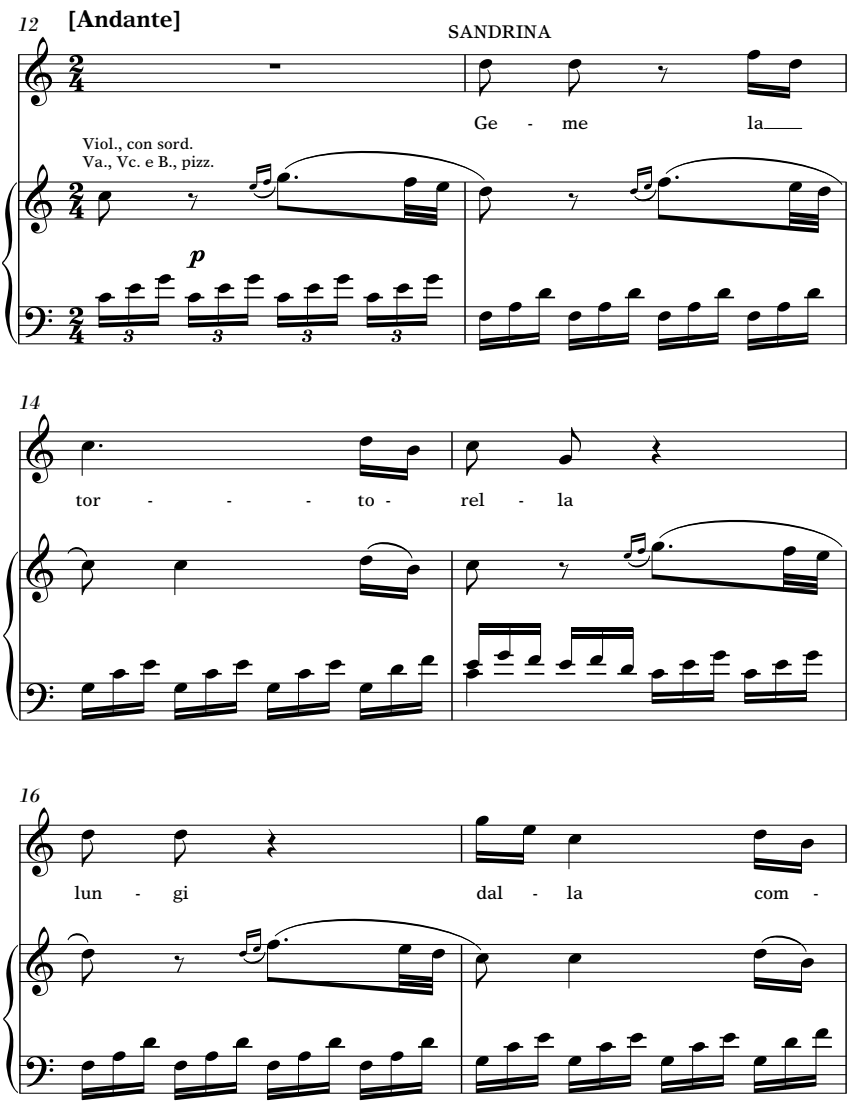
The textual and musical affinity of Mozart's Sandrina with Piccinni's well-known heroine could hardly be more clear. Despite several important differences in the story—that the garden girl is really a noblewoman in disguise, that she does not marry her master in the end, and that the emotional imbroglio ventures so far afield from the normal course of events in opera buffa that both the heroine and her lover are driven to madness—the essential features common to "Pamela" operas are all in evidence: (1) a sentimental heroine who either is or appears to be of low birth; (2) a love triangle of "Pamela," her suitors (her master the Podestà, as well as Count Belfiore), and Arminda, who wishes to get her out of the way; (3) a plot centered on the persecution of the heroine and the pathetic representation of her distress; (4) a happy ending that rewards Violante/Sandrina for her suffering and celebrates her fidelity to the lover who abused and abandoned her; and, most important, (5) Sandrina's access to the sentimental singing style.

The difference in Sandrina's rank and situation, however, does raise an important question about the way *Giardiniera* adapts the "Pamela" plot. In Piccinni's *La buona figliuola,* the heroine stands at the center of her opera as an example of "virtue in distress." She is visually and musically more an object than a subject of the plot, more acted upon than acting (something generally true of operatic Pamelas). The discov-

15. The inflection to the minor mode, especially to the parallel minor, is characteristic of Mozart's Sandrina. As we have already seen, her aria "Noi donne poverine" (No. 4) hints briefly at it; her A-major aria "Una voce sento al core" (No. 16) includes an entire B section in A minor (and *agitata* texture), set off by a change in tempo to Allegro and a change from triple to duple meter. The turn to the parallel minor, however brief, seems to have been characteristic of other sentimental heroines as well.

16. Hunter calls C-major arias for seria characters in operas of this period "heroic"; see "Text, Music, and Drama in Haydn's Italian Opera Arias," 32.

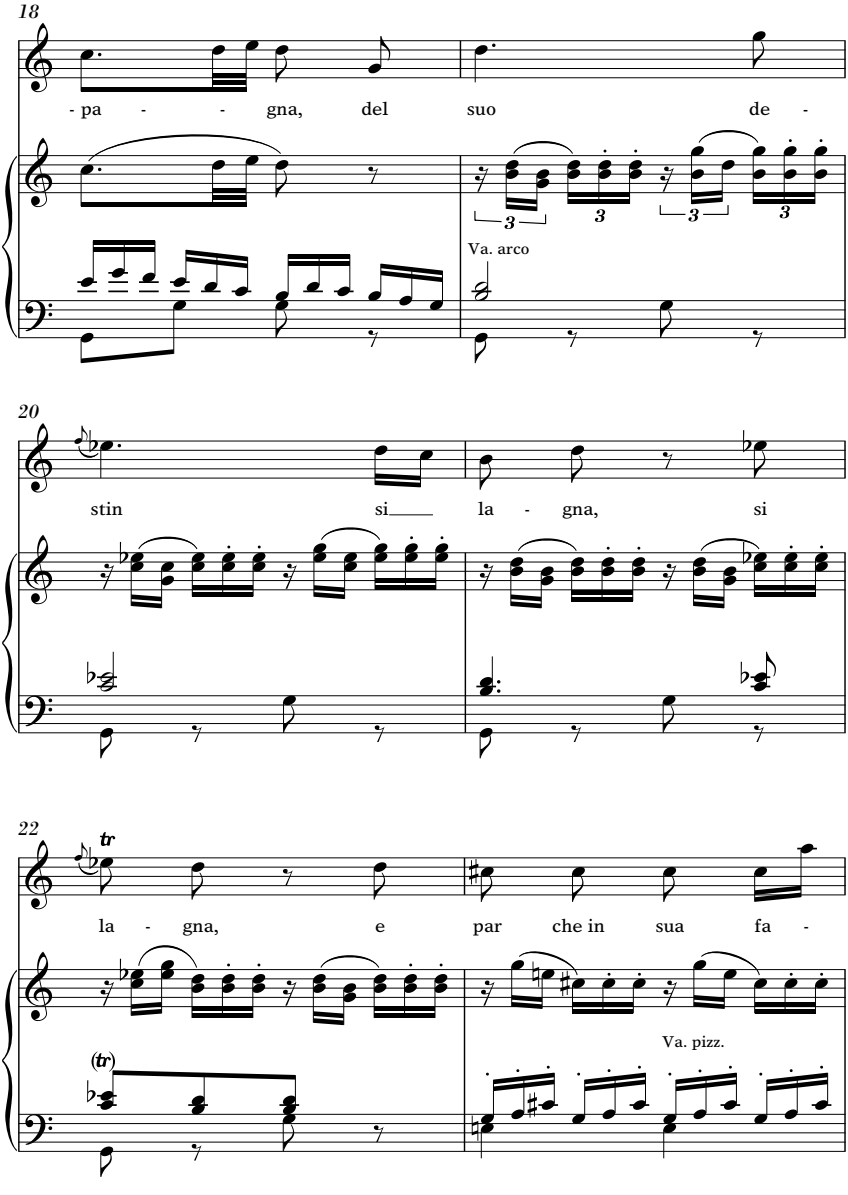
Example 4.4. *Giardiniera,* "Geme la tortorella" (No. 11), mm. 12–26.



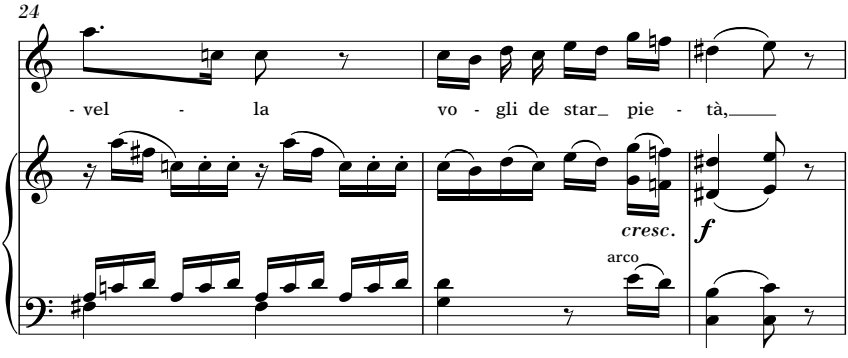
(*continued*)

ery of birthright crucial to the opera's resolution and happy ending is not brought about by any action taken on her part. She is, in fact, asleep in a secluded spot at the time the Marchese and Tagliaferro make the important discovery of her birthright. In *La finta giardiniera,* on the other hand, despite the fact that Sandrina/Violante is objectified as "virtue in distress," the key to the story and its dénouement lies pre-

Example 4.4. *Continued*



Example 4.4. *Continued*



cisely in her choices and actions. It was her decision to disguise herself as a garden girl and to look for Count Belfiore that set the plot in motion, and it is her later decision to reveal her disguise, first to her stunned fiancé and then to everyone else, that brings about the opera's resolution and requisite *lieto fine.* It is, ironically, the act of posing as a garden girl—a role she must stoop from her high station to assume—that distinguishes Mozart's heroine from other operatic Pamelas.

Reading Opera "for the Sentiment"

When a young officer opined to Dr. Johnson, "Surely, Sir, Richardson is very tedious," Johnson replied, "Why, Sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment."[17] Two inferences relevant to the present argument can be drawn from Dr. Johnson's famous comment. First, sentiment is the key not only to Richardson's novels but also to the sentimental genres in general. If the young officer holds to the view that *sentiment* is tedious, nothing said in Richardson's defense or in defense of other sentimental works is likely to persuade him otherwise. Second, in the sentimental genres, the occasion for sentiment is very often set in opposition to the plot. For example, in Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy,* Mr. Yorick's travels—and his narrative—end before he gets very far in France, let alone all the way to Italy. Since *La finta giardiniera* is a sentimental work, Johnson's advice to read for the sentiment opens up a new way of understanding Mozart's only "Pamela" opera, as well as posterity's neglect of it. Objections to its story may be traced back as far as reviews of a singspiel production of it in Frankfurt in 1789, but they are rooted, I

17. Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson,* 480.

would argue, in a misreading of the opera's plot.[18] Its inconsistencies and implausibilities should not be understood as flaws but as "giving occasion to the sentiment."

To explore the question of why the sentimental aspects of this opera's story have been thought problematic, it will first be necessary to give a brief account of the action. I shall begin as members of the audience would, with the cast list printed in the original libretto, which reveals the psychological motivations of the characters and the conflicts upon which the action is structured.[19]

Don Anchise Mayor [Podestà] of Lagonero, in love with Sandrina
La Marchesa Violante [Onesti], in love with Count Belfiore, thought to be dead, disguised as a garden girl under the name of Sandrina
The Count Belfiore, formerly in love with Violante, and now with Arminda
Arminda Milanese Lady, formerly in love with Cavalier Ramiro, now engaged to Count Belfiore
Il Cavalier Ramiro, in love with Arminda, but abandoned by her
Serpetta Maid to the Podestà and in love with him
Roberto Violante's servant, who pretends to be her cousin, under the name of Nardo, disguised as a gardener, in love with Serpetta, who does not return his love

Sandrina, who is really the Marchesa Violante Onesti in disguise, has taken the post of garden girl at the palace of the Podestà Don Anchise. The Podestà is in love with her and eager to marry her despite her apparently poor station in life. His maidservant Serpetta (who clearly derives, as her name suggests, from Serpina, the maid who would be mistress in Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*) is not at all pleased by this state of affairs, since she hopes to marry the Podestà herself. Arminda, the Podestà's niece, is engaged to marry Count Belfiore, the jealous fiancé of Violante, who abandoned Violante and left her for dead a year earlier. Walking in the garden with Arminda, Belfiore recognizes Sandrina as his Violante. She faints on seeing him, suffering anew the painful memory of his cruel treatment of her. In the scenes that follow, after some deliberation, Sandrina finally tells him that she is *not* Violante (she only looks like Violante), which is hardly believable but prolongs the act 1 finale.

In act 2, Ramiro, eager to drive a wedge between his beloved Arminda and her intended, brings proof of the supposed murder of the Marchesa Violante to the attention of the Podestà. To prove her beloved innocent of murder, Sandrina now admits she is Violante. But when she spurns Belfiore's renewed addresses, he reacts with a confusion that is well on its way to madness, overwhelmed by the impossibility of

18. See Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography,* 334–35 and 340–41.

19. Hunter points out that often such listings specify the identity and rank of characters, even when, as in this case, this information eliminates the element of surprise. See *Culture of Opera Buffa,* 59.

his position as a man of feeling betrothed to two women. Arminda, consumed by jealousy, has Sandrina abducted and transported to a deserted wilderness, where Sandrina sings an extraordinary *scena* of pathetic feeling as virtue in distress. In the course of the act 2 finale, under a cover of darkness that leads to more than one comic discovery of mistaken identity, Sandrina and Belfiore begin to exhibit physical signs of madness. By the finale's end, they appear to have lost their senses entirely. In act 3, Violante/Sandrina and Belfiore awake in the garden, apparently recovered from their madness, to sing a long duet that concludes with their singing together in tenths and sounding like lovers for the first time in the opera. All that remains now is for Arminda to accept Ramiro and for Serpetta to accept Nardo. The opera ends with a celebratory *lieto fine* devoted to the faithful *giardiniera,* her count, and love.

If this opera is read for the story, its apparent problems are many. Violante's disguise wears thin before the first act is over. Belfiore's confusion over whether Sandrina is or is not Violante (she betrays herself to him more than once, but then denies she is Violante) is only slightly more believable than his indecision with respect to the matter of whether honor binds him to a prior engagement or a later one. And no matter what the inconsistencies of his character, one cannot help but wonder at his inability to choose the lovely Violante over the wrathful Arminda, whose character is revealed to him in a formidable rage aria, "Vorrei punirti indegno" (No. 13). Of course, to pursue this line of reasoning to its natural conclusion would be to make Mozart's opera a good deal shorter, calling for a reconciliation of all parties at the end of act 1. If the opera is read for the sentiment, however, its apparent inconsistencies and excesses may be understood in an entirely different way, as opportunities to explore feeling. Take, for example, the crucial recognition scene that initiates the act 1 finale in which Belfiore recognizes the unconscious Sandrina as Violante (she fainted in the previous scene on hearing the news that he was betrothed to Arminda). When Sandrina awakens from her swoon, she exclaims, "Deh vieni ingrato core, / Guardami son pur quella" (Come, then, ungrateful heart. / Look at me; I am indeed she). Belfiore, in disbelief, questions his discovery, but their tête-à-tête is interrupted by the entrance of Ramiro and Arminda, and then the Podestà, Serpetta, and Nardo. Later in the finale, Sandrina denies she is Violante and Belfiore is left in a state of confusion. (This is only the first of several occasions on which Sandrina admits her real identity but denies it later.)

The two protagonists' vicissitudes of feeling are precisely choreographed by an extraordinary number and variety of stage directions in the original libretto.[20] The first sixteen lines of the finale, for example, include six separate parenthetical stage directions (see figure 4.1). The libretto requires specific, pathetic gestures and postures: Belfiore's astonishment, admiration and amazement, and contemplation; Sandrina's collapse, recovery, and paralyzing disbelief. Mozart's realization of the scene drama-

20. Since there was no libretto printed for the Munich performance, the libretto in question is the Rome libretto of 1774 from which Mozart worked.

Figure 4.1. *Giardiniera,* act 1 finale, opening.

Il Contino	
Numi! che incanto è questo.	Gods! what magic is this?
Violante! è viva? oimè!	Violante! and alive? O heavens!
Tremo da capo a piè;	I tremble from head to foot;
Dove mi sia non so.	I do not know where I am.
(S'accosta a Sandrina svenuta e resta spaventato e sorpreso.)	*(Approaches the unconscious Sandrina and stands there in astonishment.)*
Sandrina	
(Nello svenimento si muove e poi torna ad abbandonarsi.)	*(In her unconscious state, she moves and then passes out again.)*
Deh vieni ingrato core,	Come, then, ungrateful heart.
Guardami son pur quella.	Look at me; I am indeed she.
Il Contino	
La voce è di Violante,	The voice is that of Violante,
Il ciglio, il bel sembiante.	the eyes, the beautiful appearance.
(Sempre con ammirazione e stupore.)	*(With continuing admiration and amazement.)*
Ma come in queste spoglie	But why is she dressed like this?
Sarà la fantasia,	It must be my imagination;
Meglio l'osserverò.	I will observe her more closely.
Sandrina	
(Rinviene.)	*(Recovering.)*
Ah della pena mia	On my suffering
Pietà sentite, oh Dei!	take pity, oh God!
Il Contino	
(Torna attentamente ad osservarla.)	*(Again observing her attentively.)*
È lei senz'altro, è lei,	It is her without doubt, it is her;
Coraggio più non ho.	my courage fails me.
Sandrina	
(S'accorge del conte e resta attonita.)	*(Notices the Count and is astonished.)*
Il Conte? oh Dio! che miro!	The Count? oh God! What do I see!

tizes the emotionally charged exchange and its physiological effect with great sensitivity. He begins the finale in recitative, which allows changes of thought and feeling to be represented immediately in the music by changes in tempo, texture, and even key. For example, he composes out Belfiore's steps toward the unconscious Sandrina in the strings and renders his trembling and confusion ("oimè! / Tremo da capo a piè") in *agitata* texture over a chromatically rising bass harmonized by a series of diminished seventh chords. The destabilization of tonality (the tonic suggested by the key signature has not been firmly established) and texture characterizes this moment as one of significant but uncertain discovery and confirms in musical terms the Count's assertion that he does not know where he is ("Dove mi sia non so"). On recovering, Sandrina addresses Belfiore in steadier tones and with something ap-

proaching real melody, passing through E minor to confirm G major as she confirms her identity ("Guardami son pur quella"). Mozart captures the admiration ("ammirazione") of Belfiore's response in G major and then his amazement ("stupore") in the chantlike syllabic setting of his response. He captures Sandrina's suffering with an inflection to minor as she recovers at the *a tempo;* calling on God to take pity on her suffering, Sandrina attempts to take the music to A minor. Belfiore, however, now more certain of the truth of his discovery, confirms C major—finally—instead (though it does not yet sound like a tonic). The uncertainty and developmental quality of the harmony thus far into the finale might be read as a musical enactment of his discovery as he passes through disbelief toward acceptance, which is signaled by the arrival of the tonic. Sandrina tries once more to take the harmony to A minor, but the entrance of the other characters redirects the course of the harmony toward G major. In these first thirty-three measures of the finale, although they do not complete the process of recognition they have begun (there is no reunion of hearts, for example), no opportunity for the pathetic rendering of feeling has been missed.

It is not until much later in the finale, in the midst of the ensuing imbroglio, that Violante accuses Belfiore of betrayal:

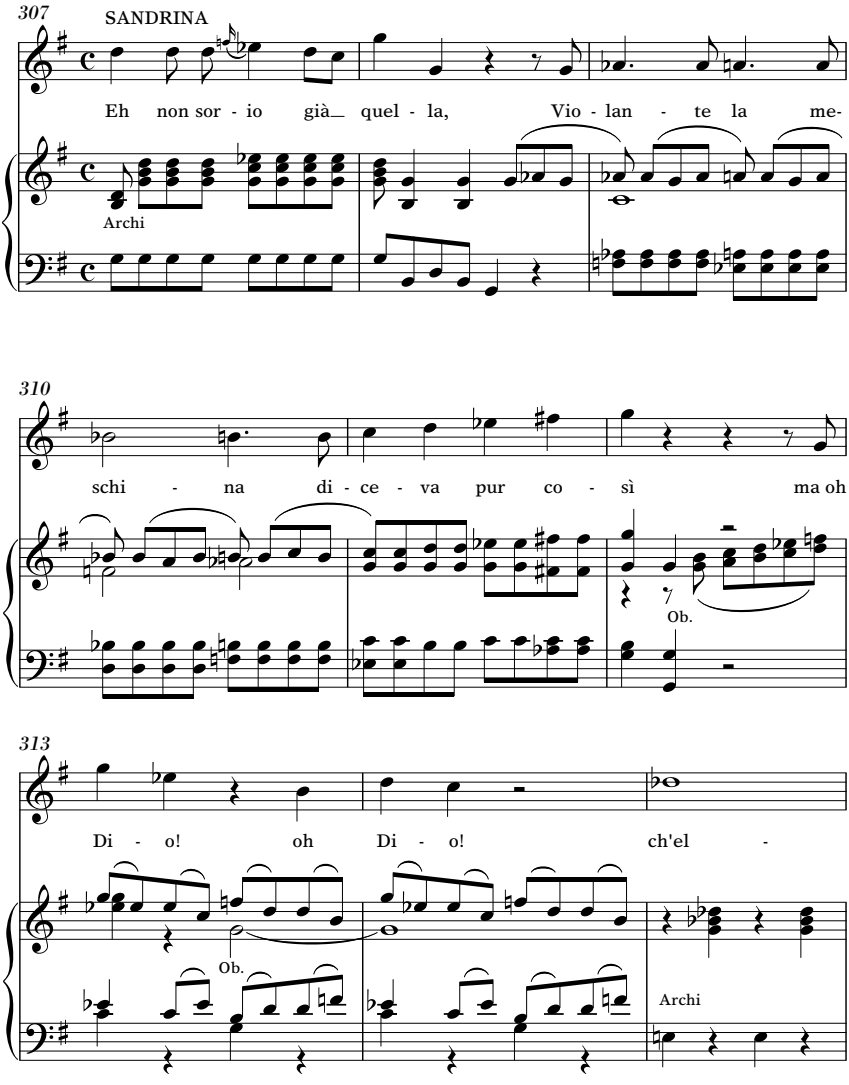
Barbaro senza fede	Cruel man without faith,
È questa la mercede	is that the reward
Del mio costante amor?	for my constant love?
Misero, in che mancai,	Wretch, in what did I fail?
Dimmi che feci mai,	Tell me what I ever did,
Perfido traditor!	wicked traitor!

Her passionate speech passes through D minor on its way to an extended passage in A minor at measure 291, the very A minor, it might be argued, she tried to establish much earlier in the finale. He kneels to beg her pardon and transforms her A minor to its relative major, C, just as he had much earlier in the finale, and then, perhaps on realizing that she is not responding, to C minor. But Sandrina denies that she is Violante:

Eh non son io già quella,	Why, I am not that one,
Violante la meschina	wretched Violante
Diceva pur così,	used to speak like that,
Ma oh Dio! ch'ella morì.	but, oh God! she died.

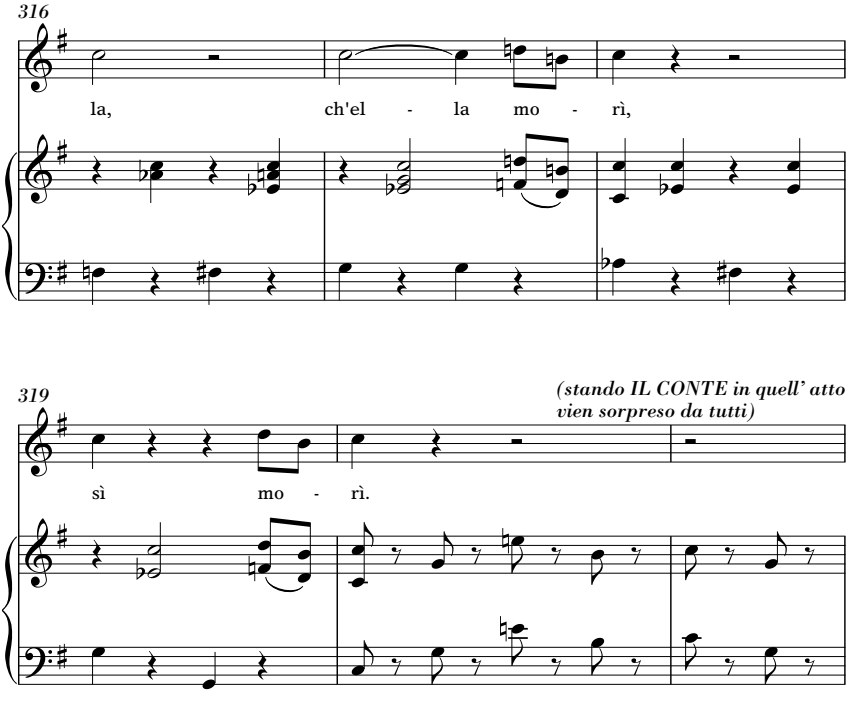
An ascending chromatic line in the vocal part brings her description of "Violante la meschina" to life (see example 4.5), and another in the bass accompanies the phrase "ch'ella morì." Her response is rooted in C minor, but is destabilized by the two striking chromatic passages just mentioned. It is further colored by a deceptive cadence at measure 318 and by the absence of the third in the cadential arrival at measure 320.

Example 4.5. *Giardiniera,* act 1 finale, mm. 307–21.



Recognition is thus undone. Its customary reversal, an expectation of the plot, is sacrificed to emotional display. Discovery sets off one pathetic exchange; denial sets off another. The other characters' misunderstanding of the scene they witness exposes both Sandrina and Belfiore to new recriminations, providing further occasions for expressions of sentiment. Sandrina (the victim) and Belfiore (her persecutor) are thus united here by suffering, something Mozart confirms when he allows them to exclaim to the same tune in tenths: "Ah che sola [solo] io son capace / Di

Example 4.5. *Continued*



tormento e di dolor" (Alas, that I alone am able to suffer such torment and sorrow). When Belfiore exclaims at the very end of the finale that he is torn between Arminda and Sandrina, as Heartz has observed, "the harmony underscores his indecision."[21] Three times Belfiore attempts to cadence in A minor with his line "Non so risolvere, non so che far" (I cannot decide; I don't know what to do); twice a deceptive cadence takes him to F major (VI), before A major arrives, complete with *forte* and a confirming key signature at the tutti at measure 449.[22]

Although Belfiore has good reason by the end of this finale to suspect that Sandrina is Violante (he makes this assumption when he exclaims at the start of act 2 that he has had no peace since he saw Sandrina ["Dacchè vidi Sandrina / Non ho pace"]), he cannot be certain, and the pathetic scene of recognition and denial is replayed twice more in act 2 before reconciliation is achieved. Recognition in this opera is an affair of the heart, and each new refutation of it offers a fresh opportunity for sentimental display that pulls at the heartstrings of the characters (and the audience). Even though Sandrina's denials only postpone the end of a transparent plot, they are essential to

21. Heartz, *Haydn, Mozart, and the Viennese School,* 601.

22. This arrival anticipates the A-major conclusion of this finale. A major, a key associated with love in this opera and others, is the parallel major, the negation in a sense, of A minor.

the characterization of Belfiore, whose suffering is crucial to his eventual vindication. It is his acutely sensitive nature, of course, that proves his love for Violante and makes him a match for her. While every character in *La finta giardiniera* may sing of love (Ramiro, who never leaves the high seria style that suits his *musico* role, is especially persuasive in his aria "Dolce d'amor compagna" [No. 18]), the sentimental characterization is reserved exclusively for the virtuous, suffering heroine and her emotionally volatile lover, whose sentimental journey from the platitudes he repeats to Arminda to the displays of remorse and affection he later makes to Violante is essential to his redemption.

While reading for the sentiment offers a key to understanding the opera's drama, it also helps us to understand the potential problems implied by the adoption of the "Pamela" narrative, foremost among them, perhaps, that the *poverina* type and the familiar elements of her story might easily descend into cliché. One *poverina* might inspire sympathy, but several in a season might well begin to suggest comedy rather than pathos. Rather than sacrifice their *mezzo carattere* heroine to potential ridicule, librettists and composers found other ways to make sport of the tradition themselves. The scheming Serpetta, for example, who assists Arminda in her plot against Sandrina, describes herself as "Poverina" in the act 2 finale.[23] But elsewhere, in her aria "Chi vuol godere il mondo" (No. 20), she acknowledges her difference from the sentimental heroine:

Lo so che una fanciulla	I know that a young girl
Dev' esser di buon core,	must have a good heart,
Andar sincera e schietta;	must be sincere and honest;
Ma ciò non serve a nulla	but all this does not help
Cogl' uomini oggidì.	with the men of today.

Arminda too, as we have seen, though she seems to recognize the lovely *giardiniera* as a type when she chooses to confide in her near the end of act 1, reveals her view of the "poverina" (or "poverella") as the dupe of an unfaithful lover in her aria, "Si promette facilmente" (No. 7):

Si promette facilmente	The lovers of today
Dagl' amanti d'oggidì;	make promises too easily;
E la semplice zitella	and the simple maiden

23. The pretension of the scheming servant girl to be a "poverina" seems to have been customary in "Pamela" operas. See, for example, Sandrina's "Poverina, tutto il dì," in *La buona figliuola,* and Lisetta's "Io son poverina," in *La vera costanza* (on the latter, see Waldoff, "Sentiment and Sensibility in *La vera costanza,*" 99–102). The *poverina* topos was also apparently recognized outside the immediate circle of "Pamela" operas. Da Ponte and Mozart rely on it as Don Giovanni eavesdrops on Donna Elvira in "Ah! chi mi dice mai" (No. 3). Moved to pity by her story of betrayal, Don Giovanni exclaims to Leporello, "Poverina! Poverina!"

Se lo crede, poverella,	believes them, poor girl,
E si fida a dir di sì.	and trustingly says yes.

There was also the risk that the sentimental plot with its excesses might carry the drama in the direction of farce. For this reason, the librettist of *La finta giardiniera* in his text and Mozart in his setting carefully distinguish between moments of genuine sensibility and moments when the sentimental genres and their affectations are held up to ridicule. And they do so in various ways not possible in 1760, when the heroine of *La buona figliuola* and her story were not yet a paradigm. The Podestà, for example, is clearly a buffoonish version of a master in love with his virtuous servant. He claims to be violently in love with Sandrina ("Ardo, moro per te") and offers potentially persuasive operatic evidence of his sensibility with winds and timpani in his aria "Dentro il mio petto io sento" (No. 3), claiming to faint with delight ("Manco per l'allegrezza"), to be moved by the harmony ("Si cangia l'armonia / Che il cor fa palpitar"), and to be plunged into despair ("Li timpani, le trombe, / Fagotti e contrabbasso / Mi fanno disperar"), but the effect is finally comic. Later he reveals how little he understands of real feeling—let alone constancy—when he advises Ramiro to forget Arminda:

Oh che sproposito!	Oh what nonsense!
Affliggersi così per una donna,	To be so troubled over a woman
Por la vita in periglio?	that you endanger your life?
Prendete il mio consiglio;	Take my advice;
Scegliete un'altra bella,	choose another beauty,
Dategli il vostro core,	give her your heart;
Che se amor vi ferì, vi sani amore.	for if love wounds you, love will heal you.

Characteristically buffo, the Podestà is too preoccupied with his own self-importance to be very much in love. (On discovering what appears to him to be Sandrina's betrayal of him in the act 1 finale, his chief worry is not that he may lose her, but rather that he will be made a laughingstock). He is repeatedly unmoved by Sandrina's tender pleas for pity—in her aria "Una voce sento al core," the first half of which is addressed to him, and in both finales. He is in love with the idea of himself as a man who would set aside rank to marry for love, but he proves himself unworthy of the sentimental heroine by his apparent lack of feeling.

In their parody of upper-class courtship, Serpetta and Nardo enact sentimental clichés as comic repartee. Take, for example, the following exchange:

Nardo	
Mia vezzosa Diana, perdonate.	Forgive me, my charming Diana.
Se a voi sono importuno:	If I am importunate:

Ha sempre il cor gentile Una donna ch'è bella.	a woman who is beautiful always has a kind heart.
Serpetta Oh bella, oh brutta, Io non sono per voi.	Whether beautiful or ugly, I am not for you.
Nardo S'io morissi però?	And if I were to die?
Serpetta Non piangerei.	I would not weep.
Nardo Dunque vado a morir.	Then I shall go and die.
Serpetta Buon viaggio a lei.	A pleasant journey to you.

Nardo affects noble passion by calling Serpetta his "Diana" and threatening to die of love, but Serpetta's reaction is both unbelieving and unfeeling. In his aria "Con un vezzo all'Italiana" (No. 14), with which this scene concludes, Nardo takes instruction from Serpetta on the manner in which she would like to be wooed, approaching her with Italian, French, and English platitudes in successive verses. When none of these produces an effect on her, he bursts into patter with exasperation, concluding his aria with a new tempo, Allegretto:

Maledetta indifferenza Mi fa perder la pazienza: Qui non serve alla Francese, Non capacita l'Inglese, Non gli piace all'Italiana: Oh che umor, che donna strana, Io mi perdo in verità.	This cursed indifference makes me lose my patience: the French style won't do, the English is no good, she does not like the Italian way; Oh what a temper, what a strange woman, I am truly at my wits' end.

Although *Giardiniera* is Mozart's only "Pamela" opera, the sentimental is a much more frequent and significant presence in his other operas than has yet been acknowledged. As the defining cultural context in which certain characters, situations, and plotlines are presented, it offers a way of understanding an aspect of Mozart's theater that many have been made uncomfortable by, namely, the appearance of sentiment for its own sake—when, for example, in *Giardiniera* the emotional residue of plot events that have already been resolved drives Sandrina and Belfiore to madness; when in *Figaro* Barbarina enters in act 4 to display a sense of distress in a poi-

gnant aria (in F minor) that is not required by the action; when Donna Elvira succumbs to Don Giovanni again, is betrayed again, and still sings an aria of love and forgiveness; when Fiordiligi and Dorabella fail to recognize their own fiancés wearing ridiculous mustaches. Perhaps we are made uncomfortable because these moments seem poorly motivated by the plot, or because they delay the action, or because they seem more than unlikely. What these implausibilities have in common, however, is that they provide occasions for sentiment, for the exploration of feelings. In isolation they may appear to be inconsistencies in the libretto or miscalculations of one kind or another. When taken together, however, they cannot be easily dismissed. They need to be read for the sentiment.[24]

Sandrina as "Virtue in Distress"

Central to the fiction, drama, and opera of sensibility is the figure of "virtue in distress," "the virtue a woman's, and her distress caused by a man."[25] This distress is manifested on the body in tears, sighs, and palpitations, as well as in tremblings, paroxysms, and collapses. A testament to the immediate physiological impact of "feeling," such symptoms of distress are typical of the sentimental heroine. "All such heroines," says Janet Todd, "convey their virtue through their meaningful bodies."[26] At the same time, however, as G. J. Barker-Benfield has shown, the vulnerability associated with sensibility was sexually arousing to men: "Refinement of delicate nerves made women liable to sickness; so this liability of sensibility also became a sexualized characteristic, like other signs of vulnerability—kneeling, say—arousing to men."[27] In the years following the publication of *Pamela,* the danger involved in distress had increased considerably and was to intensify as the century wore on. Although Pamela escapes unharmed from the episode in which Mr. B enters her chamber at night contemplating the destruction of her virtue but finally thinks better of it, later heroines such as Richardson's Clarissa would not be so fortunate. "'Virtue in distress' meant women at the mercy of men depicted as liars, cheats, frauds, hypocrites, rogues, and sadists."[28] It was widely believed, and not only by novelists and their readers, that "excessive delicacy or acuteness of feeling produces an impaired or diseased state."[29] As John Mullan has shown, eighteenth-century physicians and scientists also believed that women of feeling were made vulnerable to illness (and worse) by their susceptibility.[30] In such a climate, to speak of dying of a broken heart was no mere cliché. When Clarissa falls ill after her abduction and rape by Lovelace,

24. See Waldoff, "Reading Mozart's Operas 'for the Sentiment.' "
25. Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* xviii.
26. Todd, *Sensibility,* 120.
27. Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* 345.
28. Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* 221; see also 345.
29. Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel,* 1.
30. See Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability,* 16.

Dr. H offers the following diagnosis: "Her heart's broken: she'll die."[31] Since as a general rule characters do not die in *opere buffe* (with the notable exception of Don Giovanni), Clarissa has no parallel in the operatic world. In Paisiello's *Nina,* however, the heroine goes mad when she is separated from her lover and made to believe he is dead; her sanity returns only when the reappearance of her beloved and her father's consent to their union restores her to her former self.[32] The threat that distress posed to body and mind, even within the normally safe haven of the opera buffa stage, was real enough, and its consequences dire.

The characterization of Sandrina as "virtue in distress," already established by her having been stabbed and abandoned a year earlier, is clearly developed by the opera's extraordinary series of events, which subject her to betrayal, persecution, and finally madness. The role of distress in this libretto, as compared to, say, *La buona figliuola* or *L'incognita perseguitata,* is obviously more consequential and damaging. Mozart's setting exploits the implications of distress to the fullest, invigorating the plot with its transforming force. (Anfossi, by comparison, in his setting of *La finta giardiniera,* represents both distress and melancholy in an almost uniformly sweet style.)[33] Take, for example, Mozart's initial presentation of Sandrina in the *introduzione.* In the opening tutti statement in D major in which all five characters rejoice in the day, Sandrina takes Serpetta's part (Mozart thus renders this quintet in four-part harmony), concealing her true identity. Following this tutti, each character explains his or her situation in a solo verse—Ramiro describes his suffering, the Podestà anticipates his union with Sandrina, and so on—and each verse is characterized by its own distinct melody, key area(s), and character. In her verse, however, Sandrina attempts to establish E minor (ii) but fails, overshooting it to reach F-sharp minor (iii) at measure 136 (see example 4.6). The harmony (and particularly her inability to control it) offers a powerful dramatization of the distress of which she speaks:

Sono infelice, son sventurata,	I am unhappy, I am wretched;
Mi vuole oppressa la sorte ingrata,	cruel fate is determined to oppress me;
Di me più misera no non si dà.	no one is more miserable than I.

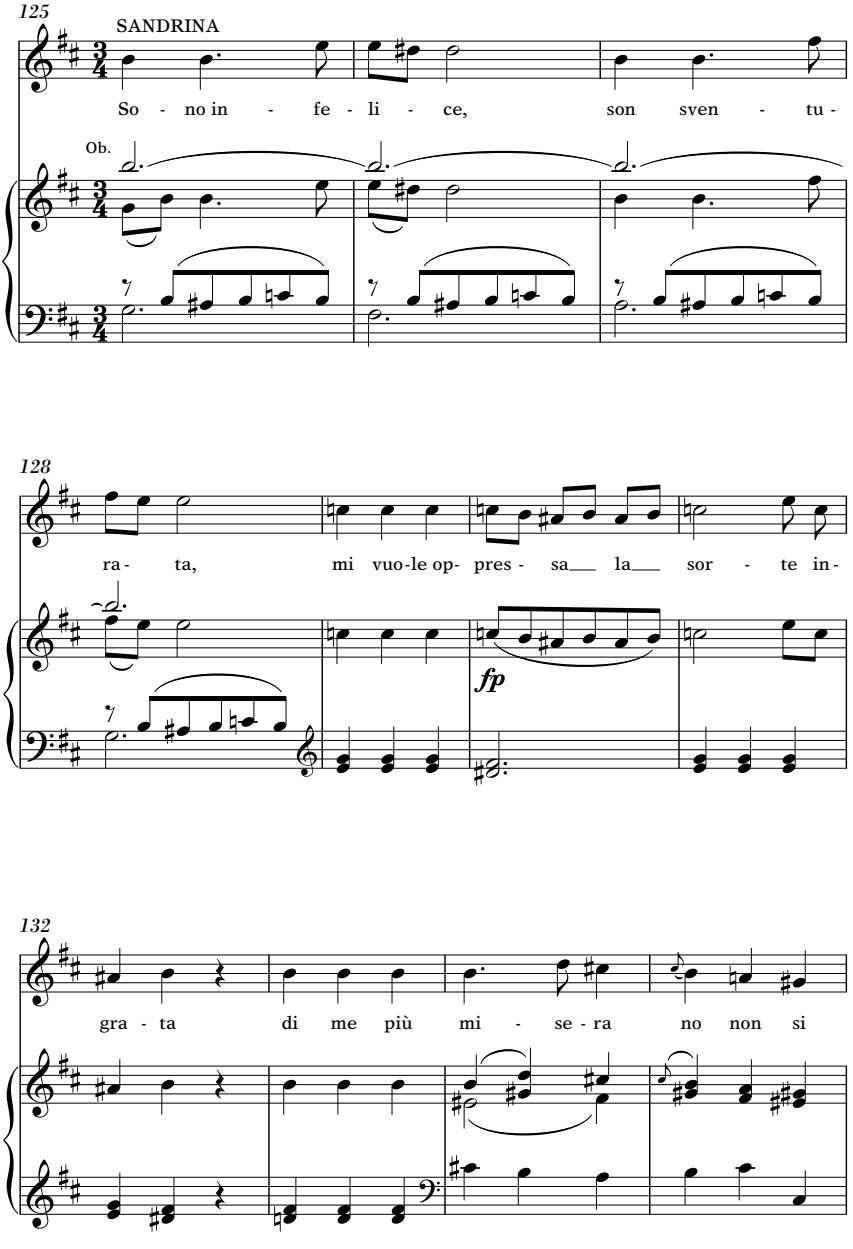
She turns from the Podestà's G major to prepare her chosen key of E minor on her second word, "infelice," and spends the first two lines trying to reach her goal. The word "misera" in the third line, however, carries her irrevocably beyond E minor. Her arrival in F-sharp minor is achieved with the very last syllable of her text, "dà," which is marked *fortepiano* and punctuated with a syncopated accompaniment and a brief melisma, and then repeated three times. This emphasis on the authentic cadence in

31. Richardson, *Clarissa,* 1248.

32. See Castelvecchi, "From *Nina* to *Nina.*"

33. For a detailed comparison of Mozart's and Anfossi's settings, see Mattern, *Das dramma giocoso* La finta giardiniera.

Example 4.6. *Giardiniera, introduzione,* mm. 125–42.



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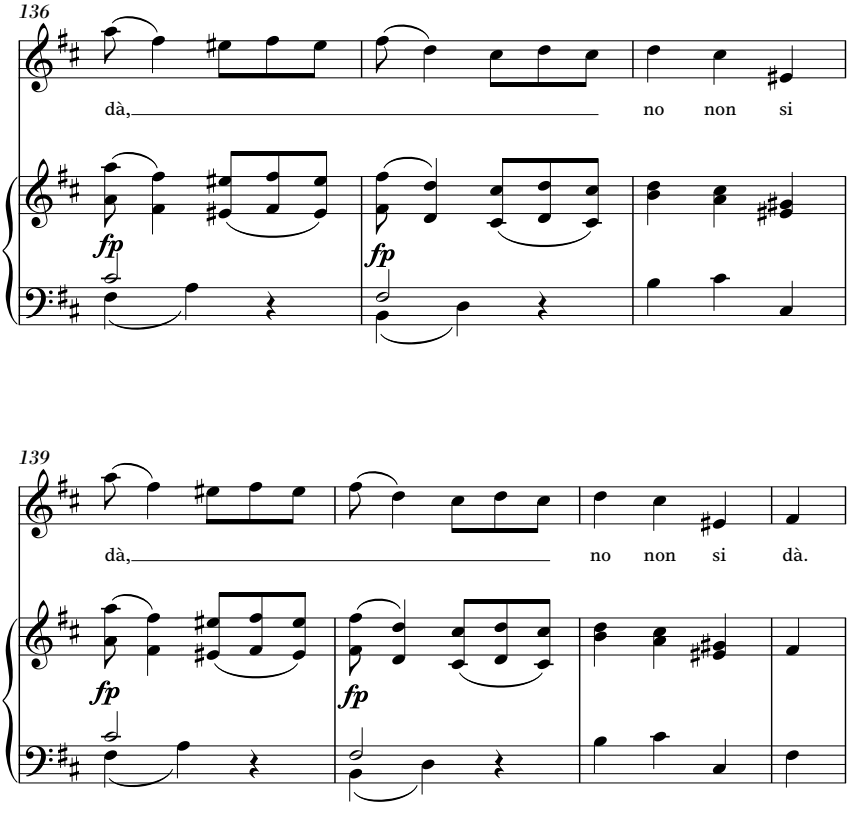
Example 4.6. *Continued*



F-sharp minor seems strangely out of proportion to the suddenness of its arrival. Her modulations here and elsewhere (as we have already seen in the act 1 finale) suggest the vulnerable sensibility that will later carry her beyond suffering into madness.

Elsewhere in the opera, Mozart continually exploits opportunities to render Sandrina's distress in chromatic and striking harmonies. On learning from Arminda before the act 1 finale that Belfiore is engaged to her, Sandrina turns suddenly from secco recitative to *accompagnato* to represent her distress:

Un fiero
Improvviso dolore . . .
oh Dei m'assale . . .
Sento strapparmi l'anima mia . . .
Mi manca il cor . . . nel seno . . .

A cruel
unexpected sorrow . . .Oh God,
assails me …
I feel my spirit being torn asunder . . .
My heart is failing . . . in
my breast . . .

Sudo . . . gelo . . . non reggo . . .	I am burning . . . freezing . . .
io vengo meno.	I cannot bear it . . . I am fainting.
(*sviene*)	*(Swoons)*

In the sentimental genres, as Mullan suggests, "Feeling is above all observable, and the body through which it throbs is particularly excitable and responsive."[34] In the operatic context, of course, it must also be audible. A series of diminished sevenths represents the unexpected attack of sorrow and heartrending distress; a chromatically descending sequence dramatizes her passage through the physical extremes of hot and cold toward unconsciousness. In this passage, in the act 1 finale, and especially in her grand *scena* to come, Sandrina brings the "Pamela" type closer to the seria heroine, but at the same time preserves the essential aspects of her sentimental characterization. Mozart's setting allows us to hear in the music what the text and stage directions indicate should be made visible on the stage, namely, the extreme effects of distress on the sentimental body.

I turn now to Sandrina's extraordinary *scena* near the end of act 2. Nowhere is the quality of her distress more powerfully realized. Having acknowledged her identity to clear Belfiore of the charge of having murdered her, Sandrina is now abducted by Arminda's deputies and abandoned in a terrifying wilderness. The libretto describes the scenery in detail:

> Luogo deserto ed alpestre di antichi acquedotti in parte rovinati, fra quali vi è una grotta oscura praticabile. Sandrina timorosa e tremante, nell'atto che si vedono precipitosamente fuggire diverse persone, che l'anno ivi lasciata.
>
> A deserted mountainous spot with ancient, partly ruined aqueducts, among which there is a dark, accessible grotto. Sandrina, fearful and trembling, while various persons who have left her there are seen to be running hurriedly away.

This gothic landscape with its "partly ruined aqueducts" and "dark, accessible grotto" seems not only to isolate but also to threaten the unprotected heroine, who appears "fearful and trembling." The ruin, of course, was one of the period's favorite symbols of nature's power over man, and similar scenic requirements may be found in other operas of this type. The setting as a whole, as Hunter suggests, "depicts the hostile aspects of nature and, as in the Gothic novel, implies a sexual threat."[35] The challenge such a scene presented to a composer was considerable—not merely to represent the heroine as "virtue in distress" (and thereby to enlist the sympathy of the audience) but to suggest in musical terms the terror bordering on hysteria that could induce madness (in the act 2 finale to come).

34. Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability,* 201.
35. Hunter, "Landscapes, Gardens, and Gothic Settings," 100.

The libretto calls for two distinct arias, each followed by a recitative, as figure 4.2 shows. Anfossi, in his setting, responded with two closed arias in major keys, the first followed by an *accompagnato* and the second followed by a secco recitative.[36] Mozart, however, uses every musical means at his disposal to intensify the drama in the direction of its gothic sensibility. He sets the entire scene as a single, through-composed *scena*—entered without pause from the previous aria and containing two *arie agitate* and two accompanied recitatives—that catapults headlong into the act 2 finale. Stephan Kunze rightly suggests that this *scena* derives from the *ombra-scena* of opera seria, in which a heroic character senses or fears the proximity of death and struggles with despair, often caused by the loss of a loved one.[37] It is realized here, however, in terms of the culture of sensibility: Mozart's setting focuses on the physiological effects of distress, attempting to bring them to life in the music and to provoke a strong sense of emotional identification in members of the audience.

Central to the musical dramatization of Sandrina's distress is the texture associated with the *aria agitata,* a musical idea frequently associated with "virtue in distress" in *opere buffe,* and cued in the libretto by physical signs of agitation and suffering, especially a shortness of breath resulting in an inability to speak.[38] This dramatization of how feeling could overwhelm the speaker to the point of speechlessness derived from sentimental novels. In *The Man of Feeling,* for example, Henry Mackenzie writes of his hero, "There were a thousand sentiments;—but they gushed so impetuously on his heart, that he could not utter a syllable."[39] The association of the sentimental heroine with the *agitata* texture may be traced directly back to *La buona figliuola,* where Cecchina's distress while trying to get away from the Marchese in her aria "Alla larga, alla larga, signore" culminates in a shift to the *agitata* texture and a new tempo, Presto, at measure 13.

No, vi dico, non vo' che l'affetto	No, I tell you, that wouldn't be prudent,
Tradisca il rispetto che vuol l'onestà.	that would betray the respect that virtue demands.
Cessate . . . lasciate . . . Così non si fa.	Stop . . . let me go . . . this cannot be.

Her broken lines, the breathless quality of her "cessate . . . lasciate" (stop . . . let me go), and the incessant offbeat accompaniment all suggest the physiological effects of distress that came to be associated with the *aria agitata* for the sentimental heroine

36. See Mattern, *Das dramma giocoso* La finta giardiniera, 142, as well as 97–105 and 142–55. It is not known whether Mozart was familiar with Anfossi's setting. Several scholars have assumed he was, but there is no conclusive evidence to suggest it, and Mattern asserts that Mozart did not know Anfossi's score.

37. Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 57–58.

38. Other arias of this type given to operatic Pamelas include Rosina's "Dove fuggo" in Haydn's *La vera costanza* and Lilla's "Ah pietade, mercede" in Martín y Soler's *Una cosa rara.*

39. Mackenzie, *Man of Feeling,* 74.

Figure 4.2. *Giardiniera,* Sandrina's act 2 *scena.*

entered *attacca* from No. 20

Scena XV

Luogo deserto ed alpestre di antichi acquedotti in parte rovinati, fra'quali vi è una grotta oscura praticabile. Sandrina timorosa e tremante, nell'atto che si vedono precipitosamente fuggire diverse persone, che l'hanno ivi lasciata.

A deserted mountainous spot with ancient, partly ruined aqueducts, among which there is a dark, accessible grotto. Sandrina, fearful and trembling, while various persons who have left her there are seen to be running hurriedly away.

No. 21 Aria (allegro agitato)

Crudeli, oh Dio! fermate, (settenario)
Qui sola mi lasciate . . .
Misera . . . chi m'aiuta,
Soccorso chi mi dà.
Ah Numi, son perduta,
Muovetevi a pietà.

Cruel ones, oh God! stop,
you have left me here alone . . .
How wretched I am . . . who will help me,
who will come to my aid?
Ah gods, I am lost,
have pity on me.

Accompagnato

Dove son! che m'avvenne!
Dunque son qui condotta,
Infelice, a morir! Numi pietosi,
Se vi muove il dolore, il pianto mio,
Deh guidate i mei passi . . .
Ma oh Dio! per questi sassi,
Non so dove m'inoltro . . .
Dovunque il guardo giro, altro non vedo
Che immagini d'orrore, e solo io sento
Le voci del mio duol, del mio tormento.

Where am I? What has happened to me?
So I have been brought here,
poor me, to die! Merciful gods,
if my sorrow, my weeping, move you,
guide my steps . . .
But, oh God! Among these rocks,
I do not know where I am going . . .
Wherever I turn my eyes, I see nothing
but images of horror, and only hear
the voices of my sorrow, of my anguish.

No. 22 Cavatina (allegro agitato)

Ah dal pianto, dal singhiozzo (ottonario)
Respirar io posso appena:
Non ho voce, non ho lena,
L'alma in sen mancando va.

Ah, for crying, for sobbing
I can hardly breathe:
I have no voice, I have no strength,
the spirit in my breast is failing.

Accompagnato

Ma qui niuno m'ascolta e niun si vede,
Ahi che vacilla il piede . . .
Manca lo spirito . . . oh Dei!
Odo strepito, e parmi
Veder tra quelle fronde
Un orrido serpente,
Che coi sibili . . . oimè . . . dove mi celo,
Dove corro . . . che fo . . . quivi . . . mi sembra.

But here no one hears me, no one can be seen,
Oh how my footsteps falter . . .
My spirit is failing . . . oh gods!
I hear a noise, and I seem
to see among those branches
a horrible serpent,
which hisses . . . alas . . . where can I hide,
where can I run . . . what shall I do . . . here
. . . it seems.

Ah non m'inganno . . . un antro,
In questo, sì, vedrò pur di salvare
Questa misera vita;
Assistetemi voi, oh Cieli, aita.
(Si ricovera dentro la grotta.)

Ah, I am not mistaken . . . a cave,
I may yet save here
this miserable life;
assist me, oh heavens, help me.
(She hides in the cave.)

***attacca* into the act 2 finale (No. 23)**

(see example 4.7). The *agitata* texture, however, ultimately derives from opera seria, where it is associated more generally with extreme emotion, especially anger. Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* includes four *arie agitate* in minor, two in the new sentimental mold for Sandrina (Nos. 21 and 22) and two in the older seria mold for Arminda (her rage aria, No. 13) and Ramiro (his rage aria, No. 26).[40]

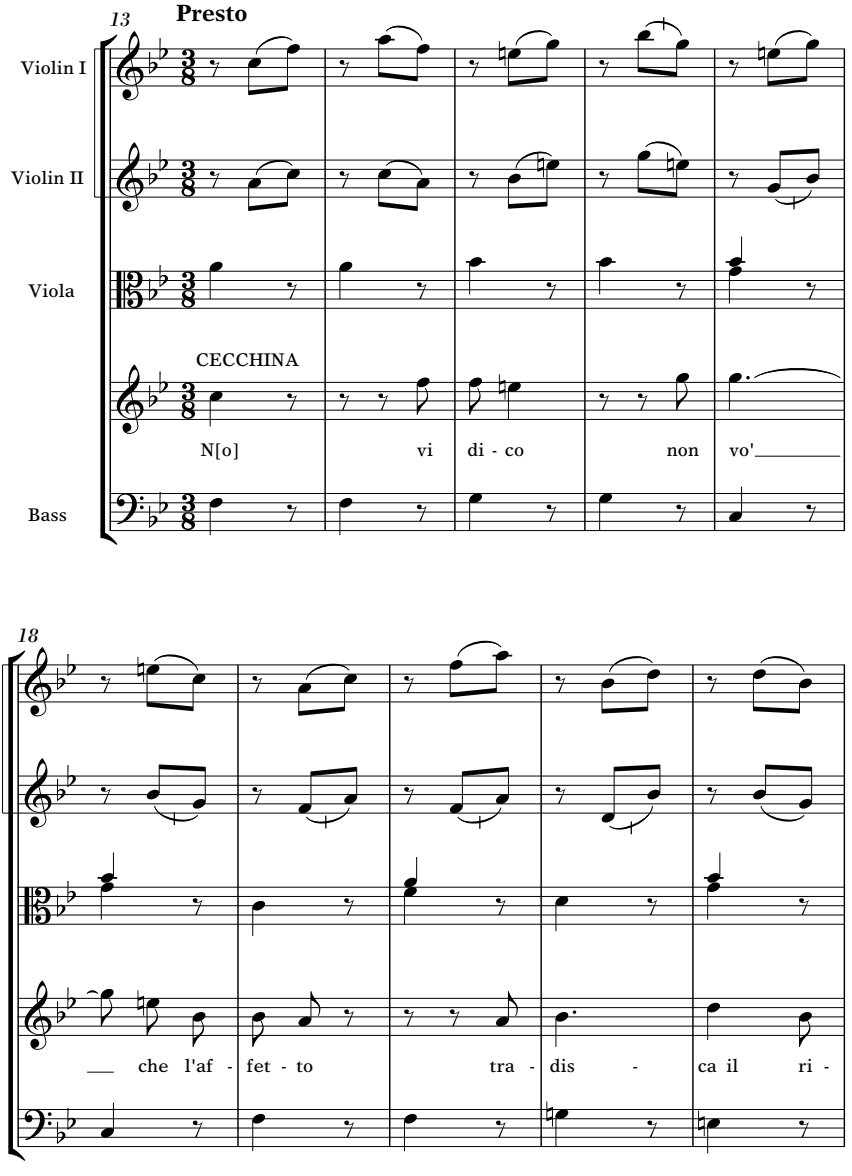
Mozart begins to depict the darkness and desolation of the scene with the postlude of the preceding aria, Serpetta's "Chi vuol godere il mondo," which transforms its G major into the dominant of C minor with prominent chromaticism in the oboes and strings. Sandrina's first *aria agitata* in C minor creates a sense of distress with repeated driving motives in the accompaniment and a breathless melody (see example 4.8). Sandrina's text combines cries for help, "Crudeli, oh Dio! fermate," with her own anxious reflections on her immediate peril, "Misera . . . chi m'aiuta, / Soccorso chi mi dà." Mozart draws attention to the difference between these lines by setting them to two different but related *agitata* motives. He develops a third, slightly less agitated, chromatic motive to accompany lines 5 and 6, where Sandrina addresses the gods and asks them to take pity on her. The hysterical quality of the vocal line further characterizes her distress. The first words of the aria, "Crudeli" and "fermate," are set repeatedly as individual cries separated from each other by rests and rendered pathetic by the *forte* on beat four of the eight-note anacrusis and *piano* on the downbeat quarter note of each three-note cry. A pair of German augmented sixth chords marked *fortepiano* punctuates the phrase "Soccorso chi mi dà," emphasizing the fact that no one comes to her aid. Later in the aria *fortepiano* diminished seventh chords articulate the phrases "Qui sola mi lasciate" and "Muovetevi a pietà." The sense of perpetual motion in the aria is destabilized by Mozart's use of dynamics, which disrupt lines and accentuate offbeats. The portrait of distress is more than compelling, but Mozart does not stop here. Without pause, he plunges into the dramatic recitative, which begins abruptly at measure 76, before the change in tempo to Andante at measure 83 confirms that the aria has ended (see example 4.9). The *agitata* motive from the aria pursues Sandrina into the recitative, interrupting her thoughts. This use of repetition suggests the nature of fear. As the music depicts her steps with word painting, the motive representing her distress returns, suggesting there is no escape just as she says, "Non so dove m'inoltro."

In the second *aria agitata,* a cavatina in A minor, Sandrina demonstrates in musical terms what she describes in her text (see figure 4.2), that she can hardly breathe for sobbing.[41] Mozart depicts the physical effects of distress by placing rests between her syllables, making her sound as if she is gasping for air (see example 4.10). The strings are muted and the texture more subdued than in the previous aria, but the effect suggests the intensification of her distress. While in "Crudeli, oh Dio!" she cries

40. In contrast, Anfossi's original setting of this libretto included no minor arias.

41. Edmund Goehring has called this type of aria the "breathless cavatina"; see his "Sentimental Muse of Opera Buffa," 129.

Example 4.7. *La buona figliuola,* "Alla larga, alla larga," mm. 13–36.



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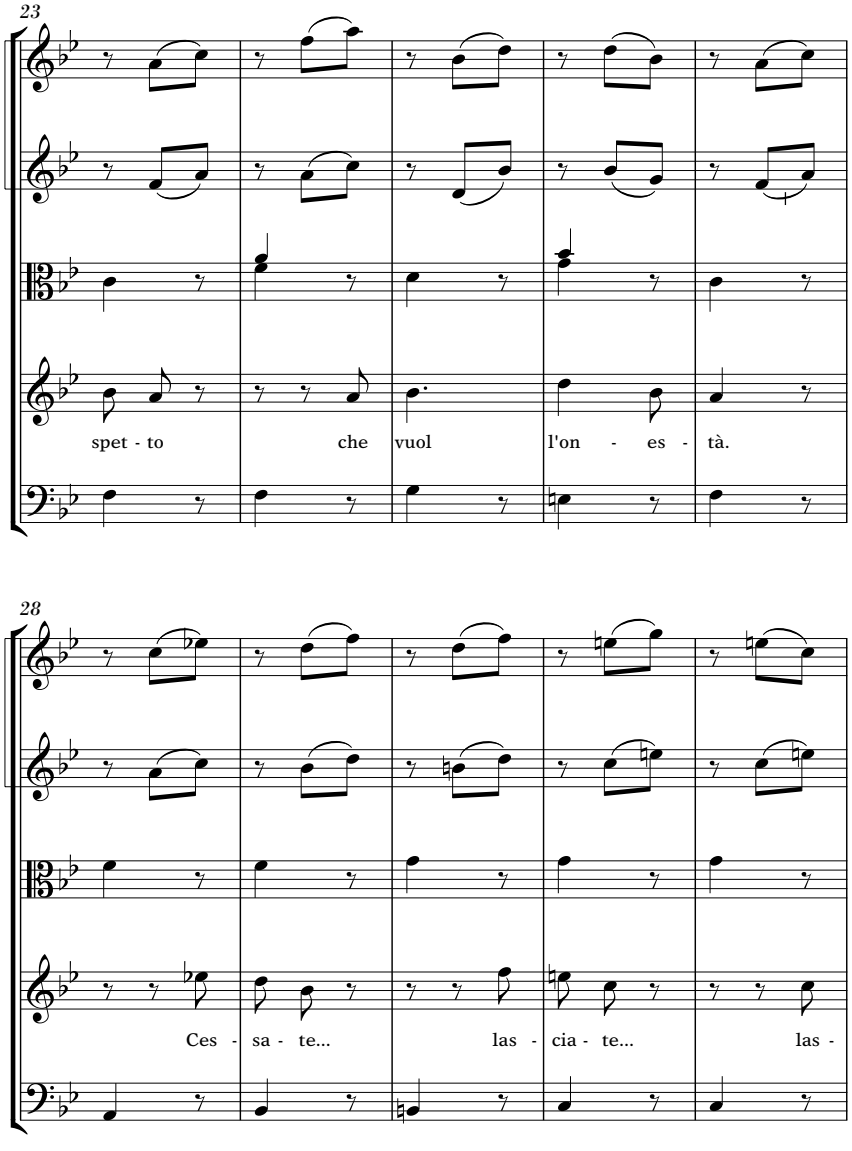
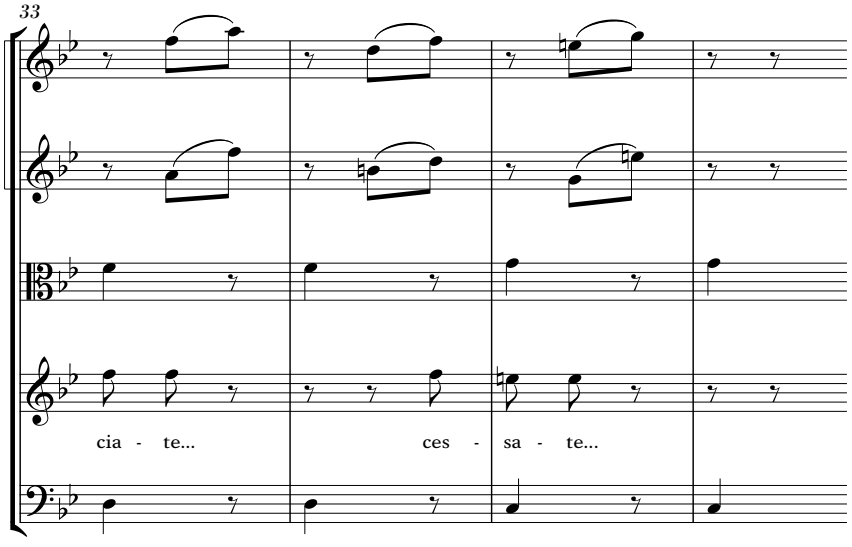
Example 4.7. *Continued*



out for help, in this aria she is unable to do even that much. Her text is delivered *piano* and broken, and this pathetic portrait of the heroine reduced to tears foreshadows her descent in the upcoming finale from hysteria to the loss of her senses. In the recitative immediately following, again without pause, Mozart creates in the orchestra a musical rendering of her experience. Shifts in tempo show how her footsteps falter, and motives in the strings create the stimuli to which Sandrina responds

Example 4.7. *Continued*



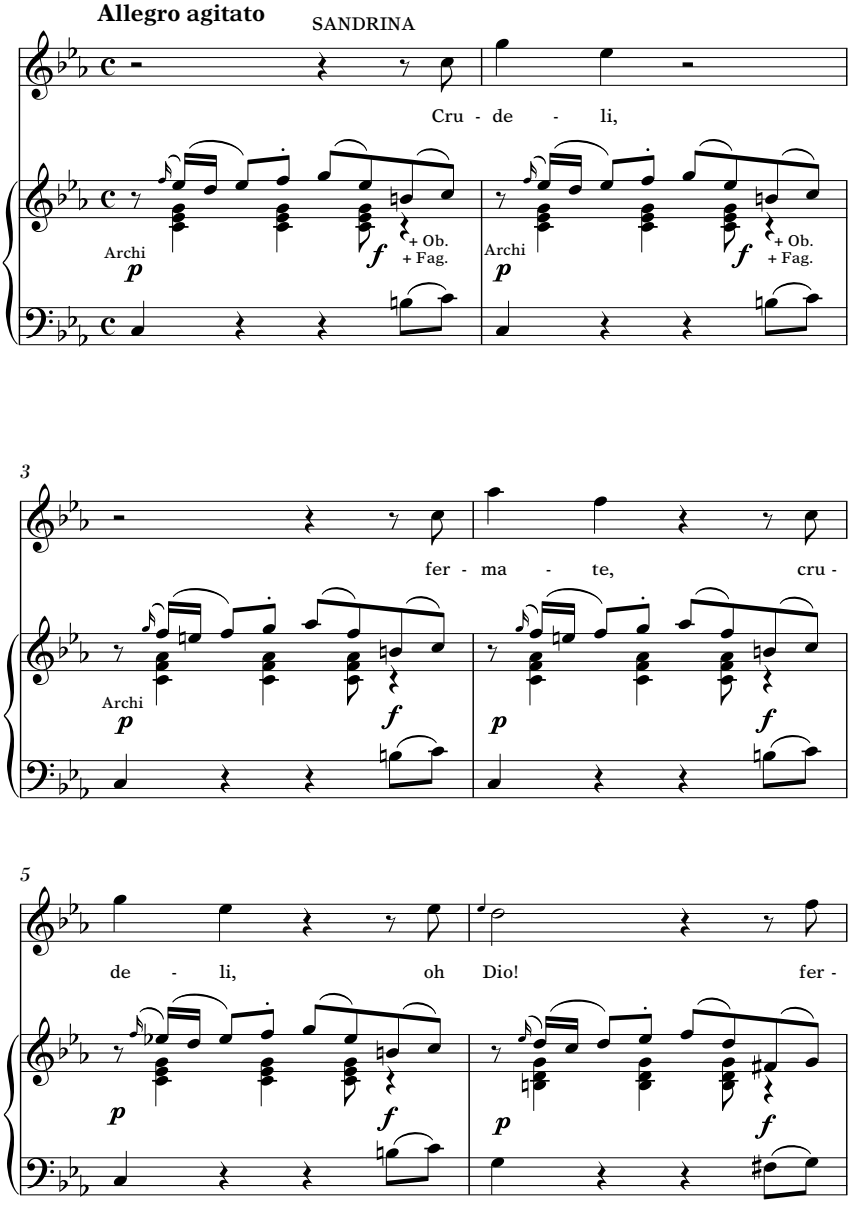
in dread: first the noise she hears, then the hissing of the "orrido serpente" (see example 4.11). But Mozart is careful here to have the orchestra react to her text, and not the other way around. That is, the orchestra creates the noise at measure 116, Allegro, only *after* she claims to hear it. The serpent appears at measure 119 in the violins, Presto, only *after* she claims to see it. Mozart's setting in this way suggests that Sandrina, already half-mad with distress, is imagining new sources of terror in the darkness. But the music does not allow us to remain detached from her experience; it realizes her visions with word painting, making the source of her terror as real to us as it is to her. Hints of the *agitata* motives return to suggest her unrelieved distress as she enters the cave.

In an age when sentimental theater sought to offer audiences opportunities for empathy and identification, Mozart's dark and compelling *scena* fully engages the idea of "virtue in distress" and the dangers that went with it. The extremes of emotional distress, of course, prove to be too much for Sandrina's delicate constitution, and in the finale that follows—again without pause—she loses her senses.

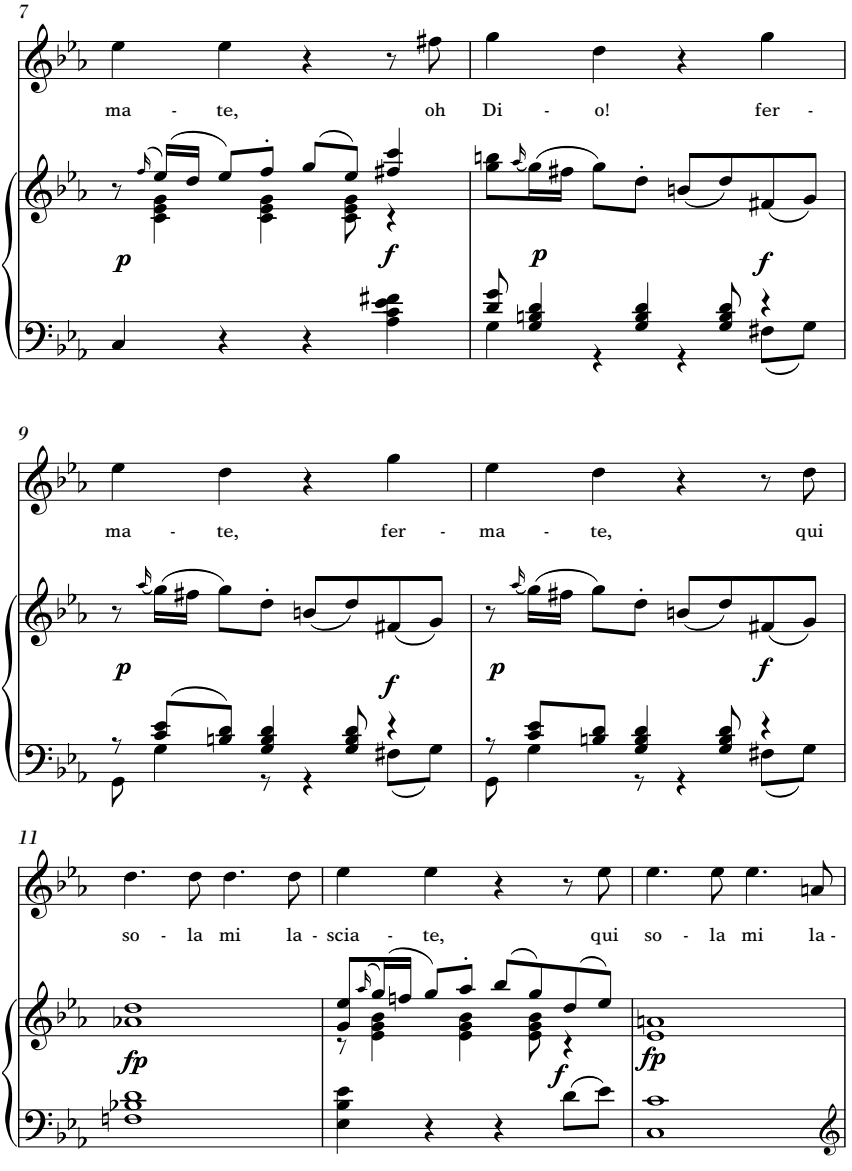
Count Belfiore, Madness, and the Restorative Recognition

In its characterization of Count Belfiore and its series of mad scenes, *Giardiniera* offers a view of sensibility and its effect on the body that is unusual in *opere buffe.* Although sentimental heroines are fairly common in this context, overtly sentimental men and mad scenes are not. One contemporary work, *La vera costanza* (an opera composed by Francesco Puttini and Anfossi for Rome in 1776), includes a senti-

Example 4.8. *Giardiniera,* "Crudeli, fermate, crudeli" (No. 21), mm. 1–23.



Example 4.8. *Continued*



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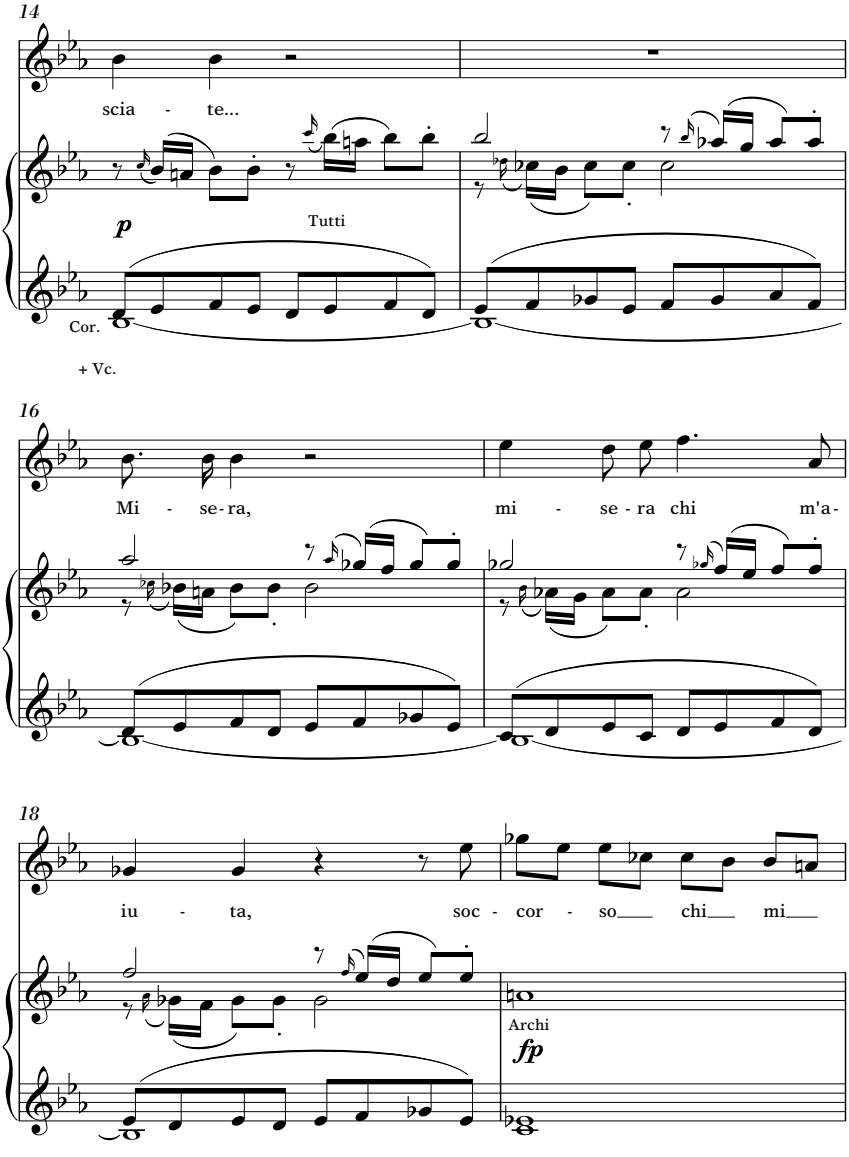
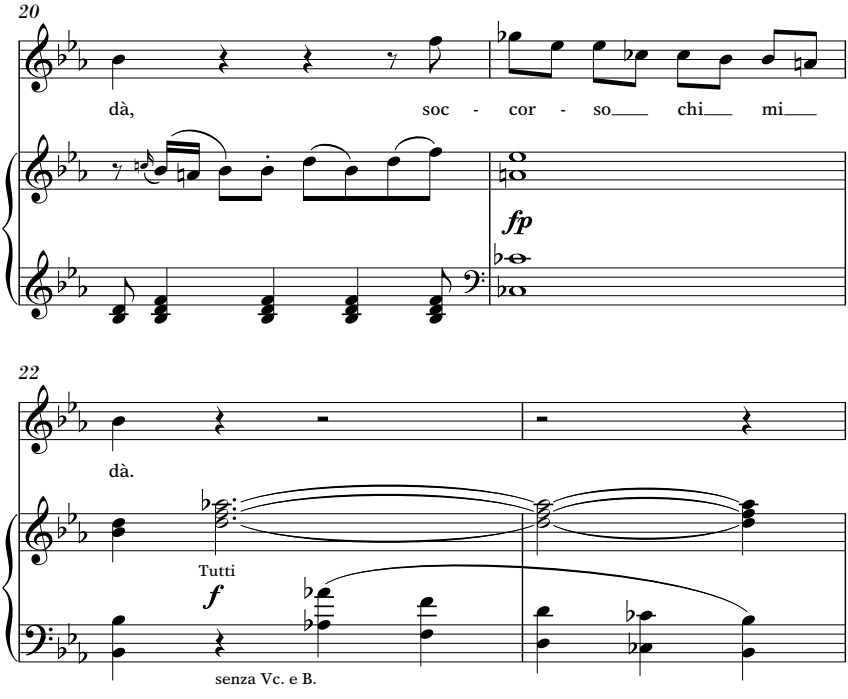
Example 4.8. *Continued*



mental count similar to Belfiore whose madness redeems his character and ultimately proves him worthy of the sentimental heroine.[42] Indeed, the similarities between *Giardiniera* and *La vera costanza* are striking and seem indebted in some ways to the fact that they were conceived for the same theater in Rome. Nevertheless, the

42. See Waldoff, "Sentiment and Sensibility in *La vera constanza*," 105–18.

Example 4.8. *Continued*



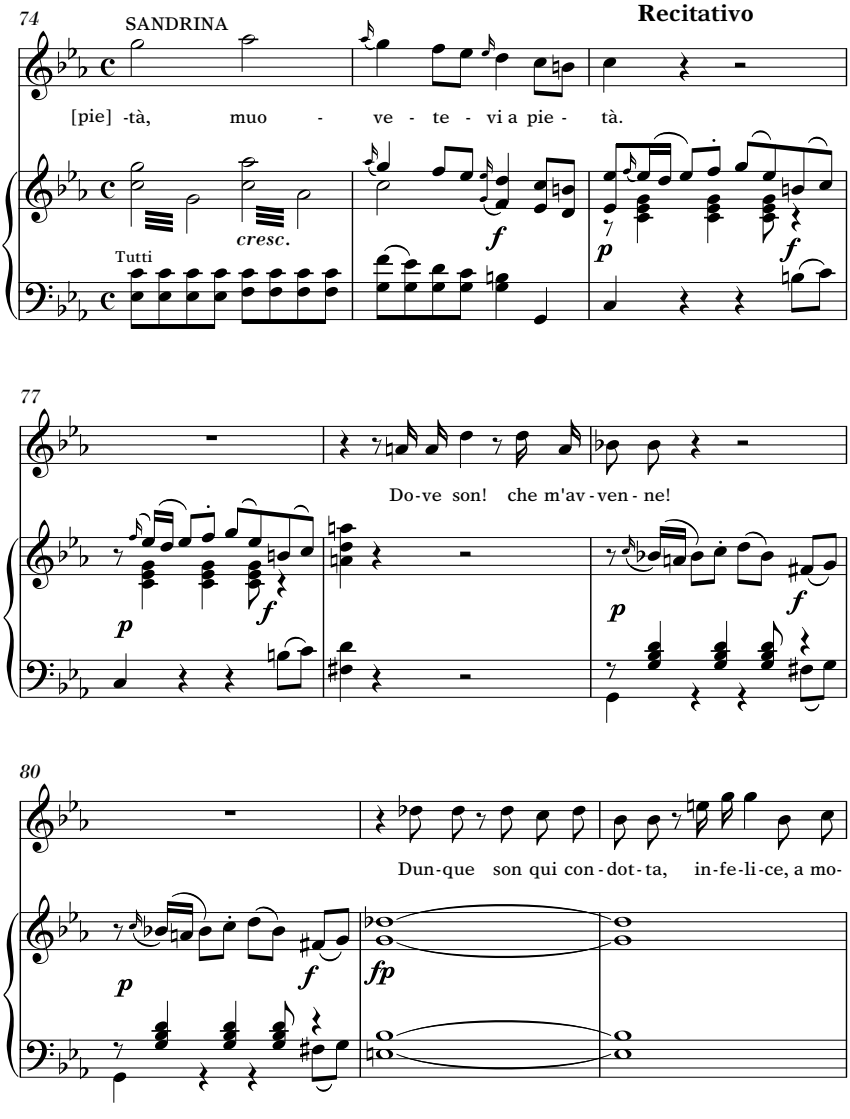
presence of mad scenes for a man of feeling in an opera buffa of 1775 was the exception, not the rule. Contemporary authors in other fields had already suggested that "the [virtuous] sensibility lays open the heart to be pierced with many wounds from the distresses which abound in the world," and it was widely acknowledged that "a privileged delicacy or refinement can forebode illness."[43] Opera buffa, however, had not yet ventured very far into this territory.

The acuteness of feeling characteristic of sensibility, the very thing that motivates both Violante/Sandrina and Belfiore, was also viewed in Mozart's day as the key to nervous disorders, hysteria, and madness. As Todd explains, "Hysteria, an especially female disease, became prominent in eighteenth-century England—just as melancholy or hypochondria grew common in sensitive men—and formed the subject of a number of treatises, notably Robert James (*Medical Dictionary,* 1743) and George Cheyne (*English Malady,* 1733)."[44] The susceptibilities of both Violante and Belfiore are suggested by their names: "Violante Onesti," almost too obviously, combines violent passion with honor or virtue; "Belfiore," literally, beautiful flower, com-

43. The first quote is taken from a sermon of Hugh Blair's, cited in Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel,* 51; the second is from Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability,* 16.

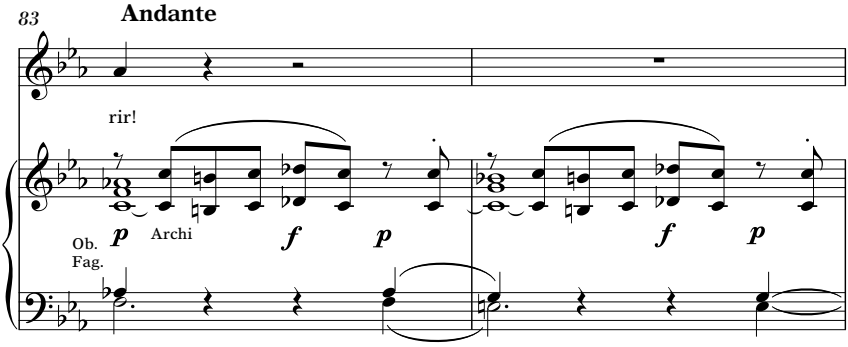
44. Todd, *Sensibility,* 19.

Example 4.9. *Giardiniera,* the end of No. 21 into the recitative following, mm. 74–84.



pounds two familiar Italian words to suggest his fragile nature. That Belfiore stabbed his beloved a year earlier in a jealous rage, when understood in the context of the culture of sensibility, is less a crime than an act of passion. It is the surest proof that he is capable of genuine feeling, but, like many characters in sentimental novels, susceptible to strong passions that might carry him away. "It is 'sensibility,'" Mullan suggests, "connoting both the involuntary action of the organs and muscles and the susceptibility of men and women to shocks of passion or disappointment, which, in

Example 4.9. *Continued*



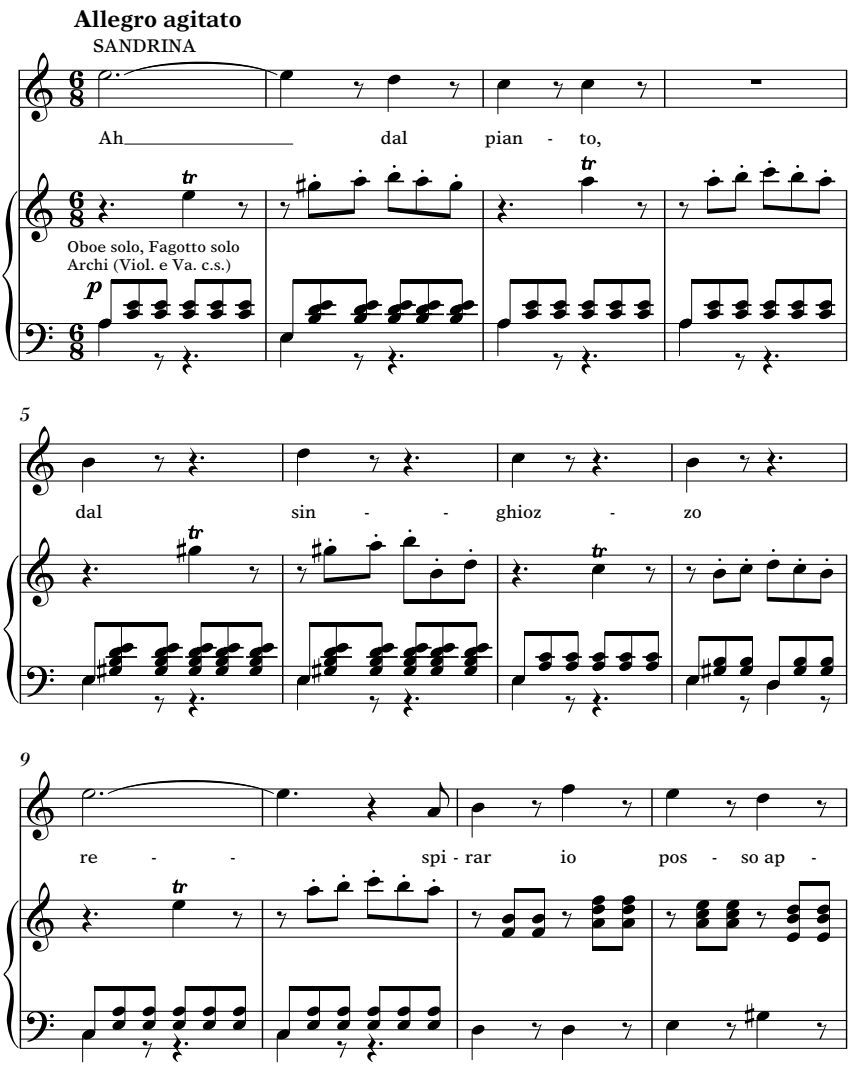
excess of anatomy, allows internal disorder to become observable."[45] Both Violante and Belfiore are victims of their emotions. And if they are not to marry the wrong partners, whether out of social propriety (Belfiore has signed a contract with Arminda) or other motivations that have nothing to do with their real feelings, they need a way out. In this context, madness is restorative. It shields the disguised Violante from the plot against her and from the attentions of the Podestà. At the same time it relieves Belfiore of his obligations to Arminda, which tried his sensibility by requiring him to be unfaithful to Violante. It also purges his body, restoring him to his proper feelings and desires: to be faithful to his first—and more deserving—love. Madness here acts as the culture of sensibility's answer to the *deus ex machina,* bringing about the recognition and reversal required for resolution and reconciliation.

To a modern sensibility, these scenes involving the onset of Belfiore's madness may appear "unpalatable" and even "shocking."[46] Given the culture of sensibility's celebration of instinct and feeling, however, this opera's apparent excesses—the dire situation Violante creates by posing as Sandrina, the apparent insincerity of Belfiore as he approaches Arminda, the absurdity of two characters exchanging Classical references as they go mad together—may be understood in a different way. The passionate impulses that lead from one confusing episode to another are central to this opera's raison d'être. Contemporary audiences valued what modern commentators resist, namely, the sentimental artwork's willingness to represent the immediacy of feeling and the extraordinary changes of situation and understanding it could bring about.

The dramatic transformation of Belfiore resulting from his discovery that Violante is still alive depends for its full effect on the early scenes in which, true to his *mezzo carattere* type, he provides a substantial portion of the opera's comedy. In his entrance aria "Che beltà, che leggiadria" (No. 6), for example, he makes a series of exaggerated pronouncements about Arminda's beauty in a ponderous Andante maestoso:

45. Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability,* 228.
46. See Heartz, *Haydn, Mozart, and the Viennese School,* 497; and Einstein, *Mozart,* 416.

Example 4.10. *Giardiniera,* "Ah dal pianto, dal singhiozzo" (No. 22), mm. 1–19.

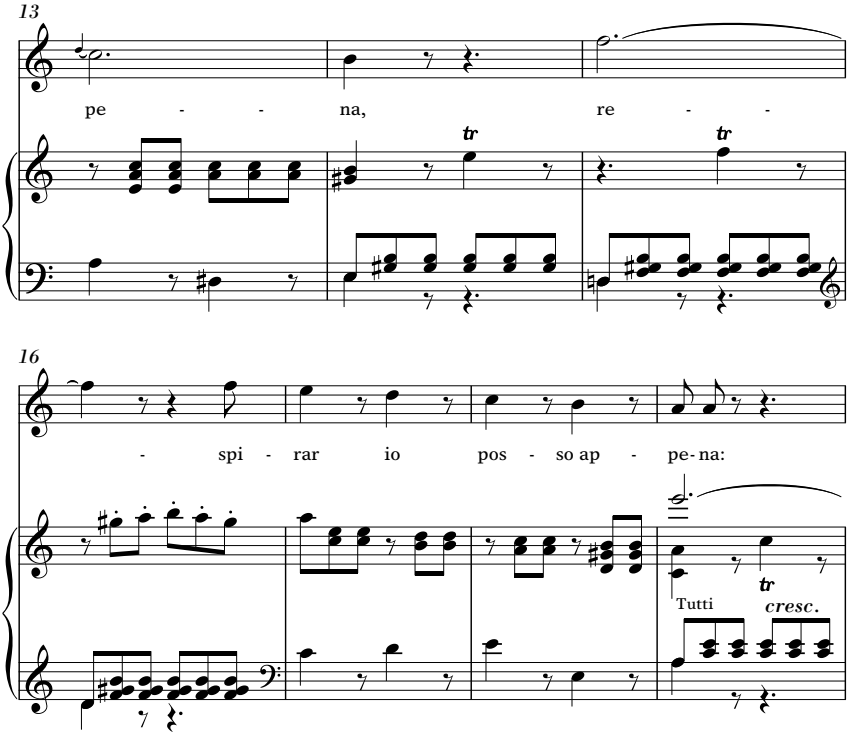


Che beltà, che leggiadria,
Che splendore, eterni Dei!
Guardo il sole, e guardo lei,
E colpito da quei rai
Parmi, oh Dio! di vacillar.

What beauty, what charm,
what splendor, eternal gods!
I look at the sun, and look at her,
and, stricken by those rays,
I seem, oh God! to stagger.

Mozart sets the word "vacillar" to a long melisma, word painting Belfiore's physical reaction to beauty, but the gesture makes more of a comic than a grand effect, some-

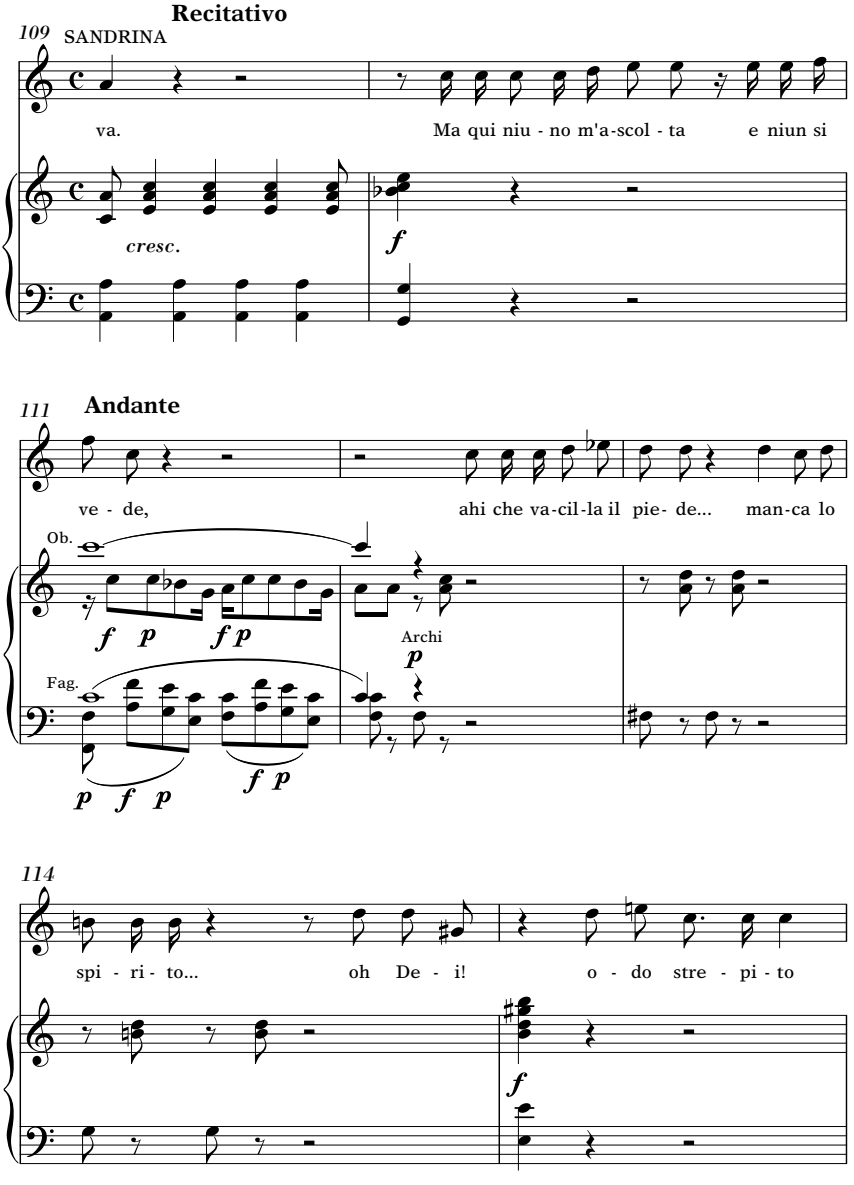
Example 4.10. *Continued*



thing Serpetta confirms when she offers her opinion of him in the recitative following, "Quanto mi vien da ridere, bella caricatura" (How he makes me laugh; what a caricature). The explanation for this, of course, is not merely that his participation in the comedy is required by the genre, but that Belfiore, now pledged to Arminda, is simply not the same man who loved Violante passionately enough to stab her in a jealous rage. His claims of love for Arminda are an obvious pretense, one made possible by his belief that Violante is dead and cast rather unconvincingly in the trappings of operatic courtship. The earliest proof that all is not quite right in his mind comes in his next aria, "Da Scirocco a Tramontana" (No. 8), in which he offers with exaggerated self-importance a catalog of his relations, all of them noble and many of them ancient. When the Podestà laughs, perhaps out of incredulity, Belfiore shows his indignation by taking a new tempo and suggests that, though the Podestà cannot see them, his ancestors are present:

Ecco Numa, ecco Scipione,	Here is Numa, here is Scipio,
Marco Aurelio, Marco Agrippa,	Marco Aurelius, Marco Agrippa,
Muzio Scevola e Catone,	Marcus Scaevola, and Cato;
E quei due che vanno a spalla	and these two, one beside the other,

Example 4.11. *Giardiniera,* the recitative following No. 22, mm. 109–24.



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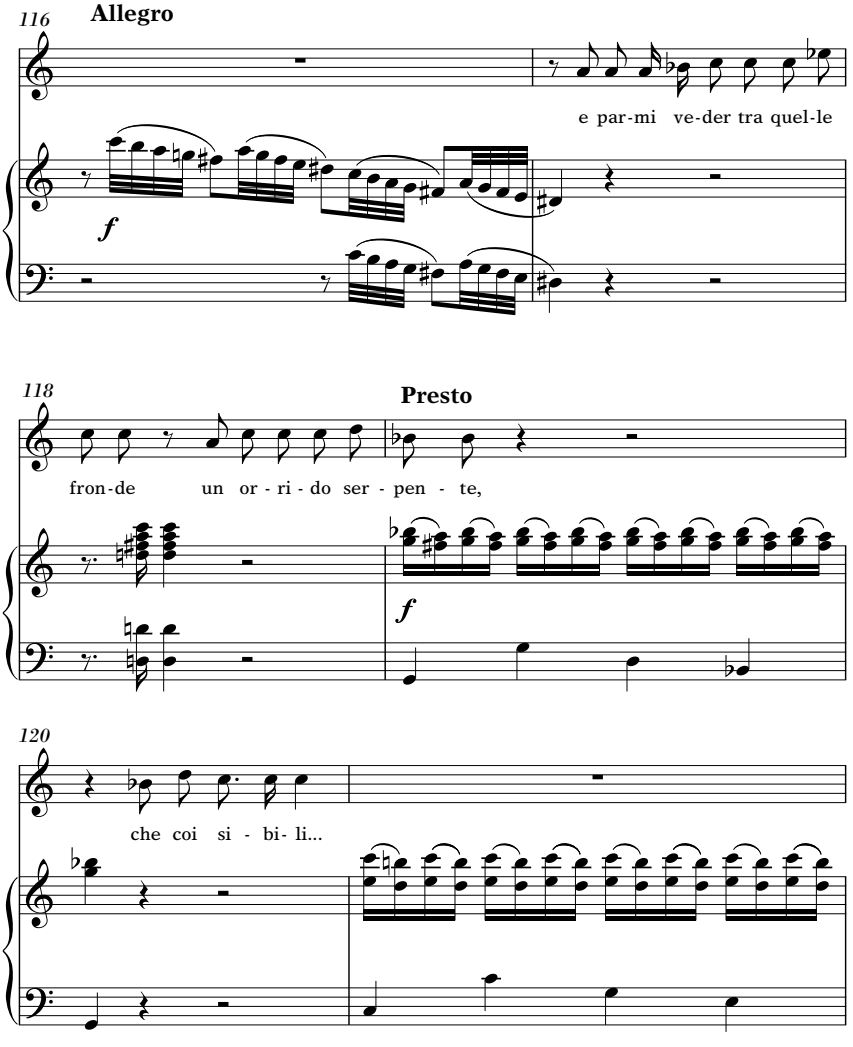


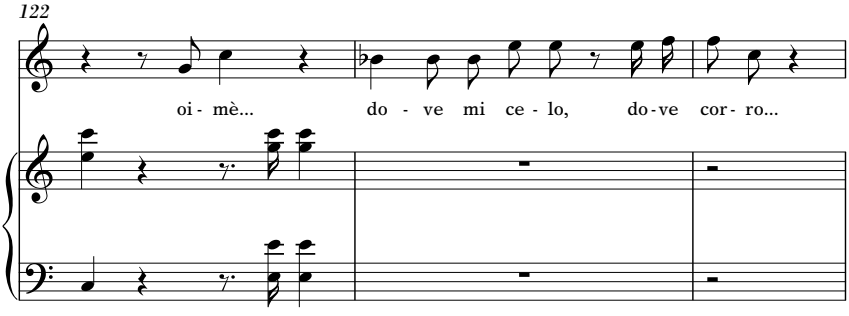
(*continued*)

Don Tiberio e Caracalla,
Con rispetto salutateli,
Sprofondatevi, inchinatevi
A ciascun di qua di là.

Don Tiberius and Caracalla;
with respect salute them,
bow, kneel to every one
of them here and there.

Though decidedly comic (and clearly designed for the original Roman audience), this aria is essential to the opera's sentimental plot in two ways. It confirms—and

Example 4.11. *Continued*



even makes something of a special case of—Belfiore's upper-class lineage, a requisite of male sensibility.[47] As a member of the nobility, Belfiore is susceptible to both the acuteness of feeling and the "diseased state" to which such sensitivity may eventually lead. At the same time, this aria, with its vision of his ancestors, suggests that Belfiore is highly strung and perhaps already closer to the madness to which he later succumbs than his gallant speeches to Arminda have implied.

The Belfiore who stabbed Violante in a jealous rage a year earlier and loves her still is characterized entirely differently from the Belfiore who presents himself as Arminda's suitor. In his soaring lines of affection in the act 1 finale (m. 248), in the opening of "Care pupille, pupille belle" (No. 15), and later in the love duet in act 3, he proves himself to be appropriately matched to the sentimental heroine in rank and temperament. Proof of his love and an explanation for his behavior come early in act 2, when he exclaims in recitative:

(agitato senza accorgersi di Arminda)	*(Agitated, unaware of Arminda's presence)*
Ah che son disperato!	Ah, how desperate I am!
Dacchè vidi Sandrina	Since I saw Sandrina
Non ho pace,	I have no peace;
Non so più che mi fare . . .	I no longer know what to do
La voglio ritrovare . . . dappertutto	I want to find her . . . I have sought
L'ho cercata fin'ora.	her everywhere until now.

Belfiore's behavior earlier in the opera was based on the assumption that Violante was dead and further searching for her was futile. Violante herself, demonstrating the bond between them, understands as much before he has a chance to explain it to her, exclaiming early in act 2:

oh Dio! se fu un trasporto	oh God! if it was in a fit
Di gelosia, e se mi crede estinta	of jealousy, and he believed me dead

47. See, for example, Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel,* 1.

Condannarlo potrò? con troppa forza	how can I condemn him? with such force
Mi parla amor per lui.	love speaks to me on his behalf.

The emotional affinity between Belfiore and Violante is confirmed elsewhere by text and music in a number of ways. Each, on learning of the presence of the other in Lagonero (Sandrina in her dialogue with Arminda in act 1, scene 10, and Belfiore in the opening line in the act 1 finale), for example, reacts with the same exclamation to the gods ("Numi!"). In the act 1 finale, in the act 2 finale, and in act 3, these former and soon-to-be-again lovers are given paired musical lines set apart from those of the other characters. The most important affinity between them, of course, as their text and music repeatedly demonstrate, is a shared acuteness of feeling and a susceptibility to passion capable of manifesting a sickness of the heart on the body.

The proof that Belfiore is worthy of Violante, that his violent behavior should be understood as a testament to his passion, and that his sensibility is as susceptible to the vicissitudes of feeling as any sentimental heroine's, comes in his emotional tour-de-force, his recitative and aria "Ah non partir . . . Già divento freddo" (No. 19). His *scena* dramatizes his reaction to the emotionally trying scene immediately before in which he is accused of murder publicly, then exonerated by Violante's admission of her identity, and finally rejected by her once again when she insists that she is not Violante, merely someone who resembles her. The effect of her denial on Belfiore is apparent immediately, for he exclaims, "Una calda e una fredda; addio cervello" (She is hot and then cold; farewell, good sense). He calls out to Violante/Sandrina as she leaves, but to no avail. This rejection—the most powerful he has experienced by far—sends him reeling. Figure 4.3 offers a presentation of the text for both recitative and aria that includes the seven changes of tempo and mood that interrupt the fifteen-line recitative, and the shift for the final quatrain of the aria to a new tempo and time signature.

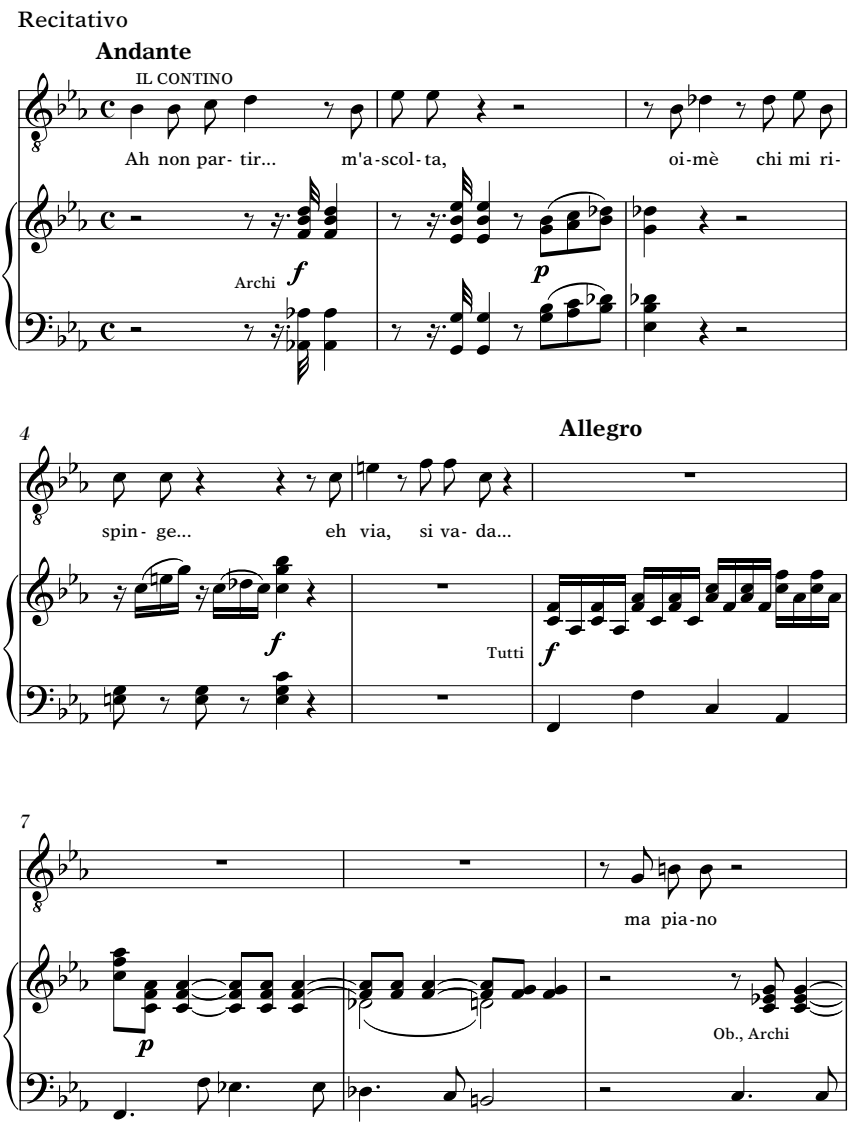
Mozart's setting responds to the smallest details of the text (see example 4.12). Word painting, for example, creates nearly every image. At the Allegro at measure 6 the orchestra creates the disturbance to which Belfiore responds, "Ma piano . . . il suol traballa," the "oscura nebbia" (dark fog) of the fourth line is set to a rising vocal line that outlines a tritone, and the "turbine" and "tempesta" are brought to life in the orchestra. Tonal juxtapositions represent the violent changeability of his feelings. When he imagines he sees Arminda and Violante standing before him, for example, the music takes him abruptly from the dominant of G minor to B-flat major as he turns from the disorientation of the previous Allegro to a sudden Andante in 3/4. The orchestra moves suddenly from the dominant of B-flat to F minor at the Adagio at measure 30; it paints the tears of the women he has betrayed with plaintive scales as he responds, "Ma voi piangete." A third tonal juxtaposition relieves him of the "tuono" and "fulmine" of the Allegro risoluto with a sudden shift to Adagio at measure 39 and an unprepared arrival in E-flat major (the aria's tonic) from G minor.

Figure 4.3. *Giardiniera,* Count Belfiore's recitative and aria (No. 19).

Andante (C)	
Ah non partir . . . m'ascolta,	Ah, do not go . . . listen to me,
Oimè chi mi respinge . . . eh via, si vada . . .	alas, she rejects me . . . ah well, go . . .
Allegro	
Ma piano . . . il suol traballa,	But softly . . . the earth is shaking,
Ed un' oscura nebbia	and a dark fog
Mi va girando intorno,	surrounds me,
È turbine, è tempesta, è notte, o giorno?	is it a whirlwind, a storm, is it night or day?
Andante (3/4)	
Arminda, Violante, **(C)**	Arminda, Violante,
Uccider mi volete?	do you want to kill me?
Allegro	
Ecco ferite pur . . .	Come, wound me . . .
Adagio ma voi piangete?	but you weep?
Che serve questo pianto,	What use are these tears?
Voglio morir . . .	I want to die . . .
Allegro risoluto ecco il tuono . . . ecco il fulmine,	here is the thunder . . . here is the lightning
Che mi piomba sul capo;	which strikes my head
Adagio oh ti ringrazio,	. . . oh I thank you,
Giove amico, tu solo,	friend Jove, you alone
Tu mi rechi conforto;	bring me comfort;
Sposa, amici piangete, oimè! son morto.	my beloved, friends, weep, alas! I am dying.
Aria	
Già divento freddo, freddo, (ottonario)	Already I grow colder and colder,
Trema il piè, s'arresta il sangue,	my foot trembles, my blood freezes,
Manca il fiato, il cor già langue,	I cannot breathe, my heart beats slowly,
Più non reggo . . . oimè che caso!	I can bear no more . . . alas, what a situation!
Per la fronte e per il naso	A cold sweat runs
Scorre un gelido sudor.	over my brow and my nose.
Ma pian piano, pur cammino,	But slowly, I can walk,
Giro gl'occhi, e con diletto	I turn my eyes and with delight
Parmi udire qui vicino	I seem to hear close by
Un soave ciuffoletto,	a sweet bullfinch.
Sarò forse ai Campi Elisi;	Perhaps I am in the Elysian Fields;
Potria darsi . . . sì signor.	that might be it . . . yes, sir.
Zitto, zitto . . . il vento sibila.	Quietly, quietly . . . the wind whistles.
Va strisciando l'aria intorno,	the air moves around me,
Veggo il sole, veggo il giorno,	I can see the sun, I can see the day,
Più non v'è da dubitar.	there is no longer any doubt.
Tempo di Menuetto (3/4)	
Che allegrezza; ancor ci sono,	What delight; I am here again,
Penso ancora, ancor ragiono:	I can still think, I can still reason;
Sì son vivo, il cor mi brilla,	yes, I am alive, my heart is shining,
Vo'godere e giubilar.	I am going to enjoy myself and rejoice.

For a full forty-six measures Mozart makes the burden of an excessive sensibility as real for the audience as it is for Belfiore, painting not only his distress but the various imagined causes of it with compelling detail. With a characteristically pathetic gesture in the final line of his recitative, Belfiore calls on his fiancée (and, implicitly, the audience) to weep for him, inflecting E-flat major to the parallel minor on the

Example 4.12. *Giardiniera,* the Count's recitative and aria (No. 19), mm. 1–33.

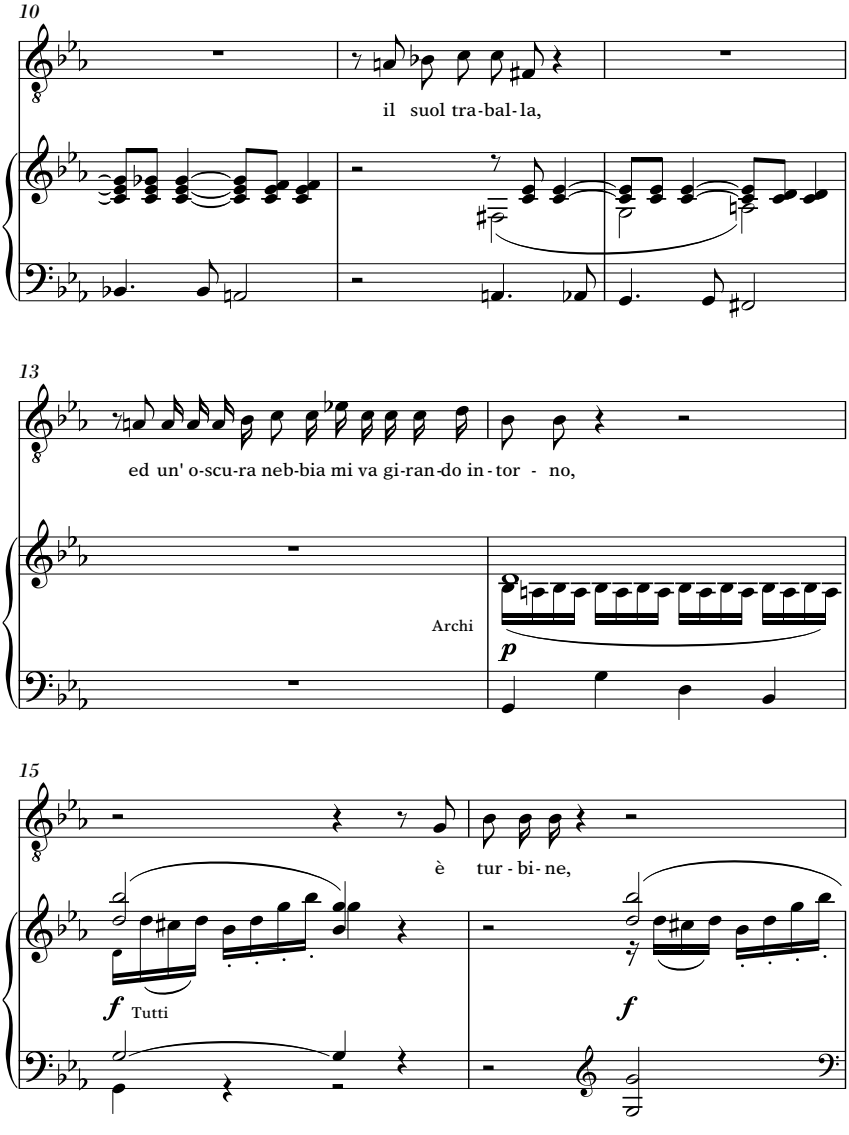


(*continued*)

word "piangete." His insistence here that he is dying hardly seems an exaggeration in a period in which Clarissa dies of a sickness of the heart and Goethe's Werther shoots himself to escape the pain of unrequited love.

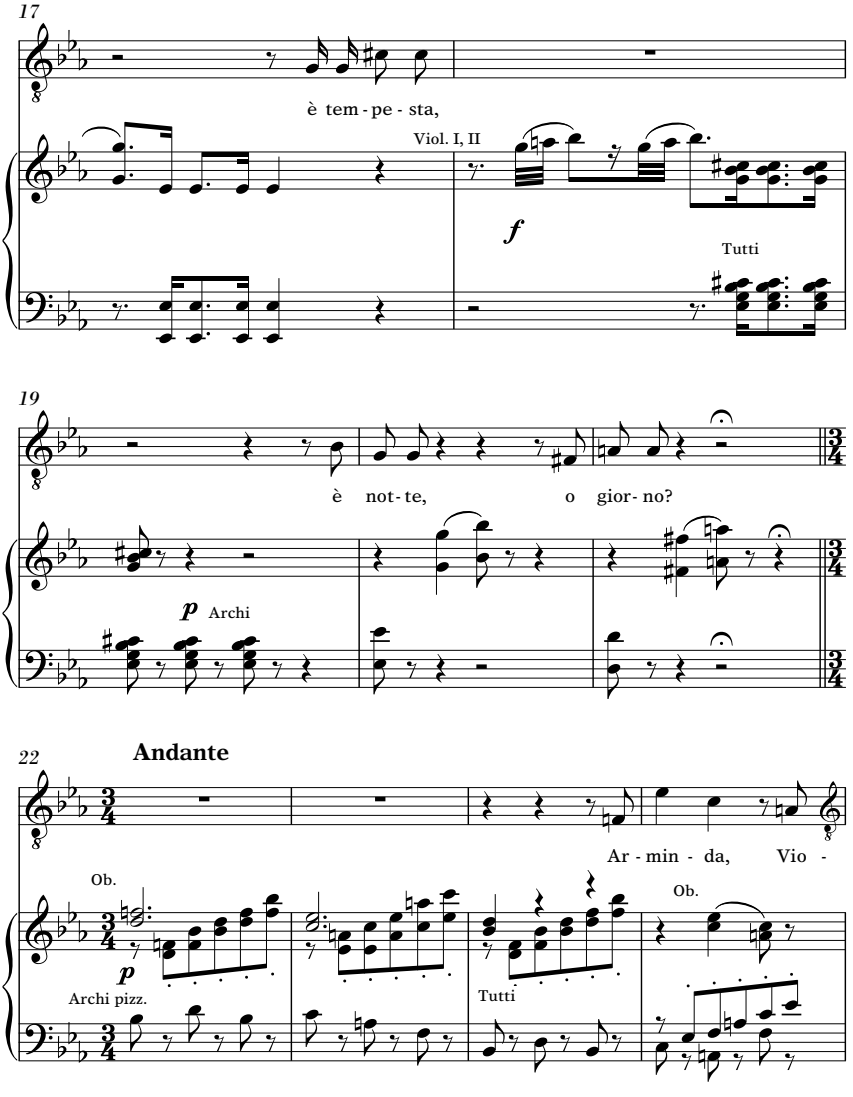
In the aria, Mozart dramatizes first the transports of Belfiore's ensuing madness, and then the return of his reason. (The full restoration of his senses awaits his recon-

Example 4.12. *Continued*



ciliation with Violante in act 3.) The early lines of the aria enumerate the telltale signs of extreme distress—coldness, tremblings, shortness of breath, and a sickness of the heart. Mozart realizes these symptoms with chromatic and broken vocal lines, and, most effectively, paints the motion of the "gelido sudor" in the strings (see example 4.13). Thus far the aria has been devoted to a depiction of Belfiore's distress. Just as Sandrina in her *scena* is frightened nearly out of her senses by her abandonment in

Example 4.12. *Continued*



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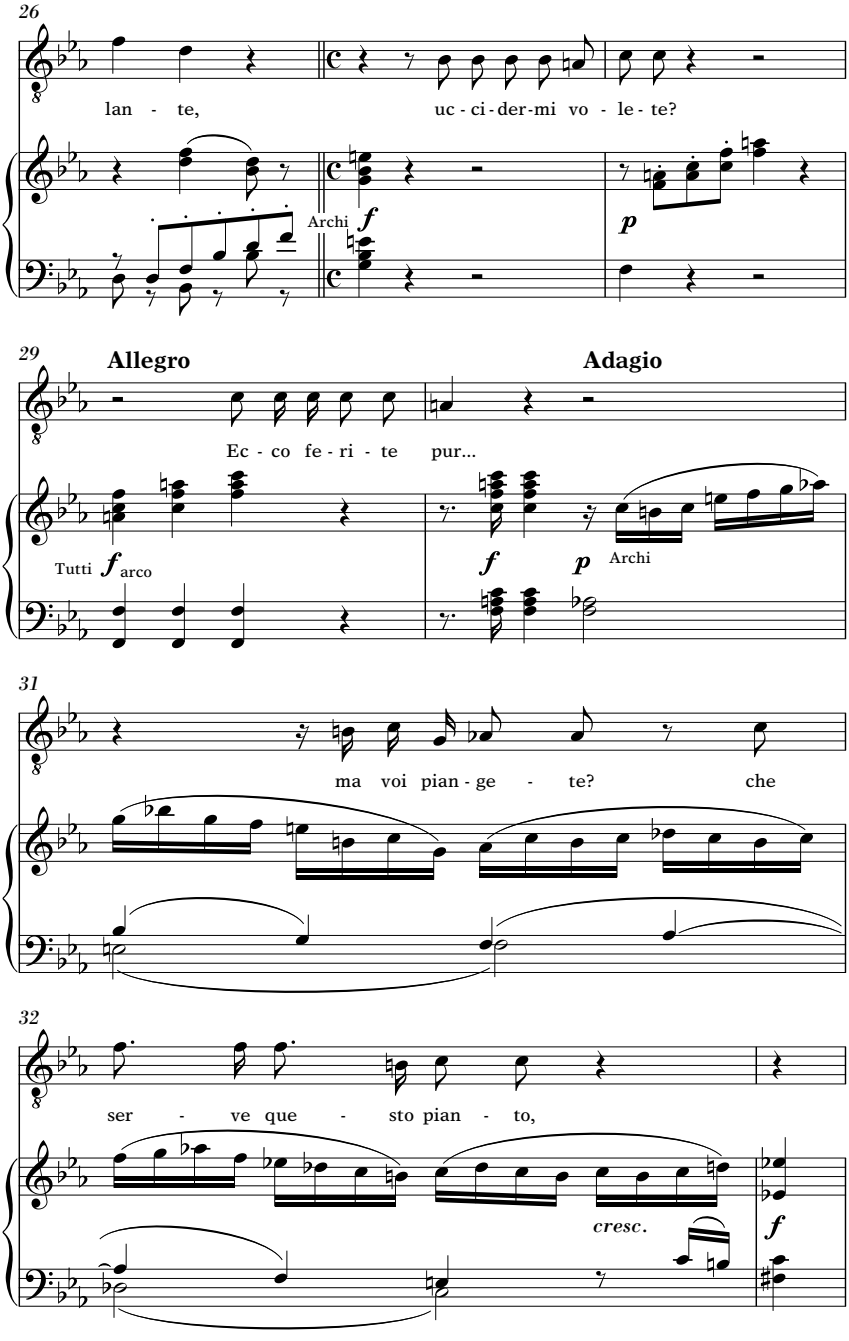
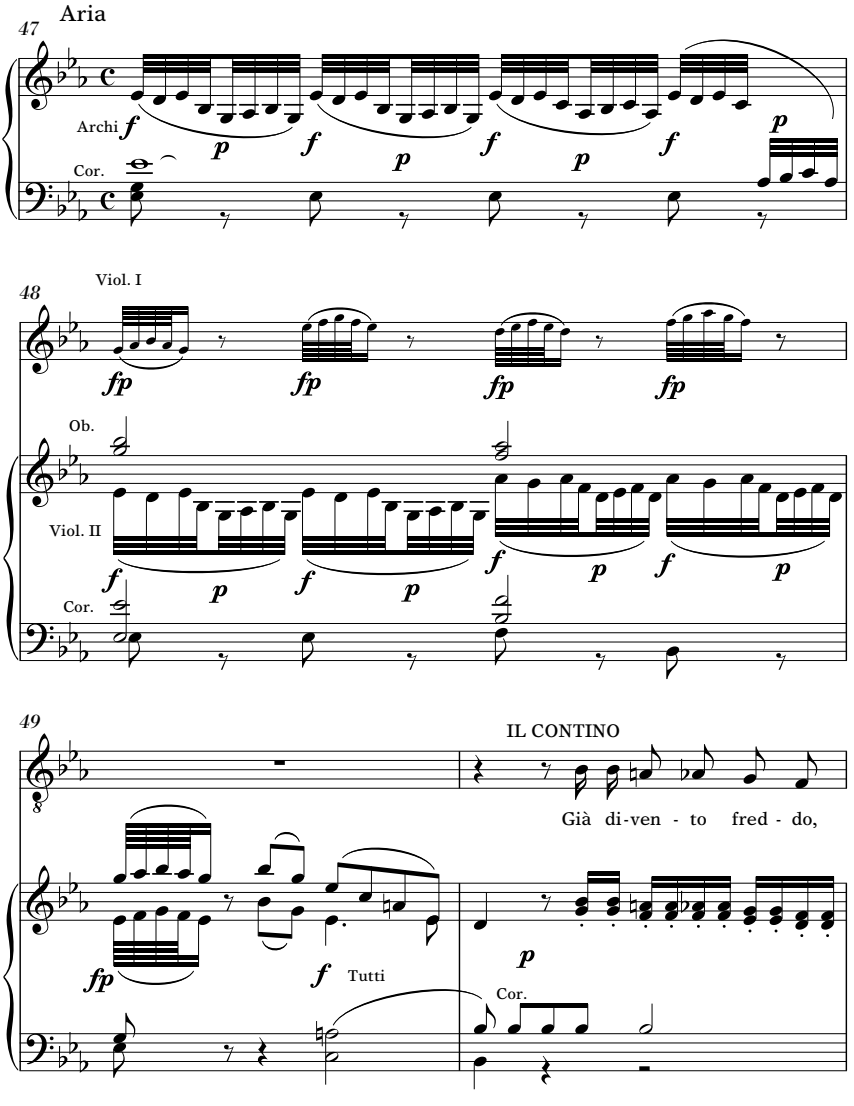
the wilderness, Belfiore here is driven out of his by Violante's denial and rejection; in these crucial soliloquies in act 2, both sentimental protagonists glimpse the abyss into which their overly delicate sensibilities might hurl them (and will in the act 2 finale). As Belfiore's aria continues, delirium descends on him, and he imagines himself in a pastoral paradise, the Elysian Fields. But the restorative effect of even this imagined natural beauty is profound, taking him from C minor at the first mention

Example 4.12. *Continued*



Example 4.13. *Giardiniera,* the Count's recitative and aria (No. 19), mm. 47–61.



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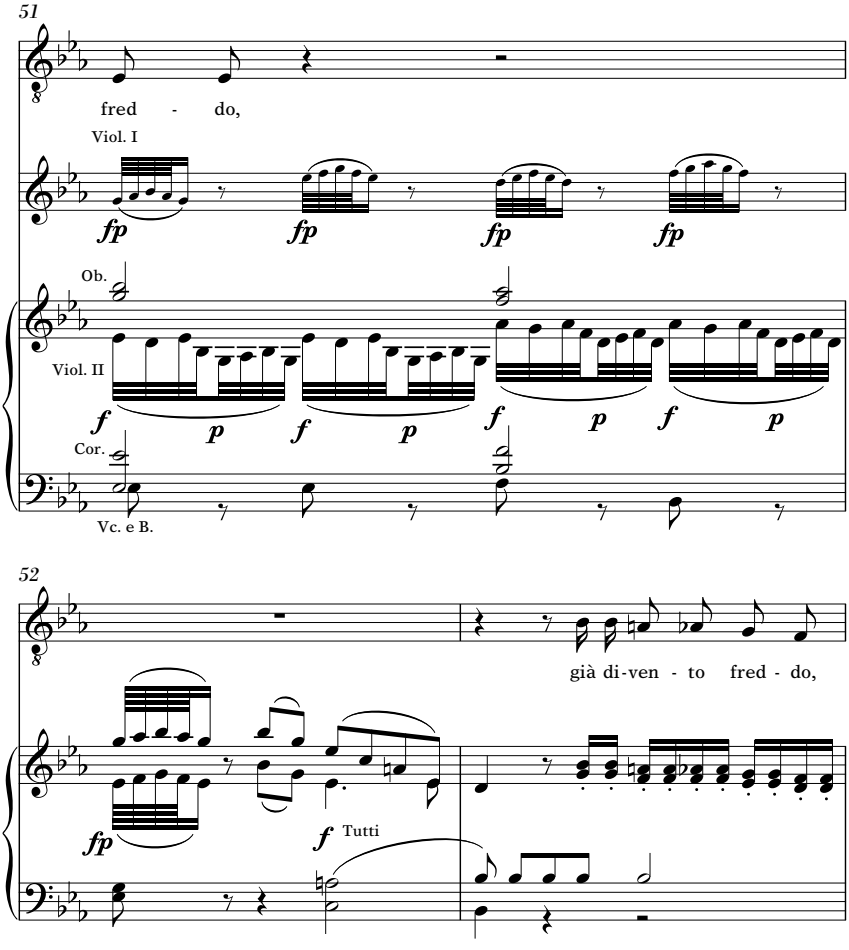
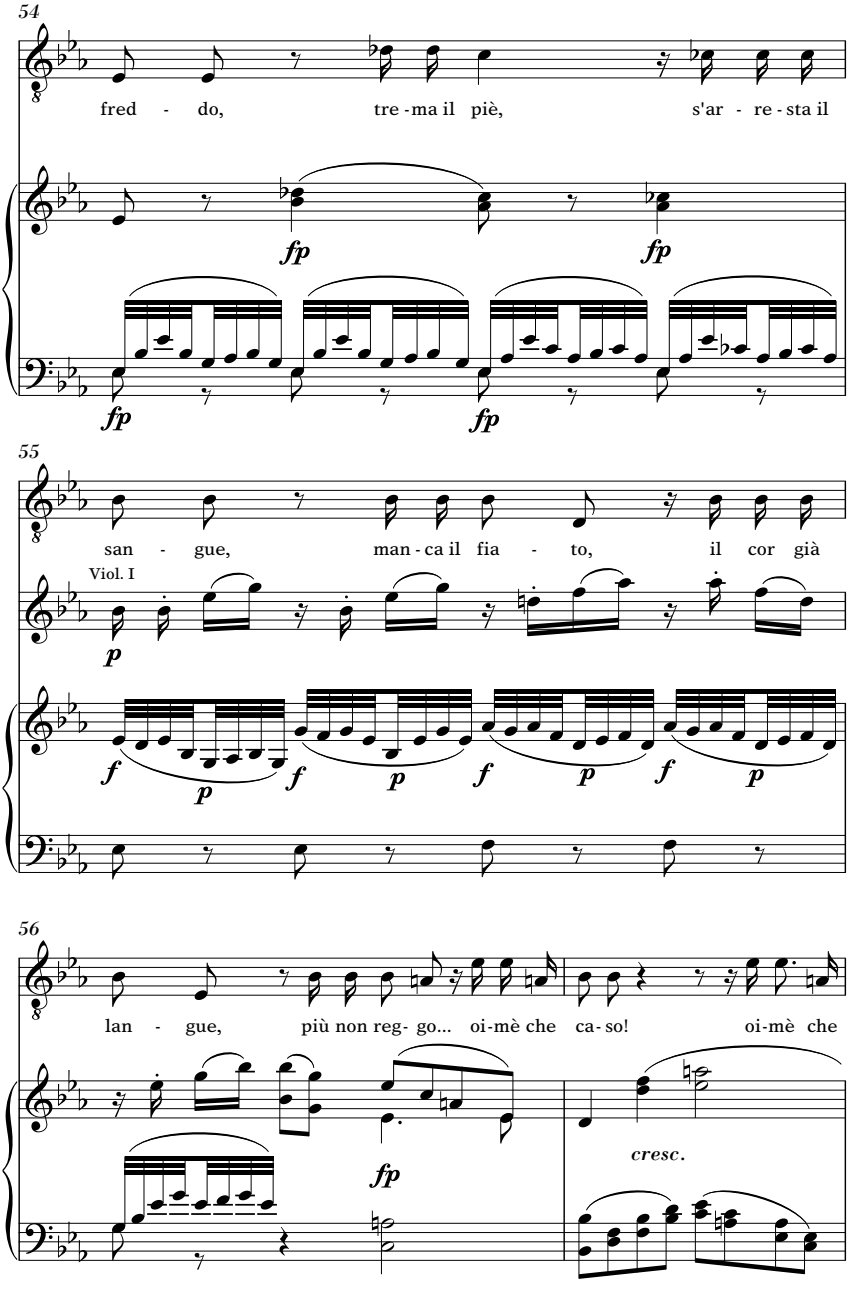
of the Elysian Fields to the dominant. After a brief retransition, the tonic returns, confirming the return of Belfiore's senses at the line "Veggo il sole." A concluding Tempo di Menuetto confirms the recuperative effects of the pastoral garden, whether imagined or real. Belfiore expresses his delight in the untroubled diatonicism of his soaring lines, culminating in an exuberant melisma on "giubilar," and reminding us at the same time of his "excessive" sensibility.

Example 4.13. *Continued*



With Belfiore's *scena* in mind, I turn now to the climactic mad scene Sandrina and Belfiore share in the act 2 finale and the restoration of the lovers to their right minds (and hearts) in act 3. At the start of the finale, Belfiore and Nardo enter looking for Violante. Arminda, the Podestà, and Serpetta arrive soon after, and the cover of darkness leads to various encounters in which one character is mistaken for another. Ramiro, determined to expose Arminda ("Ora il tutto scoprirò" [Now I will discover everything], he says to her), turns from G minor to G major at measure 107 and calls servants from the wings with torches to shed light on the proceedings. This illumination of the stage, however, does not bring its customary enlightenment. Quite the reverse, the shock of discovery brings confusion and finally madness. Arminda accuses Belfiore with a strident new theme in C major (m. 167); the Podestà accuses Sandrina with the same theme. Immediately, she begins to feel the onset of

Example 4.13. *Continued*



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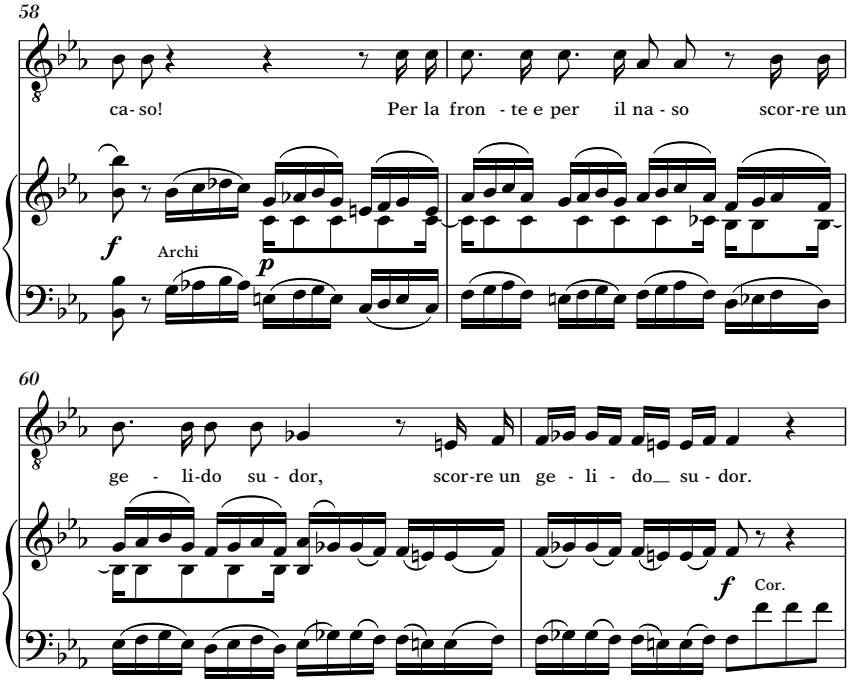
Example 4.13. *Continued*



madness: "Oimè, vacilla, gira la testa, / Parmi che il suolo vada a mancar" (Oh dear, I am dizzy, my head is spinning, I feel as though the ground were giving way). She turns first to G minor, but, as if the ground were in fact giving way, cannot cadence in G minor and turns to A minor; eighth-note motives in the orchestra depict her phrase "gira la testa."

As the others turn to accuse each other, Belfiore and Sandrina, singing the same text in sixths in perfect sympathy, descend into delirium together:

S'offusca il cielo l'aria s'intorbida,	The sky darkens, the air is growing heavy,
Io sudo e palpito, agghiaccio e tremo,	I am sweating and panting, I grow cold and tremble,
E già comincio a delirar.	and I am beginning to get delirious.

The darkening sky, the difficulty breathing, the coldness and paroxysms are all by now familiar signs of what happens when a delicate sensibility is overtaxed. They turn from the established key at this point in the finale, G major, toward C minor (a key already associated with distress in the act 1 finale, Sandrina's *aria agitata* "Crudeli, fermate, crudeli," and elsewhere) with their first words, "S'offusca il cielo," which Mozart portrays in the orchestra and voice with descending stepwise motion. The

trembling and the oncoming delirium are suggested by further passages of "spinning" eighth notes, marked *fortepiano.* A few bars later, both have removed to a pastoral landscape of their own imagining:

Sandrina	
Mio Tirsi, deh senti le dolci sirene,	My Thyrsus, listen to the sweet sirens,
Con placido incanto qui sciolgono il canto;	with peaceful magic they release their songs,
E in dolce riposo ci fanno goder.	enabling us to enjoy sweet repose.
The Count	
Ascolta, mia Clori, la lira d'Orfeo,	Hear, my Cloris, Orpheus's lyre,
Che incanta le belve, che muove le selve,	which charms the wild beasts, which moves the woods,
E arresta nell'onde rapito il nocchier.	and stops the helmsman enchanted in the sea.
Sandrina, The Count	
Che caro contento,	What happy contentment,
Che grato piacer.	what welcome pleasure.

The music marks the move to an imagined pastoral setting with a sudden shift to a G-major Andantino in 3/4. (This imagined pastoral paradise is surely related to the Tempo di Menuetto that concluded Belfiore's aria No. 19.) The lovers in their maddened state transform the accusations of the others into benevolent fantasies: Sandrina hears only sweet music; Belfiore imagines Orpheus's lyre has calmed the wild beasts.[48] Oboes and bassoons provide the music the two protagonists "hear." Later in the finale the two troubled souls imagine themselves as "terrible Medusa" and "fearless Alcides," characters from myth who would have nothing to fear in the present situation. The pain from which Sandrina and Belfiore are trying to escape, however, is audible once again at the line, "Quando finisce, oh Dei, / La vostra crudeltà" (when, oh gods, will your cruelty end?), which culminates in a striking chromatic realization of "vostra crudeltà" in contrary stepwise motion.

At the end of the finale, a pair of quatrains—one for the sane characters, and one for the mad lovers—emphasizes the simultaneous presence of two distinct realities:

Serpetta, Arminda, Ramiro, The Podestà, Nardo	
Che caso funesto,	What a dreadful event,
Che gran frenesia;	what great frenzy;
Più strana pazzia	surely no one could find
Chi mai può trovar.	a stranger madness.

48. The Count in *La vera costanza,* while in the throes of madness, also imagines that he hears Orpheus's lyre.

Sandrina, The Count	
Che giubilo è questo,	What joy is this,
Che grata armonia,	what delightful harmony,
Che bella allegria;	what lovely happiness;
Vogliamo ballar.	let us dance.

Mozart presents the first quatrain in a homophonic setting (mm. 368–77) that culminates on the dominant. He then follows it with an imitative setting of the lovers' quatrain to a new melody (a kind of *bourée* to which the actors may actually dance) beginning at measure 378. The lovers' arrival here in C major, the goal of this finale, may be thought of as a corrective to the C minor associated with their distress. The real world and the mad one are thus distinguished from one another in the music. Mozart makes the lovers' delirium as real as the chaos that inspired it. The pastoral character of their music very clearly suggests their removal from the real world to an Arcadian paradise, in which painful memories and troubling realities cannot disturb them. In order to end the finale with the expected homophonic tutti, the other characters now set their quatrain to the lovers' tune. The homophonic ending of this internal finale, then, in which characters still trapped in a state of conflict and confusion make a musically coherent and unified statement, foreshadows the reconciliation of all parties to take place in act 3 (as Hunter has suggested about internal finales more generally). At the same time, the fact that these two disparate texts are sung to the same melody appears to cede victory—at least temporarily—to the maddened view of reality represented by the lovers.

The pastoral paradise of the act 2 finale, of course, is imagined only. In act 3, once their madness has spent itself, both Violante/Sandrina and Belfiore awake in the garden, restored to their senses. Mozart presents this scene and their recitative and duet "Dove mai son! . . . Tu mi lasci?" (No. 27) in sentimental terms: Adagio, with muted strings.[49] A coherent melody in the orchestra, complete with distant horn call, is presented here at a remove from the utterances of the protagonists, providing the "dolce sinfonia" mentioned in the stage directions and complementing the pastoral image created by the scenery. In the first tempo of the duet, Belfiore, having been rebuffed one last time, makes an impassioned plea in a first verse, to which Sandrina replies in a second.

The Count	
(da sè)	*(Aside)*
(Oh fiero istante!)	(Oh cruel moment!)
Idol mio, mio dolce amore;	My dear, my sweet love;
Ah, non sai, che questo core	you do not know how this heart
Già si sente, oh Dio! mancar.	already feels itself failing, oh God!

49. The association of this sentimental texture with the restorative effects of sleep may also be found in Cecchina's touching aria "Vieni, il mio seno."

Sandrina	
Sì; ti lascio, ingrato amante;	Yes, I am leaving you, ungrateful lover;
Per te il cor non vive in pene,	for you my heart does not live in torment;
Son son io l'amato bene,	I am not your best beloved,
E ti deggio abbandonar.	and I must leave you.

As one expects of Mozart's seduction duets, the noncongruence of text and music here is crucial to the drama. Sandrina rejects Belfiore as an "ingrato amante," and she denies her attachment to him. But she sets her words to his tune, adding only a poignant melismatic passage on "abbandonar." Her text initiates an exchange characterized by pathetic feeling in which she tries to leave him, complete with affective turns to F minor (the parallel minor in the local context) and C minor (a key that has already been associated with their emotional pain). But her music, taken from his soaring declaration of love, gives the lie to her words and promises the reunion to come in the Allegro at measure 164, in which Sandrina (now Violante) and Belfiore sing a text in celebration of love *a due* and finally sound like lovers. Cured of their madness, they are now free to act in harmony with their feelings for the first time in the opera.

The presence of the natural (as opposed to the social) world plays a crucial role in these scenes as an imagined destination, a place where the tortured lovers can escape the accusations of and obligations to others. Both the act 2 finale and the act 3 love duet follow the pattern of Belfiore's *scena* in which madness is transformative; the lovers succumb to the acutest physical symptoms of distress and pass through a series of ravings to awaken in a healing, pastoral paradise. At the same time, these scenes are dependent on one another for completion. The pastoral garden of the act 2 finale is imagined only and is strongly contrasted by the actual scenery, in which a dark, deserted landscape and a portentous ruin suggest a malignant rather than a benign nature. The pastoral garden of act 3, on the other hand, is an actual *giardino,* almost certainly the very garden in which the opera began and in which Violante remade herself as Sandrina. The opera's climactic recognition scene, the lovers' awakening in the garden, restored to their proper senses and passions, is thus both anticipated and made possible by their earlier journeys in madness to imagined, restorative realms. Illness, Mullan suggests, is "the last retreat of the morally pure."[50] As I mentioned earlier, madness acts as the cult of sensibility's answer to the *deus ex machina.*

La finta giardiniera ends as it began: in the garden. Violante's choice of disguise was symbolic: finding herself abused and abandoned by her fiancé, she recognized in her

50. Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability,* 16.

situation the distress of the sentimental heroine. Assuming the role of *giardiniera,* she takes refuge in the garden, not only to conceal herself but also to find herself and to heal. Recognition is thus transformative; the abandoned noblewoman Violante in effect reinvents herself as the sympathetic heroine of Piccinni's celebrated opera. Her actions make an important statement about her identity, attesting in a special way to the late eighteenth century's confidence in the new idea that human destiny was no longer controlled by birthright alone. The role of the honest, virtuous, and persecuted sentimental heroine is one that even the nobility might aspire to, something Mozart and his librettist reinforce at the very end of the opera when the other characters, knowing her real identity, refer to her as "la Giardiniera":

Viva pur la Giardiniera	Long live the garden girl,
Che serbò fedele il core.	whose heart remained faithful.
Viva il Conte, viva amore,	Long live the Count, long live love,
Che fa tutti rallegrar.	which makes everyone happy.

A series of recognition scenes have by this time revealed Sandrina as the Marchesa Violante, and the discovery has had its effect upon the plot, but the pretend garden girl is still celebrated as "la Giardiniera."

Mozart's heroine, who is already a marchesa, has no need to raise her station in life through marriage, nor does she require some twist of the plot to raise it for her. Quite the opposite, in assuming the disguise of the garden girl, she deliberately lowers her social status. She exchanges her nobility of birthright for the nobility of character and situation that the role of the garden girl implies. And, in the end, the opera suggests that this nobility is of greater importance than that of being a marchesa or a countess. The story is still one of social mobility, but unfolds in reverse of the usual direction. In *La buona figliuola,* it is a testament to virtue—set apart from rank—when the garden girl is rewarded by becoming a noblewoman. But in Mozart's *Giardiniera,* it is a much greater testament to the idea that virtue levels ranks when the noblewoman abandons her station to become a garden girl.

5

Recognition Denied in *Don Giovanni*

Of all Mozart's operas, *Don Giovanni* is the most discussed, deliberated, and disputed. Neither *Le nozze di Figaro,* which is widely acclaimed as Mozart's greatest operatic achievement, nor *Die Zauberflöte,* regarded by some as his most high-minded theater piece, has a history of literary response and critical controversy equal to that surrounding *Don Giovanni.* In addition, Da Ponte and Mozart's opera has become the most important and influential narrative in the history of the myth. The character they created has forever changed the face (and reputation) of the legendary Don Juan. More important, with the exception of Wagner's music-dramas, no opera rivals *Don Giovanni* for its influence on the history of ideas, or for a literature as vast as it is varied. Not only music critics and composers, but playwrights, novelists, and philosophers have responded to it, including E. T. A. Hoffmann, Alexander Pushkin, Søren Kierkegaard, George Bernard Shaw, Henry James, and John Berger.[1] More recently, in preparation for the Mozart year 1991, director Jonathan Miller put together a collection entitled *The Don Giovanni Book,* which features essays by prominent historians and critical theorists such as Roy Porter, Robert Darnton, and Peter Gay.

Given this remarkable reception history, the question one wants to ask is—Why? What is there in *Don Giovanni* that draws so many into its web? Why does this opera have such a special, even peculiar fascination for musicians and audiences, for historians and critics, and for writers and thinkers of all kinds? The nature of the character himself goes a long way toward explaining this fascination, for, as Peter Conrad suggests, Don Juan holds the appeal of the archetypal character who "wants to go everywhere, and to become everyone. He is less a person than a potential."[2] Posterity's attraction to such figures is well documented, but this alone cannot explain the tremendous influence of one particular version of the popular lothario: why Don

1. See Hoffmann, "Don Giovanni: A Strange Episode"; Pushkin, "Stone Guest"; Kierkegaard, "Immediate Stages of the Erotic"; Shaw, *Man and Superman;* Shaw, "Don Giovanni Explains"; James, *American;* and Berger, *G.: A Novel.*

2. Conrad, "Libertine's Progress," 81.

Giovanni and not Don Juan, why Da Ponte and Mozart's opera and not Tirso de Molina's *El burlador de Sevilla* (1630), Molière's *Dom Juan* (1665), or Goldoni's *Don Giovanni Tenorio* (1736)? Why was it Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and not some other version of the legend that inspired Goethe to say that Mozart (had he lived) could have composed music in the same vein for *Faust,* and inspired Shaw's vision of Don Giovanni as a "philosopher . . . in the grip of the Life Force"?[3]

The Problem of the Ending

One way to approach this question is to consider the issue that, more than any other, has persisted through two hundred years of commentary about the opera—the problem of the ending, or perhaps I should say the endings.[4] As the opera was originally conceived, after the scene in which Don Giovanni descends into hell, there is a final scene (the *scena ultima*) that takes the form of the traditional *lieto fine* (or happy ending); in it the other characters appear on stage to discover his fate, to comment on their own futures, and finally to join in singing the conventional *lieto fine* tutti ("Questo è il fin di chi fa mal") in which they proclaim the moral of the piece—that this is the just end of all sinners. But very early in the performance tradition—unfortunately, we cannot be certain how early—this final scene with its *lieto fine* was cut. The opera now ended abruptly in a spectacle of hellfire and brimstone—that is, with a scene in D minor as opposed to D major, without explanation given to the other characters, without a moral, and without the customary bow to Enlightenment teachings. More important, it ended as eighteenth-century operas—almost by definition—would never have done: without a *lieto fine.* This ending became standard by the nineteenth century.[5] It gave rise to the Romantic interpretations of Don Giovanni's death as transcendence and influenced writings in that tradition from Hoffmann and Gounod to Wolfgang Hildesheimer and Brigid Brophy.[6] (Hoffmann's story is particularly interesting in this connection, for, despite its Romantic

3. Goethe's oft-cited remark appears in Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe,* 293. This statement is corroborated by a letter Goethe wrote to Schiller in 1797: "The hope which you entertained for the opera you would have seen fulfilled to a high degree in *Don Juan* recently; however, this piece too stands quite alone, and all prospect of something similar has been frustrated by Mozart's death" (Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography,* 486). The line from Shaw appears in *Man and Superman,* 169.

4. This issue is widely acknowledged as a critical problem. Among many others, see Allanbrook, "Mozart's Happy Endings"; Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 340–44; Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: "Don Giovanni,"* 64–65; Singer, *Mozart and Beethoven,* 69–73; and Beckerman, "Mozart's Duel with Don Giovanni," 13–15. See also Abert, *Mozart's "Don Giovanni,"* 128–32. Abert was one of the first to inveigh against the notion that the music for the *scena ultima* was unworthy of Mozart; in this he differs from his predecessor Otto Jahn. See Albert, *W. A. Mozart,* 2:452–54.

5. See Bitter, *Wandlungen in den Inszenierungsformen des "Don Giovanni"*; Werner-Jensen, *Studien zur "Don Giovanni";* and Parakilas, "Afterlife of *Don Giovanni.*"

6. See Hoffmann, "Don Giovanni: A Strange Episode"; Gounod, *Mozart's "Don Giovanni";* Hildesheimer, *Mozart;* and Brophy, *Mozart the Dramatist.*

leanings, the performance described in it includes the appearance of the other characters at the end of the opera; indeed, the narrator exclaims with delight early in the story that "the performance in this little German town was going to be in Italian and—*Ah che piacere!*—I would hear everything, all the recitatives, just as the composer had conceived and intended it.")[7]

These two radically different endings are reflected in the Prague and Vienna librettos of 1787 and 1788, respectively,[8] and suggest the possibility that the opera may have been performed without the final scene as early as the first Vienna performance. But these librettos alone cannot solve the mystery of how the opera was actually performed. And given the absence of conclusive evidence about the ending, we might consider a few other possibilities. For example, the autograph shows a cut of over sixty measures that Alan Tyson associates with the year 1788,[9] which implies that Mozart at least considered a shortened version of the *scena ultima*—as opposed to its removal—for the Vienna production.[10] At the present time, there is still a great deal we do not know about the early performances of *Don Giovanni.* In addition, it is more than likely that the protean variability of eighteenth-century theater produced versions of the ending that are not preserved by the surviving paper trail. (In the nineteenth century, for example, variations on the ending included having Don Giovanni's house fall in and having Donna Anna brought on stage in a coffin to the accompaniment of mourners singing the "Dies Irae" from Mozart's *Requiem.*)[11] But the question of the opera's multiple endings is not merely a matter of a near-inscrutable historical record. Even if we could know for certain that *Don Giovanni* was performed, shall we say, with the final scene and *lieto fine* during Mozart's lifetime, we would still have to contend with the vast literary and critical response based on the other ending.

7. Hoffmann, "Don Giovanni," 105. Most performances at this time were in German, as was the one Goethe attended in Weimar in 1797. One exception to this rule was in Dresden, where the opera was given in Italian and with the complete finale until 1836 (see Abert, *Mozart's "Don Giovanni,"* 129).

8. See facsimile editions of the original librettos in Warburton, *Librettos of Mozart's Operas,* 2:189–91, which includes the entire *scena ultima,* and 3:474, which ends with the word "Fine" immediately after the chorus of devils takes Don Giovanni below. See also Heartz's discussion in *Mozart's Operas,* 163 and 172–74, of an earlier *Don Giovanni* libretto in which the *scena ultima* takes a slightly different form.

9. Tyson, "Some Features of the Autograph Score of *Don Giovanni,*" 12–13. The cuts mostly concern the Larghetto for Don Ottavio and Donna Anna and seem to involve the insertion of a ten-measure bridge (folio 263) that would connect measure 689 to measure 750.

10. It is possible that the cuts mentioned in the note above were made to accommodate Francesco Morella, who took the role of Ottavio for the Vienna production and for whom "Dalla sua pace" (No. 10a) was written. Indeed, the similarity of tessitura in this passage and "Il mio tesoro intanto" (No. 21), which was cut in Vienna, suggest that both cuts may have been made to accommodate Morella, whose voice had different tessitura and capabilities from that of Antonio Baglioni, for whom the role was originally created in Prague. I am indebted to Paolo Gallarati for this suggestion (in conversation).

11. Abert, *Mozart's "Don Giovanni,"* 128–29; Abert, *W. A. Mozart,* 2:457–58.

This question of the ending, then, needs to be put in the larger context of uncertainties around which the critical literature on *Don Giovanni* has developed. Is Don Giovanni a hero or a villain? Is the opera a comedy or a tragedy?[12] Does the conclusion dramatize a moral triumph over a justly punished sinner, or does it celebrate the heroic defiance of an independent thinker reaching out toward Nietzsche's superman? The first two issues culminate in the third, for the questions of whether Don Giovanni is villain or hero and of whether the opera is comic or serious come to a climax in the complex and powerful scene in which Don Giovanni meets his end. To deal with the ending and the other questions the opera raises, I believe, we must acknowledge something important that we have learned in a poststructuralist critical age: not only is meaning ambiguous, and contradiction inherent in works of art, but we have a particular fascination with the indeterminacy that often haunts great works. Perhaps we are drawn—and not only in the present critical age—to works of art that appear to be divided against themselves, works that seem to undermine the very truths they attempt to assert. I would argue that this is the appeal of *Don Giovanni;* this is what accounts, at least in part, for the remarkable reception history of this opera.

Much of that history centers on the character of the appealing, damnable, and elusive Don Giovanni himself. Interpreters have held that he is anything from an unrepentant rapist to the very embodiment of human desire, anything from a reckless blasphemer to a Promethean hero.[13] The Romantics in particular, following the narrator of Hoffmann's short story, chose to view Don Giovanni as a Faustian figure, a tragic hero whose striving against the gods is a triumphant human achievement. In this century, many critics have opposed this Romantic vision, choosing instead to see the Don as a confusing and enigmatic figure of dual nature, a combination of what is most and least admirable in human nature.[14] The difficulties of understanding the main character only make questions of the ending and its meaning more complex.

And so I return to my earlier question: Why has *Don Giovanni* received so much attention? Many have claimed a special standing for this work—even that it is "sui generis"[15]—but this is hardly sufficient reason. In keeping with current literary and

12. The question of whether the opera is a comedy or a tragedy has unfortunately long been confused with that of whether it is best called a "dramma giocoso," as appears on the title page of the libretto, or an "opera buffa," as Mozart entered the work in his thematic catalog (*Mozart's Thematic Catalogue,* folio 7v). While the question of how to reconcile the opera's comic and serious elements remains important, scholars have shown that the terms "dramma giocoso" and "opera buffa" are virtually synonymous. See Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 195–205; Kunze, *Don Giovanni vor Mozart;* and Henze-Döhring, *Opera seria, opera buffa und Mozarts Don Giovanni.*

13. Clément calls Don Giovanni a rapist in her *Opera, or the Undoing of Women,* 33–37, and Kierkegaard claims he is the embodiment of desire. The best short overview of interpretations of Don Giovanni known to me is Williams, "Don Giovanni as an Idea."

14. For example, see Allanbrook's view of the Don as "No-Man" in *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart,* 207–8.

15. Einstein, *Mozart,* 442.

historical criticism that considers art to be both product and producer of culture, we can hardly attribute the matter to the sheer quality and effect of the opera. *Don Giovanni* is great art, to be sure, but its extraordinary appeal is something more, or at least, something else. The opera, divided in its sympathies, attempts to dramatize a moral affirmation that the titanic, heroic proportions of the Don's character bring into question and challenge. The crux of the drama comes in the spectacular scene near the end of the second act in which Don Giovanni is confronted by the ghost of the Commendatore and in which the moral truth attempts to work its miraculous recognition: Don Giovanni must repent or perish. But at this moment, recognition is denied.

What I intend to do in this chapter is to show how critical thinking about recognition makes possible a new understanding of the familiar events of this opera and at the same time provides a much-needed perspective on its puzzling reception history.

Dénouement and *Lieto Fine*

Don Giovanni, in common with other contemporary operas, concludes the action with a powerful dénouement, the final confrontation with the supernatural that seals Don Giovanni's fate, and concludes the opera shortly afterward with a *lieto fine,* which culminates in a joyful tutti, the "antichissima canzon." As Wye Jamison Allanbrook has pointed out, it is quite common for *opere buffe* of this period to end with a moment of tutti affirmation that takes the form of a celebratory song, a moment "when music is named—when attention is drawn to the human habit of celebratory music-making."[16] *Figaro,* Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio segreto,* and Martín y Soler's *Una cosa rara,* among many others, end in a similar manner. But in one important way, the ending of *Don Giovanni* is fundamentally different from the endings of these contemporary operas. While ordinarily the happy ending (whether it culminates with stage music or not) confirms the discoveries of the opera's central climax, in this instance the *lieto fine* seems to be at odds with the opera's catastrophic dénouement. The *lieto fine* and its function thus need to be understood in terms of the dénouement it follows and the opera as a whole, and the problem of the ending needs to be seen in the context of the conventions that govern what happens at the ends of late eighteenth-century operas.

Faithful to the ideals of the period in which they were composed, Mozart's operas often turn explicitly on themes of knowledge and discovery. Recognition brings these works to conclusions in which misunderstandings are resolved, wrongdoers are forgiven, the deserving are rewarded, and, most important, some human "truth" is (re)discovered. As with spoken drama and fiction, the plotting of an opera toward the illumination that comes at the end is built on climactic moments of recognition

16. Allanbrook, "Mozart's Happy Endings," 3.

and reversal, which bring about the final dénouement. The moment in the act 2 finale of *Zauberflöte* when the powers of darkness descend through a trapdoor and the stage is suddenly flooded with light may be the most explicit dramatization of this effect in terms of the period's enlightenment metaphor, but most contemporary operas culminate in some confirmation of Enlightenment principles and the social order they uphold. The contrast with the ending of *Don Giovanni,* then, could hardly be more striking. When the dark and compelling Don descends through a similar trapdoor and in an even more spectacular manner, as the opera's main protagonist he takes our sympathy and interest with him. And herein lies a crucial structural and generic problem. Don Giovanni is a most unusual protagonist in the context of late eighteenth-century opera in that he does not finally capitulate to the greater good, which must triumph in the end without him. He is a protagonist who is neither reformed nor forgiven by the end of the opera—one who refuses to embrace the Enlightenment moral and social order of the opera and join in the *lieto fine.*

In his writings on the origins of the *lieto fine,* Frederick W. Sternfeld draws an important distinction between "the main plot, [or] the myth (favola) of the protagonists" and "the dramatic frame-work which encloses the story."[17] The *lieto fine* is of course best understood as a function of the latter. When the dénouement and the *lieto fine* confirm the same human truth, as they so often do, there is no perceived conflict between convention and art. The *lieto fine* follows the dénouement, reaffirming whatever knowledge the opera has dramatized, and serves as the conventional ending to a work that is all but complete without it. Thus, to modify Sternfeld slightly, the *lieto fine* is part of both the drama and the framework. As the characters sing the moral of the drama, often rejoicing among themselves in the self-conscious way Allanbrook describes, they also turn to face the audience, opening the opera and its conventional moral wisdom to all those present in the theater.

But what of a case like that of *Don Giovanni,* in which the dénouement and subsequent *lieto fine* appear to be in conflict? The perception that the final scene of *Don Giovanni* with its *lieto fine* was a problem, that it had been included merely for the sake of convention, led to its omission in the nineteenth century and, more recently, to ongoing debates about the dramatic integrity and function of the *scena ultima.*[18] The problem lies in the expectations one brings to bear on the conventions of ending, and especially on the relation of *lieto fine* to dénouement. The *lieto fine,* with its affirmation of a righteous social and human order, cannot overcome the powerful sense of disorder created by the opera's dénouement. But perhaps the true source of discomfort is the belief on the part of commentators that if order is to be restored, it should be accomplished without contradiction or complication, in a manner so very unrepresentative of the complexities of either life or art. "Comedy ends with

17. Sternfeld, "Birth of Opera," 44.

18. See Allanbrook, "Mozart's Happy Endings"; and Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart,* 322–25; and Williams, "Mozart's Comedies and the Sense of an Ending," 451–54.

the assertion of the proper orders," Allanbrook tells us, "but this assertion may not necessarily be the crown of a serene and sane society; it may indeed be a lid clapped on disorder and despair."[19]

Given that the legend dictates that Don Giovanni must be defeated, and bearing in mind the conventions of the *lieto fine,* it should be observed that this problem is not unique to Mozart. Any opera based on the Don Juan legend is bound to be unconventional in this way. The representation of the story depends on the elimination of the protagonist and the affirmation of the happy ending in his absence. As Byron quips about the hero of his own *Don Juan,* "We all have seen him, in the pantomime, / Sent to the Devil somewhat ere his time."[20] The legend itself precludes the reform of the protagonist. Indeed, such a reform seems as potentially undesirable in its effect on the story as it is impossible. Don Juan stories of every stripe, however different they may be in matters of form and style, are all built on the same legend in which an elusive and appealing libertine—after serving as the primary agent of a remarkable entertainment—is forced to pay for his sins in a spectacular scene of "pantomime devilry."[21] Although the story of Don Juan was of low origins, and consequently frowned upon by the literary establishment, it was tremendously popular. There were countless versions, from what Goldoni liked to call "the bad Spanish play" of Tirso, to the plays of Molière, Shadwell, and Goldoni, to the puppet shows and burlesques of the eighteenth century, to the operas of Callegari, Righini, Gardi, and Bertati and Gazzaniga's *Don Giovanni* (1787), upon which Da Ponte based his libretto for Mozart.[22]

The exploits and excesses of the protagonist, then, we must assume, were largely responsible for the popularity of the tale. Don Giovanni, as Bernard Williams puts it, "is as unambiguously and magnificently removed from despair and boredom as it is possible to be."[23] Protagonist and audience alike could for a time enjoy the total abandonment of self to pleasure—could enjoy the pleasures of a life lived outside the ordinary social and moral constraints, as long as they took place within the confines of a carefully constructed stage that, as Thomas Bauman has demonstrated, was committed to the goals of "moral edification and aesthetic order" so common in eighteenth-century theater.[24] The moral is announced in the very title of so many of

19. Allanbrook, "Mozart's Happy Endings," 5.

20. Byron, *Don Juan,* I.i.

21. Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: "Don Giovanni,"* 6.

22. For the comment from Goldoni's *Mémoires,* see Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 161. Tirso, Molière, and Goldoni are cited above; Shadwell's play is titled *Libertine* (1676); the operas of Callegari (1777) and Righini (1777) were both titled *Il convitato di pietra;* Gardi's opera premiered in same year (1787) as Gazzaniga's at a rival theater in Venice. For an extraordinary catalogue of literary, theatrical, and other accounts of Don Juan, see Weinstein, *Metamorphoses of Don Juan,* 187–214. See also Forman, "Don Juan before Da Ponte"; Kunze, *Don Giovanni vor Mozart;* and Russell, *Don Juan Legend before Mozart.*

23. Williams, "Don Giovanni as an Idea," 81.

24. Bauman, "Three Trials of Don Giovanni," 143.

the versions, *Il dissoluto punito,* "the profligate punished"—such behavior must and will be punished. The recognition that comes in the last scene is not intended for Don Giovanni; it is rather the moral of his tale, intended for the other characters and the audience.

Yet, as I have already suggested, in damning Don Giovanni the opera's resolution attempts to dramatize a moral affirmation that the compelling if villainous character of the protagonist brings into question and complicates. Our identification with the protagonist is thus at odds with the central theme of the work. Don Giovanni's death is the literal dramatization of the moral given at the very end—that all sinners get what they deserve—but the tremendous force of his character throughout, not to mention his role as the central protagonist, undermines the effect of his spectacular damnation and offers a serious challenge to the recognition that comes at the end. The Enlightenment morality that governs this work has met in Don Giovanni a most formidable adversary—one whose will cannot be bent, one who refuses even in the face of death to reconcile himself to the social and moral order, one who refuses to recognize any truth but his own. Just as surely as Don Giovanni is undone by the truth he denies, so the truth the opera's conventional ending attempts to establish is undone by the fact that Don Giovanni refuses to acknowledge it.

Recognition Prepared and Denied

Let me now turn to the climactic recognition scene—Don Giovanni's confrontation with the ghost of the Commendatore in the act 2 finale—and to the way in which it is prepared by the events of the opera. As we have learned to expect, the final recognition is always built upon earlier moments of individual or partial recognition, upon the shifts, discoveries, and reversals of which all plots are made. Recognition in *Don Giovanni* is no different. The opera moves steadily toward moments of confrontation and discovery. In the first ten minutes of the opera, Don Giovanni is pursued by Donna Anna and openly challenged by her father, the Commendatore, whom he is reluctant to fight. Already his way of life is called into question. As the opera develops, Don Giovanni meets with a new challenge in practically every scene. Leporello accuses him of "forcing the daughter and murdering the father" ("Bravo! / Due imprese leggiadre! / Sforzar la figlia ed ammazzar il padre"). Elvira accuses him of leaving her; Anna recognizes him as her attacker and reveals his identity to Ottavio; he is caught "red-handed" in the act 1 finale trying to force himself on Zerlina. Don Giovanni is alternately pleaded with and threatened, but he will not acknowledge his crimes.

These scenes build one upon another, and repeatedly point toward recognition. At first, Don Giovanni is challenged by individuals (Anna and the Commendatore) when his identity is concealed by disguise and the cover of darkness. But soon, unmasked, he is confronted by Leporello and Elvira. Then steadily Anna, Ottavio, Masetto, and Zerlina realize what Don Giovanni is, until in the act 1 finale he is publicly confronted

by all. There is a clear intensification from the cover of disguise and night to the reality of identity and daylight, from private recrimination to public accusation. But Don Giovanni will not repent. The second act depicts a different progression, from the retribution of the social order he threatens (and which he is able to evade) through the promise of vengeance in the cemetery scene to the confrontation with the supernatural in the act 2 finale. Overall, the progression is from private to public, from concealment to open acknowledgment, from the powers of human morality and law to the omnipotent power of a divine order that will triumph over the flesh even where it cannot over the spirit. Don Giovanni's confrontation with the ghost is carefully prepared and seems near the end of act 2 to have become as inevitable as it is powerless to change him.

Given that the course of events is directed toward and prepares a moment of catastrophic recognition that, despite his refusal to acknowledge what he has done, even Don Giovanni is powerless to prevent, the earlier scenes in which Don Giovanni is confronted with his actions and given the opportunity to move in the direction of awareness are vital to any attempt to understand the ending. For this reason I now turn briefly to four moments in which the events of the plot conspire to confront Don Giovanni with what he has done, to force him to acknowledge the error of his ways and capitulate to moral and social law: (1) the duel with the Commendatore in the *introduzione*, (2) the conclusion of the act 1 finale, in which Don Giovanni is publicly accused of his crimes but miraculously escapes, (3) the confrontation and capture of the false "Don" Leporello in the act 2 sextet No. 19, and (4) the episode in the cemetery.[25] Each of these scenes brings Don Giovanni one step closer to the recognition he ultimately refuses to acknowledge, and each involves textual and musical indicators pointing to its role in the series of events that move toward the opera's inevitable end. In three of these moments Don Giovanni is confronted directly and challenged. The sextet differs in this regard since it advances the tide against Don Giovanni without his knowledge and will therefore be considered last.

The duel presents the first challenge. The Commendatore arrives on the scene to protect his daughter and confronts Don Giovanni. Don Giovanni does not want to fight, which he makes clear by telling the Commendatore, "Va, non mi degno / Di pugnar teco" (Go, I do not deign to fight with you), and by his exclamation, *mezza voce*, "Misero!" The musical features of the duel that have long been considered harbingers of the Don's fate are familiar: the key of D minor; the sword motifs (which return in the act 2 finale); the diminished seventh chord on which the Commendatore falls wounded in measure 175 (the return of which marks the arrival of the

25. Bauman interprets three of these scenes as "trials," in which Don Giovanni is judged as a seducer, a hypocrite, and a blasphemer whose sins "challenge three essential social structures in eighteenth-century European civilization—family, class, and religion" ("Three Trials of Don Giovanni," 137).

ghost of the Commendatore at m. 433 in the act 2 finale);[26] Don Giovanni's eerie minor rendering at measure 178 of Anna's earlier melodic line (which seems to reflect his regret over the duel, whether or not he recognizes how wrong his actions have been);[27] and what Rushton has called the "chromatic moan" at the Commendatore's death (mm. 190–94), which "hovers over unresolved harmony, leaving the end of No. 1 open" (the return of which marks Don Giovanni's final utterance and demise at m. 594 in the act 2 finale).[28] But this tragic scene, though it certainly offers him cause to do so, does not finally lead Don Giovanni to rethink his actions, let alone his way of life. The proof lies in its open-ended conclusion, as many commentators have suggested, none more eloquently than Bauman:

> The "Moonlight Trio's" final, thwarted cadence tells us that the opera's initiatory dream has *not* concluded: Giovanni does *not* respond to this brief window of opportunity; he does *not* reflect on the meaning of his actions, and the day of reckoning is once more put off. This act of delay and of self-deception that we witness on stage is underscored in our ears by Mozart's deceptive cadence. In consequence, we along with Giovanni are forced to carry this moment and its unresolved psychic meaning through the activities of the following day to the second nocturnal visitation of the Commendatore that concludes the drama.[29]

This concluding section of the *introduzione* might be understood as an example of what Mary Hunter has called a "collective statement of uncertainty or confusion," but even so its "open" ending and dark character mark it as an extreme case.[30] (Indeed, this seems only one of several ways in which this *introduzione* deliberately and disturbingly upends the usual conventions governing such ensembles. For example, the opera opens, as so many *opere buffe* do, in a garden. But the garden, rich in pastoral and other associations and a familiar locus of both lovemaking and romantic intrigue, is here presented in cover of darkness and made to serve as the setting for unexpected violence—the aftermath of an attempted assault, a sword fight, and a shocking death.)[31]

At the moment of dénouement in the act 1 finale, Don Giovanni is caught attempting to force himself on Zerlina, who, still hidden from view, first calls out for help and then cries "Scellerato" on a diminished seventh chord, *crescendo* (at m. 477),

26. This diminished seventh on B-natural is spelled with a G-sharp for the A-flat when it returns in the act 2 finale. See Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: "Don Giovanni,"* 115–21.

27. Among others, see, Noske, *Signifier and the Signified,* 51.

28. Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: "Don Giovanni,"* 117. He goes on to connect this unresolved sixth on B to the opening of No. 2 on the same chord; in musical terms, Anna and Ottavio pick up at exactly the moment of the Commendatore's death.

29. Bauman, "Three Trials of Don Giovanni," 140.

30. Hunter, *Culture of Opera Buffa,* 209.

31. See Hunter, *Culture of Opera Buffa,* 197–210; and Hunter, "Landscapes, Gardens, and Gothic Settings," 94–105, especially 98.

making clear that she now realizes what he is. When the three maskers and Masetto finally break the door down, Don Giovanni is "caught in the act." He is revealed before all for who and what he is. Even now, confronted by his peers and by the human and moral law they represent, he will not acknowledge the nature of his actions. First Ottavio and then Elvira and Anna unmask, but the discovery does not bring its accustomed result; Don Giovanni recognizes their identities, but nothing else. He attempts to blame his assault on Leporello, but the company responds, "Tutto, tutto già si sa" (Everything, everything we already know).

In terms of moral and social law, this confrontation is fully adequate to bring about Don Giovanni's downfall. He is discovered not by one nobleman in a private house but by the entire society (as represented by this strange ball where peasants, bourgeoisie, and nobles alike share a dance floor). Public recognition of his crimes is then followed by the promise of retribution: "Trema, trema, scellerato" (Tremble, tremble, villain). Don Giovanni realizes the threat that faces him, but it does not move him to self-reflection. He meets these accusations and promises of punishment with declarations of courage, and at the end of the finale he escapes with Leporello. This moment in act 1, in which the collected will of the finale's multitude proves powerless to overcome Don Giovanni, both anticipates and makes necessary the confrontation with the ghost of the Commendatore yet to come.[32] In act 2, Don Giovanni no longer faces any threat from human law or societal constraints, for if the ordinary powers of the moral and social order were capable of restraining him, they would have done so by the end of act 1. Disguised as Leporello, he easily disperses the peasants collected to seek vengeance on him with his aria "Metà di voi qua vadano" (No. 17), finishing the scene by beating Masetto. By the time Anna, Ottavio, and the others discover the "Don" in the sextet, the real Giovanni is safely secluded elsewhere, attempting to take advantage of Leporello's mistress (or wife?). When Don Giovanni is next confronted, in the cemetery, it is by supernatural forces, the harbingers of a divine law he will not be able to escape.

This scene is parallel to the duel in act 1.[33] It involves the same three basses in a private and nocturnal setting; it repeats the delivery of an insult, for here Don Giovanni offers the disrespect to the dead that he earlier offered to the living; and it repeats the issue of a challenge, for the statue of the Commendatore picks up in death where he left off in life: "Di rider finirai pria dell' aurora" (You will cease laughing by morning). This recitative in the graveyard marks the first appearance of the Commendatore's trombones, which feature prominently in the act 2 finale, and an ominous diminished seventh chord on the word "audace" as the statue exclaims, "Ribaldo' audace' / Lascia a' morti la pace" (Audacious scoundrel, leave the dead in

32. The parallels between the two acts overall and between the two finales are suggested by Bitter, *Wandlungen in den Inszenierungsformen des "Don Giovanni,"* 17–24. For the parallels overall see Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: "Don Giovanni,"* 46–47, table 1. For the two finales, see Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 346–70; and Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart,* 275–325.

33. See Dallapiccola, "Notes on the Statue Scene," 89.

peace). As Abert suggests, this scene owes much of its effectiveness to the different reactions it provokes in servant and master:

> The words of the statue at once arouse superstitious fears in Leporello. Don Giovanni, however, takes it all as a jest made by someone quite outside his own world and tries to humour him with his invitation. Thus even the final catastrophe is introduced in the buffo manner, and the irony is further emphasized by the fact that it is Leporello, trembling with fear, who delivers the invitation to the Statue.[34]

Of course, at the moment the statue accepts the invitation in "O statua gentilissima" (No. 22), the music immediately turns from the tonic E major of the statue's "Sì" to flat VI; even Don Giovanni is taken aback by this turn of events and reacts *mezza voce.* But the effect is short-lived and, once again, Don Giovanni observes events that directly concern him without recognizing their significance.

The sextet is a thwarted climax, a moment of false recognition (paralogismos). Ottavio, Anna, Zerlina, and Masetto, having lost Don Giovanni after the act 1 finale, believe that they have found him again; this time he is cornered and cannot get away. In many textual, structural, and musical details this ensemble reflects the developments of the overall action thus far and anticipates the real dénouement in the act 2 finale. Anna turns to D minor before the "Don" is discovered with her entrance at "Lascia almen alla mia pena," which recalls with both its initial pitches and its words her angry exclamation of grief to Ottavio in their accompanied recitative and duet No. 2, "Fuggi, crudele, fuggi: / Lascia che mora anch'io" (Leave me, cruel one, leave me: let me die too).[35] On the word "pianto" (weeping), she seems to recall the "chromatic moan" of the Commendatore's death. The chromatic descent of the repeating eighth-note motive with sixteenth-note anacrusis that now enters in the strings also reflects the chromaticism of the Commendatore's death. The violins descend angrily on the "Don" with thirty-second-note runs reminiscent of those in the duel, and Anna, Ottavio, Masetto, and Zerlina resolve on immediate justice: "Morrà!" (He shall die!). But the key, significantly, is G minor rather than D minor. This scene may look and feel like the moment of retribution, but, despite several points of similarity, it does not sound like the real dénouement. The passage is repeated, arriving once again on "Morrà!" and the chromaticism of the duel appears now in the winds in preparation for the deathblow.

The four now seize him and have the satisfaction of hearing their culprit beg for mercy, but their "Don" reveals himself to be Leporello. Their surprise is reflected in the music with a striking deceptive cadence. The moment of discovery is followed

34. Abert, *Mozart's "Don Giovanni,"* 116.

35. The appearances of this melodic outline at pitch in D minor include Anna's reaction in No. 2, Elvira's entrance in the act 1 finale (m. 174), and this entrance of Anna's in the sextet. See, among others, Noske, *Signifier and the Signified,* 54.

by a *sotto voce* reaction that, to borrow John Platoff's terminology, we might think of as a "shock tutti."[36] Recognition and dénouement are unsuccessful here because the social order has sufficient power only to capture the wrong man. This ensemble, an extraordinary little drama in its own right, is in part a comic enactment of the recognition scene yet to come (as we shall see below) and in part a repetition of the thwarted dénouement at the end of act 1. The concluding Molto allegro is parallel dramatically to the final Allegro of the act 1 finale; in both instances the villain is discovered and confronted but manages to escape. Leporello even models his reaction on that of his master a few hours earlier:

Leporello (sextet)	
Mille torbidi pensieri	A thousand confused thoughts
Mi s'aggiran per la testa,	are churning in my head,
Se mi salvo in tal tempesta	if I save myself in this storm
È un prodigio in verità!	in truth, it will be a miracle.
Don Giovanni (act 1 finale)	
È confusa la mia testa,	My head is confused,
Non so più quel ch'io mi faccia,	I no longer know what I do,
E un'orribile tempesta	and a horrible storm is
Minacciando oddio mi va.	threatening me, oh God!

The progression from confusion to the conceit of the storm is common to both servant and master, emphasized by the repetition of the "testa"/"tempesta" rhyme. But, unlike his master, when the stretto ends, Leporello acknowledges his wrongs and begs forgiveness of his accusers in his aria "Ah, pietà, Signori miei" (No. 20). He then makes his way to the door in the wall and, following his master's example once again, manages to escape.[37]

I come now to the climactic recognition scene itself, the confrontation with the ghost of the Commendatore in the act 2 finale. In terms of action, text, and music, the moment in which Don Giovanni finally meets his end has all the hallmarks of recognition. It comes just before the end of the opera as recognition scenes so often do, and it possesses all four characteristics that one often finds in conjunction with such scenes in Mozart. First, it is set apart from the beginning of the finale by the very entrance of the statue ghost, by the shift to cut time, to full orchestration (with trombones), and to D minor.[38] Second, the central shifts in action within the scene are

36. See Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure in the Opera Buffa Finale," 219–22.

37. For a different reading of this ensemble, see Platoff, "Operatic Ensembles and the Problem of the *Don Giovanni* Sextet."

38. Trombones, as Allanbrook explains, were used in opera from the time of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* to accompany supernatural voices in what may be called *ombra* scenes (*Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart,* 292–93).

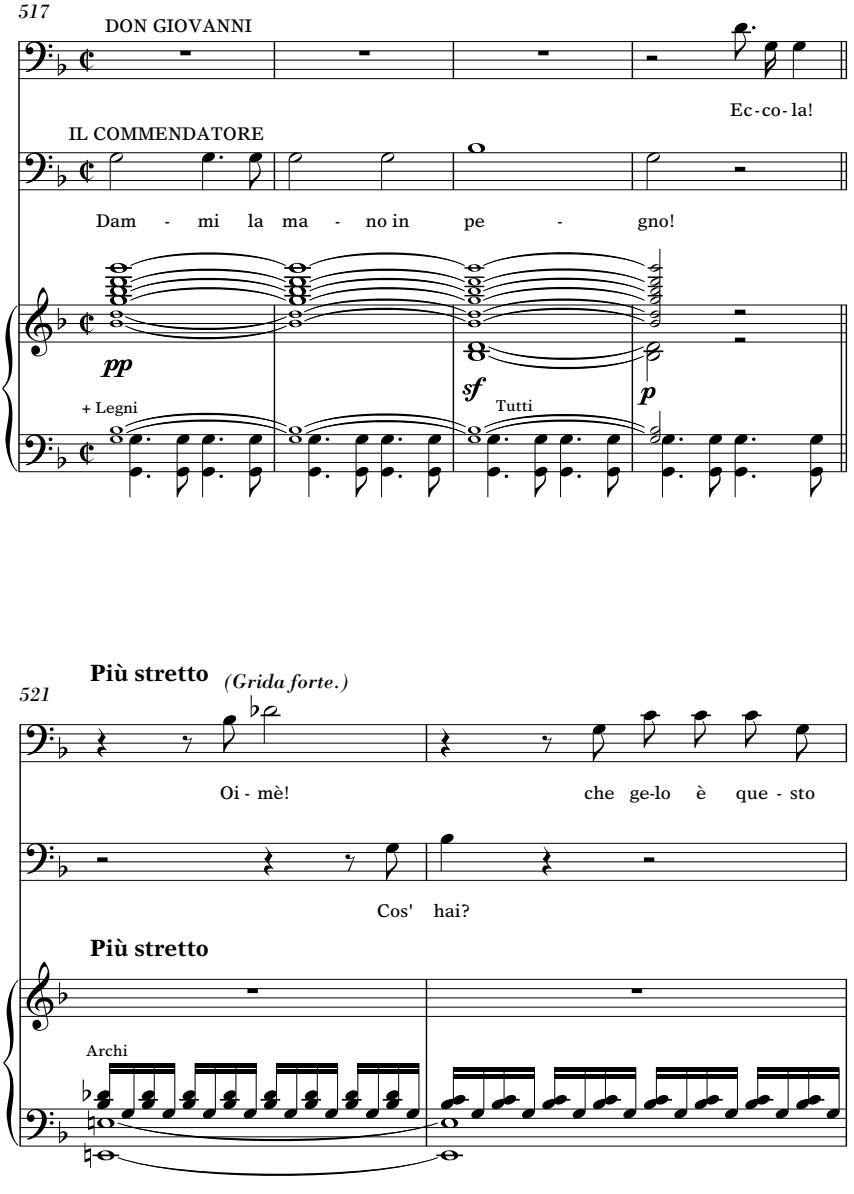
accompanied by musical shifts of key, texture, melodic line, dynamics, and orchestration, with the effect that the intensity of the scene is vividly depicted in the music. Third, the moment of discovery depends for its meaning on the unfolding of the plot, which itself serves as an explanatory narrative. The significance of the recognition depends for its meaning on the very story being enacted on the stage, and most particularly the episodes involving the duel and Don Giovanni's blasphemous denial of supernatural retribution in the cemetery scene.

Finally, and most important, as is well known, there is a great deal of musical repetition. The key of D minor returns from the overture, the duel scene, Anna's and Ottavio's vengeance duet, and elsewhere. Striking returns from the *introduzione* emphasize the poetic justice of Don Giovanni's fall: the Commendatore enters (at m. 433) on the very diminished sonority on which he was mortally wounded in the duel; Don Giovanni's final anguished cry (at m. 594) is marked by a partial return in the winds of the "chromatic moan" that had accompanied the Commendatore's death.[39] At the climactic moment of confrontation (scene 15), the entire Andante of the overture returns, with its dotted rhythms, syncopations, and chromatic scales. Reenacted as it is recomposed, the return of the music of the overture now clearly signals the crux of the drama, but Don Giovanni stands firm.[40] When he takes the Commendatore's hand in pledge ("Dammi la mano in pegno")—which may be understood as a repetition and reversal of the handclasp that marked the victory of seduction in "Là ci darem la mano" (No. 7)—the significance of the moment is reflected in the harmonic shock of the Più stretto at measure 521, which marks the end of the expansion of the overture (see example 5.1). As the orchestra jabs at Don Giovanni with sword motives from the earlier duel, the terror of the moment does finally produce some effect upon his lines, but he remains unflinching, unreflecting, refusing to acknowledge the significance of the Commendatore's return. In no other scene in Mozart, including the powerful endings of *Figaro, La clemenza di Tito,* and *Zauberflöte,* is recognition so overdetermined. Yet here, just where text, music, and tremendous stage spectacle unite powerfully in an attempt to bring it about, recognition is denied. For the Romantics this strength of will makes Don Giovanni a hero of tragic proportions. But the true tragic hero always has his moment of recognition—compare Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Faust. Don Giovanni is no tragic hero. Heroic though his defiance may seem, he stands in the place where a hero should be. Somehow reconciling what is heroic with its opposite, he combines villainy and heroism. Don Giovanni is an enigma, an antihero.

39. See Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: "Don Giovanni,"* 118. The "chromatic moan," as he points out, also appears at the end of the vengeance duet (see m. 208 of No. 2): "Thus the crime, the call to vengeance, and the fulfillment of vengeance, are linked" (ibid.).

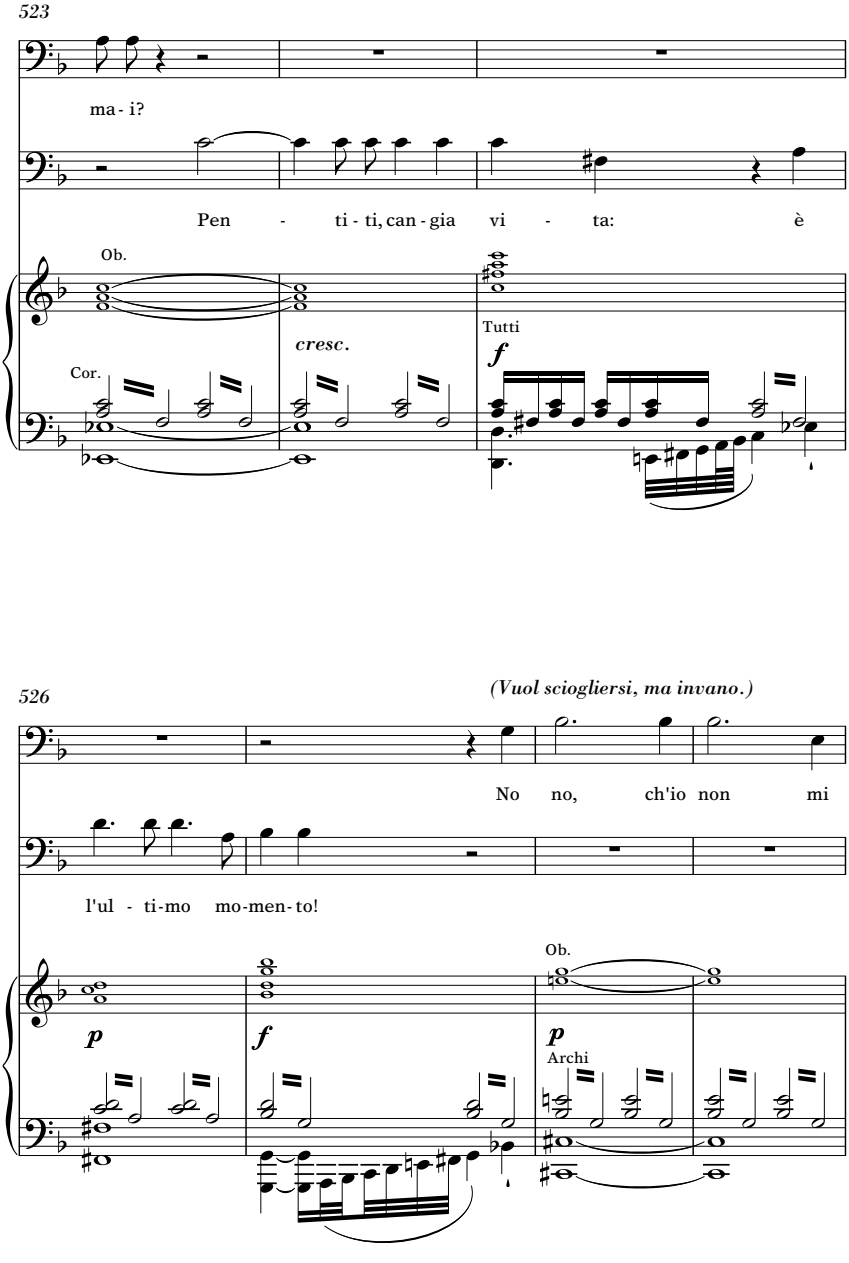
40. Among others, see Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart,* 293–319; and Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: "Don Giovanni,"* 116. In addition, the knocks on the door at measures 407–8 and following repeat the orchestral gesture at the beginning of the closing Allegro (m. 533) of the act 1 finale. This of course was the moment at which Don Giovanni was accused of crimes but escaped punishment. Supernatural retribution enters where human efforts left off.

Example 5.1. *Don Giovanni,* act 2 finale, mm. 517–35.

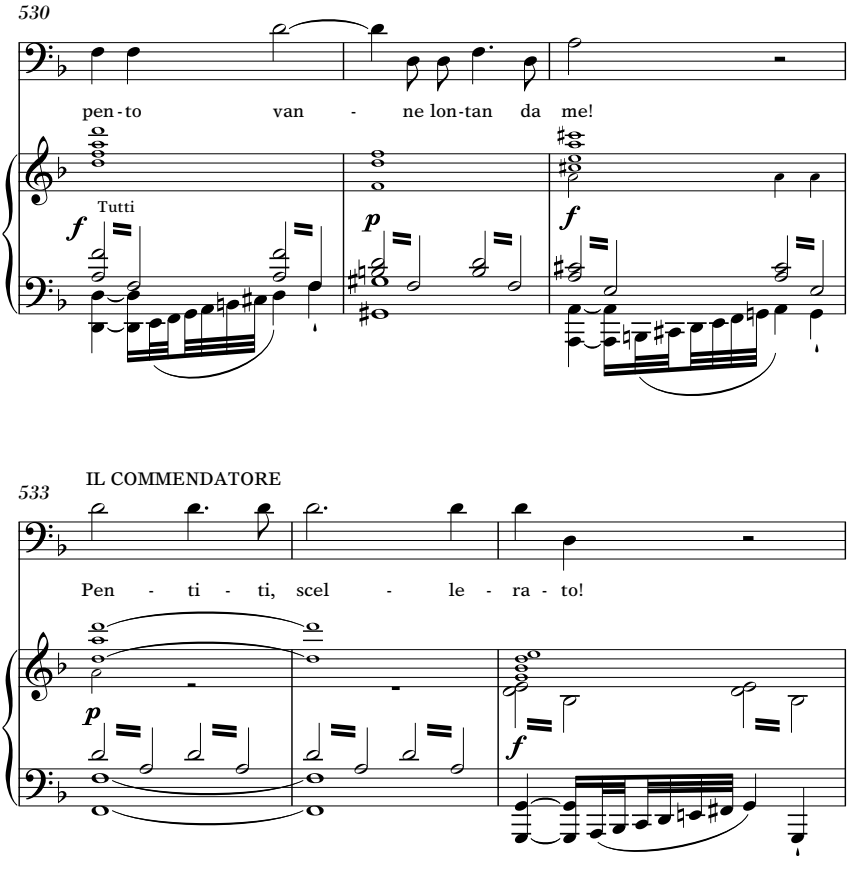


(*continued*)

Example 5.1. *Continued*



Example 5.1. *Continued*



"Life without the Don"

Writing about the last scene of *Don Giovanni,* Joseph Kerman chafes at what he calls the opera's "accidental and unformed ambiguity," and he blames Da Ponte for the questions the opera raises: "Certainly the epilogue answers none of [these questions]; it only goes to show how drab life is without the Don."[41] But perhaps this is the point of the epilogue. Bernard Williams suggests, "The [final] sextet is . . . absolutely essential, as defining—in a sense—a 'return to normal,' something which itself helps to define the meaning of previous events and of Giovanni himself."[42] The fascination of this work lies in the way in which its two endings (one for the protagonist and one for everyone else) face in opposite directions.

41. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 103.
42. Williams, "Mozart's Comedies and the Sense of an Ending," 453.

What exactly happens at the end of the opera, at least in its original 1787 configuration? Don Giovanni is engulfed in flames as demons drag him down to Hades, after which spectacle the opera must come to a conclusion. The other characters rush in to discover Don Giovanni's fate. They each explain the end of their own stories, after which all join in singing the *lieto fine* tutti:

Questo è il fin di chi fa mal:	This is the end of those who do wrong:
E de' perfidi la morte	and the wicked shall die
Alla vita è sempre ugual.	as befits the way they lived.

This conclusion, it must be said, is a stock ending. More important, in the eighteenth century, it was the expected ending. Yet in the case of *Don Giovanni* it has long been regarded as inappropriate and contrived, a cardboard convention. When the *lieto fine* is omitted, ironically, an unexpected, new, "happy" ending is created, one that saves Don Giovanni from his fate. Damnation is transformed into transcendence. Of course, this sort of happy ending is more commensurate with nineteenth- than eighteenth-century aesthetics. Perhaps that is how Shaw's play *Man and Superman* finds the Don on his way to heaven, to join Mozart in the "home of the masters of reality."[43]

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that the *lieto fine,* with its final recognition for the other characters and the audience, is as necessary as it is conflicted. We should not wish to dispense with it, but we may observe the cause of the residual feeling among critics that this opera's *lieto fine* is unsuccessful. I would argue that one source of the opera's persistent appeal is its highly unusual recognition scene. Although Don Giovanni's confrontation with the ghost has never before been acknowledged as a recognition scene, it is in fact recognition that has engendered the long history of controversy. The opera culminates—as most dramas do—in a moment of climactic recognition, and this scene, as one would expect, is both the heart of the opera and the place where the issues are most forcefully dramatized. But while recognition usually brings resolution, here it brings the opposite: recognition—and its denial—deepens the conflict already inherent in the work.

The issues I mentioned earlier all turn on this conflict. Is Don Giovanni hero or villain? Is the opera comedy or tragedy? Most important, does the conclusion dramatize moral triumph or heroic defiance? These questions do not lend themselves to easy answers. Indeed, these questions themselves are far more interesting than any answers that could be provided for them. The opera, like its defiant protagonist, refuses to capitulate to the conventional order set by the example of others. The conflicted ending preserves something indeterminate and even contradictory in human nature. And in attempting to be true to the complexity of human nature,

43. Shaw, *Man and Superman,* 139.

the opera resists a neat, moral conclusion. It is this tension born of the conflict between Don Giovanni's damnation and the *lieto fine* that is most compelling in the opera. To disrupt the precarious balance between recognition denied and exalted would be to set the opera out of joint. For it is this very uncertainty about the ending, with its uncompromised view of the Don and his fate, that has fascinated musicians, writers, and audiences for two hundred years.

6

Sense and Sensibility in *Così fan tutte*

Conceived and composed just at the time when the rational order of the Josephinian Enlightenment was confronted with the chaos of the French Revolution, *Così fan tutte* reflects the anxieties and contradictions of its age. Early critics and biographers were outraged by what they viewed as the opera's immorality. More recent critics still struggle to explain what they view as its "anti-sentimental" posture.[1] Some have suggested that the opera's sentimental moments are best understood as parody. But these and other apparent contradictions derive from a conflict inherent in late eighteenth-century culture between sense and sensibility, and they need to be understood in the context of that conflict. As the opera opens, Don Alfonso, the opera's self-styled *philosophe,* preaches Enlightenment reason "ex cathedra" on the question of fidelity in women. To prove him wrong, the two young lovers agree to a wager: they will test the constancy of their fiancées, Dorabella and Fiordiligi, by wooing them in disguise. As is well known, they lose the wager. But whether their defeat is a testament for or against the contemporary culture of sensibility is not at all clear. Perhaps the most pressing question surrounding *Così*—one that has not yet been studied with the seriousness it deserves—concerns the status of its overtly sentimental themes.

For all its revelations about the exaggerations of lovers and its seeming representation of an anti-sentimental position, *Così* is, I would argue, really a sentimental work at heart. The little drama that Don Alfonso stages turns on the susceptibility of women to passionate feeling, a hallmark of the sentimental genres. Contrary to generic expectations, however, the immediacy of feeling here is set *against* the vows of constancy it was supposed to engender. Of course, the apparent contradiction Don Alfonso exploits had been inherent in the sentimental genres all along. While the cult of sensibility (a distinctly literary phenomenon) urged women—and men—to recognize and act on their deepest feelings, it clung to a socially acceptable view that

1. See, among others, B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 72; Steptoe, *Mozart–Da Ponte Operas,* 130; and Goehring, "Sentimental Muse of Opera Buffa," 139–44.

the expression of sentiment would lead to the pursuit of virtue. Thus while its fictions fed the romantic desires and fantasies of a host of readers, its values served the interests of a morally conscious society. "The gendering of sensibility and its claim to moral superiority," G. J. Barker-Benfield explains, "promised obvious advantages, including the reform of men on women's terms."[2] The potential, however, that things might turn out otherwise—as they very nearly do in *Così*—was already inherent in the premise that one abandon oneself to emotion. While sentimental fantasies turned on the moral constancy and endurance of "virtue in distress," they simultaneously implied the attraction of the sentimental heroine—and her everyday counterpart—to dangerous situations and dangerous men. Indeed, much fiction and popular culture in the eighteenth century attests to the attraction of women to rakish men, as does Da Ponte and Mozart's own *Don Giovanni.*

Don Alfonso's scheme leads to the enactment of a sentimental fiction during the course of which Da Ponte and Mozart engage the women's affections (and ours). As a result, the opera reflects both a skeptical and a sympathetic view: even as Don Alfonso's ruse successfully exposes the sensibilities of the women, the drama remains sympathetic to a sentimental knowledge not comprehended by his "philosophy." The legacy of this apparent contradiction is that *Così* has made critics and audiences uncomfortable, especially at the end. The recognition at the end—that all women would do as Dorabella and Fiordiligi do, that infidelity is the rule, that a rational love based on mutual affection should be tempered by the knowledge that fidelity may not be a reasonable expectation—is undermined by the more significant emotional recognitions of the middle. The "scandal" of recognition has been turned on its head. The implausibility of the opera's fiction disappoints not because it is "marvelous," but rather because it is not. While ordinarily in late eighteenth-century opera recognition makes possible a neat, moral ending, in *Così* it is recognition that makes such an ending impossible.

Resisting the Ending

Although one often reads that the premiere was a failure, the existing evidence shows that *Così,* which opened on 26 January 1790, was well received by the Viennese public.[3] Unfortunately, the emperor's death on 20 February closed the theaters, limiting the number of performances during the main season to five. Five more were then given during the summer. This seemingly small number of performances has led many historians and critics to conclude that *Così* was not appreciated by its first audiences. But *Le nozze di Figaro,* whose enthusiastic reception has never been in doubt, received only nine performances during its first season. When measured by its box-office receipts as compared to those of other works in production at the

2. Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* xxvii.
3. See B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 163–65.

Burgtheater, *Così* was, as Dexter Edge has shown, "by far the most successful opera of 1789–90, rivaled only by Salieri's *La cifra,* the only other newly commissioned opera that season."[4] Other evidence confirms Edge's view. Count Zinzendorf, though in his characteristically uninformative way, noted the premiere in his diary: "The music by Mozart is charming and the subject rather amusing."[5] An initial report in the Weimar *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* is more enthusiastic—"I can again announce an excellent work by Mozart to you, which has been taken up by our theatre"—and concludes: "Concerning the music: that it is by Mozart, I believe, says everything."[6]

Despite this generally favorable reception, however, *Così* was viewed by many in the years following as morally suspect. The actor Friedrich Ludwig Schröder, for example, described the libretto in his journal (28 April 1791) as "a miserable thing, disparaging to all women."[7] A review of a Berlin production in 1792 proclaimed, "The present opera is the silliest rubbish in the world, and it draws an audience only because of the splendid music."[8] Many early accounts, like this one, attempt to distance both Mozart and his "splendid" music from what they perceived as an immoral libretto on a "deplorable" subject.[9] The *Annalen des Theaters* published a report in 1791 on a Frankfurt performance in which the opera was described as "a miserable Italian piece of work with the forceful, elevated music of a Mozart."[10] Given the ideological preference in the north for German opera, as well as for the cultivation of high German theater (and its theory), it is not surprising that such criticism came from the north and not from Vienna, where, if Johann Pezzl's account is to be trusted, it was widely believed that *così fan tutte.*[11] Still, the libretto was later questioned in Vienna, too: Constanze told the Novellos that she did "not much admire the plot of 'Così fan,'" and Niemetschek wrote in his influential biography that he wondered how the composer could "waste his heavenly sweet melodies on such a miserable and clumsy text."[12]

Romantic critics, following suit, viewed *Così* as an immoral and cruel experiment on human nature. Of course, this is the same generation of critics that embraced *Don Giovanni,* and it is a curious fact of reception history that during the nineteenth century the two operas were produced on divided principles that reflect a clear privileging of one over the other. While *Don Giovanni* was adapted in the direction of a

4. Edge, "Mozart's Reception in Vienna," 82.

5. Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography,* 362.

6. Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography,* 363 (translation amended).

7. Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography,* 394 (translation amended). B. A. Brown suggests that Schröder may have attended a performance in 1794 rather than in 1791 (*W. A. Mozart: Così fan tutte,* 168).

8. Cited in Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Vienna,* 337.

9. Cited in Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Vienna,* 337.

10. Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography,* 395.

11. See Pezzl, "Sketch of Vienna," 112.

12. For Constanze's and Niemetschek's comments see, respectively, Novello and Novello, *Mozart Pilgrimage,* 94; and Niemetschek, *Lebensbeschreibung,* 43.

more flexible morality that allowed for the celebration of its appealing antihero, *Così* was altered according to a different standard of morality and sexual politics, a standard thought to be more appropriate to its female protagonists. Changes were made to the text, setting, and story, extra characters added, and, in one case, the use of a magic spell was introduced, all to relieve the women of responsibility for their actions.[13] Morality in this comparison seems to be divided along gender lines; the rakish behavior of a man may be celebrated, but the reluctant infidelity of two women may not be.

A number of recent commentators, though not disturbed by the supposed immorality of the libretto per se, continue to uphold the view that Mozart's music struggles against the implications of Da Ponte's text. Here, for example, is Bernard Williams: "The upsetting feature of *Così* is . . . that some of the music it has elicited is, so it seems, too strong, and puts a weight on the plot which its farcical artificiality cannot sustain."[14] The assumed divergence of text and music appears to be the key to a challenging and conflicted work. Joseph Kerman articulates this position with his usual élan: "Mozart's music clarifies and damns Da Ponte's cynicism, and so spoils his immaculate play."[15] But the extent to which it is appropriate to view the music as working against the text is open to question. For one thing, the fundamental problem of the ending—that the two sisters, having fallen in love with their "new" suitors before our very eyes and ears, would return to their original fiancés—was created in the first instance by the libretto. It is precisely the dramatic situation—the poignant irony of two women of sensibility abandoning constancy to follow their hearts (the very action that should have assured their constancy)—that creates the conflict and its disturbing dénouement.[16] Although Mozart is always free to confirm or resist the implications of the text, and to shade its implications in a variety of ways, I would argue that for the most part in *Così* his music teases out and develops what the libretto implies.

What underlies the widely held view that *Così* is a problematic work with an "undramatic" and "unsatisfactory" ending, then, is not any divergence of music and text; it is rather the opera's serious treatment of sentiment and the role sentiment plays in the opera's crucial recognition scenes, a role that has not been understood in its proper literary and cultural context.[17] Many commentators who have responded to the opera's development of genuine feeling—especially what has often been perceived as "the undeniable presence of passion" in the seductions of the second act—

13. A German production of 1814 transformed Don Alfonso into a magician, whose spells motivate the action. See Angermüller, *Mozart's Operas,* 204; and Link, "*L'arbore di Diana,*" 372–73. See also B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 165–72.

14. Williams, "Passion and Cynicism," 361.

15. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 97.

16. For an interpretation of the opera's problematic ending, see Hunter, *Culture of Opera Buffa,* 282–85.

17. "Undramatic" is Kerman's term (*Opera as Drama,* 98); "unsatisfactory" is both Kerman's (92) and Williams's ("Passion and Cynicism," 361).

attest to the difficulty of reconciling such passion with the ending.[18] For those who perceive genuine feeling to be a musical reality but do not recognize its sentimental context, the seduction scenes seem to run counter to the opera's purpose. They are, however, essential to it. *Così* presents a critique of the ideals of sensibility at the same time it makes a sentimental testimonial. The opera's attempt to distinguish between an appropriate and an "excessive" sensibility (as we observed in the case of *La finta giardiniera*) is dependent upon its ability to dramatize the sentimental experience convincingly. To make its anti-sentimental points, the work must first engage the sentimental truths it attempts to undermine. In this context it becomes clear that Da Ponte's text is neither so cynical, nor Mozart's emotional music so out of place, as many have thought. Don Alfonso's scheme cuts to the heart of the culture's ambiguities and literally forces the opera's representation of sentimental experience to divide against itself, just as he forces the opera's lovers to divide against each other. The effect on the ending is as profound as it is unavoidable.

Compare, for example, the ending of Mozart and Da Ponte's first collaboration. When the disguises are removed at the end of *Figaro,* the significance of the climactic recognition (and its dénouement) bears directly on the drama set in motion *before* the disguises were assumed. Deception and imbroglio are thus employed to confirm the social order. In *Così,* the reverse is true: the significance of what is discovered depends almost entirely on the changes of character and feeling that the disguises themselves helped to bring about. Here, deception and imbroglio threaten to overturn the social order. But Don Alfonso's demonstration is worked out from within the sentimental realm. The opera dramatizes a sentimental story in which the twin virtues of feeling and constancy are made to work against each other. The result is a sentimental drama that lays bare the genre's inherent contradictions. What Don Alfonso reveals was present all along, waiting to be discovered—the anti-sentimental concealed within the sentimental. This is the most important way in which *Così* differs from every other Mozart opera. Once again, *Figaro* may serve as a point of comparison. In that opera, Da Ponte and Mozart present a more serious conflict (the Count and the Countess are already married and he is a consummate philanderer) that is far less disturbing, even though it exposes the Count as morally wrong. The difference lies in the treatment of sentiment. In *Figaro,* the sentimental figure is the Countess and the faithless lover is the Count, poignancy without contradiction. In *Così,* the sentimental and the unfaithful are one and the same, a contradiction that is forcefully dramatized, especially at the end.

As a result, *Così* makes emotional demands that far exceed those made by *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*—as indicated by its long history of making critics and audiences uncomfortable—and it evokes a pathos that is strangely out of sync with its *lieto fine,* a pathos that results from the fact that the recognitions of the middle find no rec-

18. Williams, "Passion and Cynicism," 361. See also Mitchell, "Truth about 'Così,'" 97.

onciliation in the dénouement. The myth of the failed premiere brings the opera's earliest history into alignment with its uneven reception in the years immediately following. The desire to present a single, unified view of the opera's reception might even be thought to reflect a more fundamental desire to overcome the real source of discomfort—its highly problematic ending with its scandalous recognition. We are accustomed in opera buffa to having the emotional discoveries of the middle—the Countess's recovery of lost love in "Dove sono i bei momenti," for example—point *toward* the dénouement, as they do in *Figaro.* But *Così* does not conform to such generic expectations. Recognition and the knowledge it brings resist the *lieto fine*—and the moral—of this opera. As it did in the case of *Don Giovanni,* recognition has once again engendered a controversy concerning the way an opera ends, a controversy fueled by the nature of the story and the questionable morality it appears to endorse.

The coming generation of Romantic writers and artists—among the first to criticize this opera and its ending—would stake their worldview on the value of experience and its discovery of feeling, in the face of which all other considerations were thought to pale. The opera's moments of sentimental discovery (the recognition scenes of the middle) appear to point in the opposite direction from the dénouement toward a *lieto fine* very differently conceived, an ending in which the two ladies from Ferrara would be able to follow their hearts and marry their Albanian suitors. Several modern productions, such as Peter Sellars's with its much-discussed staging, have attempted to alter the drama in the direction of this Romantic view.[19] But contradiction inheres in the ending. It does not need to be reconceived and its implicit chaos staged by a director to be meaningful. On the contrary, the effect is far more disturbing when the final scene is played straight (as it would have been in the eighteenth century), with all the attendant problems left implicit and unresolved. One has the sense that here as nowhere else in Mozart the *lieto fine* is a compromise with which neither the characters nor the audience can be entirely comfortable. In its resistance to the reconciliation recognition brings, *Così* remains true to sentimental experience.

Reading *Così* "for the Sentiment"

Così opens *in medias res* onto a lively debate on female virtue, one that needs to be understood in the context of the culture of sensibility and the sentimental genres that indoctrinated lovers such as Ferrando and Guglielmo on the subject of moral constancy in women. Don Alfonso has apparently just suggested (though we never find out exactly what he said)—as a point of principle, without intending any par-

19. On Sellars's production, see Hunter, "Window to the Work"; and MacDonald, "On Peter Sellars."

ticular disrespect—that the beloved fiancées of his two young friends, like other young ladies, are capable of infidelity. Outraged, Ferrando and Guglielmo initiate the opening trio (No. 1) by presenting their side of the debate:

Ferrando	
La mia Dorabella	My Dorabella
Capace non è:	would not be capable of it:
Fedel quanto bella	heaven made her
Il cielo la fe'.	as faithful as she is beautiful.
Guglielmo	
La mia Fiordiligi	My Fiordiligi
Tradirmi non sa:	couldn't betray me:
Uguale in lei credo	I believe constancy and beauty
Constanza e beltà.	to be equal in her.

Their words are precisely in keeping with the images of virtuous women that sentimental fiction espoused, though their sentiments are at the same time undermined by the authors' subtle wit. Each lover attests to his beloved's virtue with the same simile (in which fidelity is equated with beauty) and to the same tune, Guglielmo following Ferrando's melody to the note. Even as these sentimental beliefs are first introduced, they are presented as what might be called heartfelt clichés. When Don Alfonso, the opera's "vecchio filosofo" (old philosopher), as he is described in the *dramatis personae* of the original libretto, asks the lovers for proof of their beloveds' fidelity, the soldiers together construct the following:

Ferrando	
Lunga esperienza . . .	Long experience . . .
Guglielmo	
Nobil educazion . . .	Noble education . . .
Ferrando	
Pensar sublime . . .	Sublime thoughts . . .
Guglielmo	
Analogia d'umor . . .	Kindred feelings . . .
Ferrando	
Disinteresse . . .	Unselfishness . . .
Guglielmo	
Immutabil carattere . . .	Steadfast characters . . .
Ferrando	
Promesse . . .	Promises . . .

Guglielmo	
Proteste . . .	Protestations . . .
Ferrando	
Giuramenti . . .	Vows . . .

The spontaneity of the two lovers' reply gives their defense an appearance of conviction, but to Don Alfonso it is only a list of sentimental generalities that he gently mocks by completing it: "Pianti, sospir, carezze, svenimenti, / Lasciatemi un po' ridere" (Tears, sighs, caresses, swoons, at least let me laugh a little).

Don Alfonso opens the second trio (No. 2) with a rebuttal of the sentimental position the two lovers have outlined in the first:

È la fede delle femmine	Fidelity in women
Come l'araba fenice;	is like the Arabian phoenix;
Che vi sia ciascun lo dice,	everyone says it exists,
Dove sia nessun lo sa.	but where it is no one knows.

The phoenix, of course, was an image often associated in literature with the "myth" of fidelity in women, and it is more than likely that members of the original audience recognized Don Alfonso's argument as a deliberate misquotation of a quatrain from an aria in Metastasio's *Demetrio* of 1731 that was well known. That Ferrando and Guglielmo recognize the passage as a quotation is clear from their exclamations in the recitative following, "Sciocchezze di Poeti! / Scempiaggini di vecchi!" (Poet's nonsense! Old men's foolishness!), and confirmed by the fact that the lines appear indented as a quotation in the original libretto. Goldoni had used the same verse from Metastasio in his *La scuola moderna* (1748), and Da Ponte himself had used it earlier in both *Il ricco d'un giorno* (1784) and *Una cosa rara* (1786), and would use it once more in *L'isola del piacere* (1795).[20] But whether or not Ferrando and Guglielmo notice, as Patrick J. Smith, Rodney Farnsworth, Daniel Heartz, and others have, that Don Alfonso attributes to women ("femmine") what Metastasio claims for lovers ("amanti") remains unclear. The Metastasian verse is identical except for the first line, which reads in the original, "È la fede *degli amanti*" (emphasis mine).[21] Don Alfonso appears to call on the authority and wisdom of great literature to make his argument, but has cleverly adapted the passage to his own purpose. In so doing, he

20. B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 74–75; see also Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 229 and 232. Don Alfonso quotes from literature again in his short, spontaneous *accompagnato* on women's (in)fidelity, "Nel mare solca e nell'arena semina" (I.vii), which also appears in quotations in the original libretto; the source this time is Jacopo Sannazaro's *L'Arcadia* of 1504 (see Brown, *Così,* 69). The rich literary associations of the text, which far exceed those found in *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni,* are attributed by Brown and Rice to the fact that the libretto was originally conceived for Salieri (another well-read Italian); see their "Salieri's *Così fan tutte.*"

21. P. J. Smith, *Tenth Muse,* 175; Farnsworth, "*Così fan tutte* as Parody and Burlesque," 53; Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 232.

signals the direction the action will take. While the opera's subtitle is true to the Metastasian original, *La scuola degli amanti* (The School for Lovers), its wager is restricted to "le femmine."

The misogyny Don Alfonso's alteration necessarily implies has no small consequence for the plot, for it divides the lessons he seeks to teach the lovers according to gender. Don Alfonso engages in this exercise primarily to prove to his two male pupils by means of experience—to be understood in Rousseau's terms—what they will not be convinced of by argument.[22] The men will take action; the women will be acted upon. The men are asked to create a circumstance in which their fiancées will be tempted by new romance and then to observe the consequences. The women are made the objects of the experiment. There can be no doubt, however, that the knowledge the women gain in the process has a profound effect upon them, something that Don Alfonso may not have anticipated. One senses that even though he foresees the pain his "lesson" will inflict on all parties—he comments in an aside in the laughing trio "E voi ridete?" (No. 16), "Ma so che in piangere / Dee terminar" (but I know it is bound to end in tears)—Don Alfonso does not fully understand what a sentimental adventure of this kind might entail for the women. Indeed, one imagines that such sentimental knowledge is not dreamt of in his "philosophy." Thus, while the men only witness the contradictions inherent in sentimental culture that Don Alfonso brings to light, the women experience them very much as women in the age must have.

Like the opening scenes, the opera as a whole may be understood as a debate on the merits of feeling and sentiment in the culture of sensibility. Its "philosophical" subject is the virtue of women much celebrated in sentimental fiction, drama, and opera. The sentimental cause is championed by the lovers—all four of them products of this culture—and most compellingly by Fiordiligi, whose allegiance to the tenets of sensibility springs from deep conviction and goes beyond convention. Fiordiligi and Dorabella thus become the heroines of a story centered on the moral constancy of women. The turning point of the first act is brought about by the instinctive compassion the imminent deaths of their Albanian suitors evoke in them. Both sisters are forced into the position of defending their virtue, and though Dorabella capitulates to her new suitor rather early in act 2, Fiordiligi plays the role of "virtue in distress" quite convincingly, even to the moment late in act 2 when she plans to follow Guglielmo to the battlefield (to die by his side if necessary). While the opera clearly makes light of sentiment in several scenes—when, for example, Don Alfonso cries crocodile tears in the recitative before his "Vorrei dir, e cor non ho" (No. 5), affecting a sentimental disposition he does not possess—its representation of the sentimental experience of the two sisters in the second act, especially that of Fiordiligi, is for the most part touchingly sympathetic.

22. B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 85.

For their part, Ferrando and Guglielmo submitted to Don Alfonso's "rational" demonstration in the first instance only because they were certain he would be proven wrong and their beloveds vindicated. Indeed, their first proposal in defense of their "Penelopes" is a duel—the traditional means, not coincidentally, of defending virtue—and one readily imagines that had the wager been resolved in this way Don Alfonso, an older man, perhaps accustomed to the sedentary habits of a "philosopher," could hardly have proven his point. In agreeing to the wager, Ferrando and Guglielmo attempt to champion a view of female virtue that is as valuable to them (and to society) as it is to Fiordiligi and Dorabella. We know from their own testimonials in the opening scene that they value in their fiancées precisely the thing Don Alfonso mistrusts: "Promesse . . . Proteste . . . Giuramenti . . ." Such assurances of feeling—whether they are exaggerations or not—appeared to guarantee fidelity in women. Indeed it is precisely this view that, earlier in the century, had transformed the virtuous woman into a sentimental heroine who claimed the sympathy and admiration of a vast audience. The young soldiers' sentimental convictions need to be understood as the product of a culture that encouraged men to value women's susceptibility to romantic feeling, the very same susceptibility that Don Alfonso exploits to get Fiordiligi and Dorabella to betray them.

In advancing the anti-sentimental position, Don Alfonso, rightly understood as a product of Enlightenment thinking, does not eschew feeling altogether (he supports both affection and marriage between the couples in the end), but he believes that human affection in society should be understood—contradictions and all—in rational rather than emotional terms. As Jonathan Miller, Bruce Alan Brown, and others have remarked, he appears to know the writings of the French *philosophes.*[23] His view of fidelity (that it is as rare as the Arabian phoenix, which is to say mythical) is supported by his belief that constancy goes against human nature. He asks in the first scene:

Solo saper vorrei	I would only like to know
Che razza d'animali	what kind of animals
Son queste vostre belle,	these beauties of yours are,
Se han come tutti noi carne, ossa, e pelle,	if they, like us, are flesh, bone, and skin,
Se mangian come noi, se veston gonne,	if they eat as we do, if they wear skirts,
Alfin, se Dee, se donne son . . .	in the end, if they are goddesses or women . . .

Near the end of act 2 he insists, when he urges that the men accept and marry their fiancées as they are:

23. J. Miller, *Subsequent Performances,* 199–200; B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 82–83.

Natura non potea	Nature cannot make
Fare l'eccezione, il privilegio	an exception for the privilege
Di creare due donne d'altra pasta	of creating two women of different stuff
Per i vostri bei musi; in ogni cosa	especially for you; in everything
Ci vuol filosofia.	one must be philosophical.

This idea that fidelity is a contradiction of human nature may be found in the writings of Diderot, Rousseau, Casanova, and Benjamin Franklin, among others. Closer to Da Ponte's and Mozart's Vienna, Pezzl brings this view of the natural inconstancy of human affections into the immediate proximity of *Così:* "All in all, that grand passionate love—a principal occupation of our grandfathers—has become invisible in our age." On the pursuit of women of the upper classes, he writes:

> Since it is evident that one is simply dealing with puppets, teasing them and playing with them is all anyone wishes to do. One flatters their whims for a while until one has achieved one's objective; then one laughs over the vain little creature and leaps out of her arms into those of the next one, where the same game is played over again, with the same conclusion. . . . Thanks to our malleable morals, our inclination to laugh at everything, our refined way of thinking, we have been freed from the desperation of unrequited love.[24]

In comparison to this view, Don Alfonso's attitude toward Fiordiligi and Dorabella is a good deal less cynical and far more compassionate. Ferrando and Guglielmo, for their part, are eager to marry, despite the day's bitter lesson; celebration of feeling is not dead, nor is it completely lost to convention.

The debate over the merits of feeling and sentiment is most effectively dramatized, as one would expect in this context, in the music, which carefully distinguishes real sentimental experience—as it is developed later in the opera—from the lovers' early protestations of emotional platitudes. In their opening scenes, Da Ponte and Mozart deliberately avoid establishing independent identities for each of the lovers. The two heroes and two heroines, as many have noted, are presented in a special ensemble style that precludes their development as individuals with independent passions and desires. Ferrando and Guglielmo are revealed as carbon copies of each other in the opening trio where they sing similar texts to identical music, later responding to Don Alfonso simultaneously in thirds, gesturing in tandem to their swords at the appropriate moment. Of course, as Donald Mitchell suggests, "it is not surprising, that identical attitudes should be expressed in identical music. (It would be confusing if they were not.)"[25] But the effect is almost one of caricature. In their initial duet, "Ah guarda, sorella" (No. 4), the two sisters also present themselves *a due,* coming

24. Pezzl, "Sketch of Vienna," 113.
25. Mitchell, "Truth about *Così,*" 98.

together to sing in thirds and sixths on the line "Felice son io," which they finish together, pausing in the second tempo for a notable melisma on "Amore" (a sly reference to the fact that Louise Villeneuve [Dorabella] had played the trouser role of "Amore" on the same stage in Martín y Soler's *L'arbore di Diana*),[26] after which they alternate perfectly parallel, arpeggiated testimonials to Cupid before concluding the duet together. Even after the two young men begin to take on individual identities in the third trio, "Una bella serenata" (No. 3)—Ferrando proving to be the more idealistic of the two—much of their leave-taking and later lovemaking is done *a due.*[27] The opera's early representation of sentiment as "identical attitudes" that may be represented by identical music appears to undermine whatever claims the characters make to understand the nature of human passion.

It is only once the ruse is well underway that the four lovers begin to emerge as distinct and well-defined characters. Indeed, we are a full third into the opera before one of the lovers steps out of the ensemble style to sing an aria (it is Dorabella with her "Smanie implacabili che m'agitate" [No. 11]). From the perspective of characterization (as it usually unfolds in *opere buffe* in ensembles and arias), it seems pointedly ironic that the four lovers begin to take on more interesting, conflicted, and vastly different identities—and to engage our interest and sympathy—only after they are forced into a situation that we know to be false. This is especially true in the case of Dorabella and Fiordiligi, who develop without pretense since they do not know that their romantic adventure is a ruse. The opera poses a misleading juxtaposition between what is real (the lovers as they were) and what is farce (the lovers as Alfonso manipulates them), for it is the real that is expressed in platitudes and the farce that plays itself out in terms of what appears to be real feeling. A strong sense of carnival pervades the opera, inverting the logical order of things.

Though we know it to be the invention of a cynical "old philosopher," the ruse proves to be a compelling drama. As the women's affections are engaged by their new suitors, the sentimental fiction enacted on the stage engages our sympathies as it engages theirs. One must read such fictions, as Dr. Johnson advises, "for the sentiment." The appeal of such fictions was precisely their ability to engage an audience eager to indulge in expressions of feeling. "Such literature," as Janet Todd reminds us, "buttonholes the reader and demands an emotional, even physical response."[28] The sentiment at the heart of the opera's "fiction" is as real—that is, as powerfully affecting—to us as the feeling in one of Richardson's novels or any other sentimental representation. In this context, of course, "real" and "realistic" do not mean the

26. See Link, "'Così fan tutte': Dorabella and Amore," 888–94. There is another reference to Villeneuve's earlier role as "Amore" in the recitative following the sextet (No. 13). At the word "Amor," Dorabella exclaims, "Numi, che sento!" (Ye gods, what do I hear!), something Mozart highlights in the music by having the texture change from secco to accompanied recitative with the entrance of awed, muted strings. For other connections between Martín y Soler's opera and Mozart's, see Link, "*L'arbore di Diana.*"

27. See Heartz, "When Mozart Revises."

28. Todd, *Sensibility,* 2.

same thing. Despite the rage for *Pamela* both in England and on the continent, it remained very uncommon for masters to marry their servants. Verisimilitude was no more the crowning feature of sentimental fiction than of opera buffa. And yet, that sentimental fictions were known to celebrate implausibilities and unlikelihoods did not inhibit their ability to engage readers. That *Così*'s sentimental drama is known from the outset to be a ruse, therefore, does not necessarily interfere with its power to move an audience.

When Don Alfonso sets out to demonstrate that the ideal of moral constancy could be brought into conflict with efficacy of feeling, he lays bare a potential contradiction in the age of sensibility as tellingly as any modern critic. The two principles did not necessarily work in tandem and could be made to work against each other. While an acute sensibility engendered in women deep feelings that would prove constant under the threat of danger, such "sensibility" left them prone to emotionally motivated mistakes. Highly vulnerable, they might fall for the wrong men, or become susceptible to despair and madness (as in *La finta giardiniera*). Deep feeling did not always lead to marriage and legitimacy, even in fiction. The same sensibility that emancipates and empowers Pamela ultimately condemns Richardson's tragic sentimental heroine, Clarissa, whose cruel treatment at the hands of her unfeeling family and trust in the rake, Lovelace, lead to her ruin and death. In one case, the social order is reaffirmed (as it almost always is in opera buffa); in the other, it proves powerless to save a virtuous woman. Thus did the period produce fictions such as Richardson's *Clarissa* and Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in which excessive sentiment leads to disastrous consequences.[29]

One way of understanding the ironic tone *Così* takes toward many of its sentimental scenes, especially in act 1, is to observe a distinction Barker-Benfield points to between "sensibility" (which is "tempered by reason") and "excessive sensibility" ("given over entirely to 'feeling' and to romance"):

> Doubts about "excessive sensibility" in women had been expressed by Richardson and would intensify in keeping with the increasing manifestations of women's minds and feelings in sentimental fiction. The conventional formula of "excessive sensibility" permitted criticism while continuing to sanction the sensibility that had become the defining characteristic of eighteenth-century femininity.[30]

The opera draws the same distinction between exaggerations of sentiment—overreactions to events and protestations that cannot possibly be true—and the poi-

29. Pezzl offers his sense of the Viennese response to this phenomenon: "No Viennese of fine society will ever play Werther" ("Sketch of Vienna," 112).

30. Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* 317 and 302, respectively.

gnant emotions of a fine sensibility, such as Fiordiligi's. The exaggerations are easily ridiculed—in Don Alfonso's "Vorrei dir," for example, which he sings with a wink to the audience—but the latter plays a crucial role in the sentimental drama that ensues in act 2 and the appearance of "virtue in distress" Fiordiligi takes on there, in which she reacts with genuine feeling to real events as she perceives them. In counting on the genuine sentiment and natural affection of his subjects to make his anti-sentimental demonstration, Don Alfonso shows how criticism may come from within the culture and even within the genre. The opera's fiction is both sentimental and anti-sentimental, as are many of the period's sentimental novels. One recalls that Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey,* now generally regarded as a work that takes a questioning, even satirical view of the sentimental, was received in its day as genuinely sentimental.[31] *Così* is far more sympathetic to sentimental affection than *A Sentimental Journey,* but its combination of the sentimental with the anti-sentimental is at least as complex. Indeed, one imagines that many of the early critics who condemned the opera as immoral may have objected to it precisely because Don Alfonso's ruse was understood as a harsh condemnation of the sentimental culture.

True to the world of opera buffa, however, Don Alfonso does not finally prove to be a harsh critic of the sentimental genres. He laughs at the idea that vows of constancy may be kept, but he does not laugh at the idea of love or marriage, once the parties have learned their lessons. And he is as quick to mock the opera's seria leanings as its sentimental ones. For example, it is one of the opera's many paradoxes that its two champions of female virtue, Ferrando and Guglielmo, who are willing to defend their sentimental view of their beloveds with their honor and their swords, are almost immediately coerced—by means of the wager—into adopting the roles of rakish suitors who attempt to compromise women's virtue. To champion the cause of love, they must pledge their honor as soldiers to the opposite cause. In setting the claims of love against those of duty, Da Ponte and Mozart satirize the familiar position of the opera seria hero, whose struggle of conscience is almost always brought about by a conflict between love and duty. It only adds to the irony of the situation that these two idealistic "heroes" find themselves in a compromising situation of their own making, one in which neither love nor duty can win out with its dignity intact. In the end, Don Alfonso is the first to encourage a forgiving attitude toward the women, one that demonstrates his own compassion, as well as the constancy and affection of the men. As Brown rightly suggests, those who attempt to see Don Alfonso as a *philosophe* of the highest order go too far. "The term 'philosopher' did not always have the same scientific or academic connotations it now does," and philosophers in the theatre have often appeared closer to Don Alfonso than to Diderot.[32] Don Alfonso is, after all, the bass in an opera buffa, complicit in all manner of imbroglio,

31. See Keymer, Introduction to Sterne, *Sentimental Journey,* xxvii.
32. B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 83.

and happy to play the role of a benevolent father figure in the end, something one imagines Rousseau and Diderot might have found repugnant.

To read *Così* "for the sentiment" is thus more than a matter of recognizing the passion of the seductions in the second act. The entire plot is built on protestations of emotion, only some of which are born of Don Alfonso's scheme. The moments in the second act that push those boundaries the farthest, especially Fiordiligi's *rondò* "Per pietà, ben mio, perdona" (No. 25) and Ferrando's painful seduction of her in "Fra gli amplessi in pochi istanti" (No. 29), need to be understood in the context of the conventional—if at times overstated—testimonials of sentiment in the first act, for it is the conventional declarations the lovers make in act 1 that are put to the test in act 2. The women have promised fidelity without knowing what it is in the sense of having any experience of it. Their early declarations demonstrate the half-knowledge of the tenets of sensibility that make possible the emotional recognition scenes to come later. In the second act, the women—and the men to a lesser extent—are thrown headlong into the jaws of experience, where they are confronted with what they only imagined (and desired) in act 1. As the men witness the capitulation of their Penelopes, they also witness something even more disturbing—that feigned emotion expressed in conventional platitudes may produce an effect on women as great as (or perhaps even greater than) genuine affection. Don Alfonso, as we have seen, never doubted the power of such sentimental feeling. What he doubts is that it will prove equal to the test of fidelity. The opera sets out to temper sentimental feeling with reason, to expose what is excessive to ridicule, to force an impossibly idealistic conception of love into conflict with human nature—in short, to explore the potentially dangerous emotional boundaries of sentimental experience from the relatively safe haven of the opera buffa stage.

The Language of Sentimental Knowledge

For every moment in *Così* that attempts to hold the culture of sensibility up to ridicule, there is another in which genuine feeling carries such conviction that it appears to overwhelm the ruse that set out to expose the pretensions of the sentimental. These moments of genuine feeling are not restricted to the seductions of the second act; they appear early and often in the opera. A close reading reveals how the immersion of the central characters in the culture of sensibility is developed extensively in the language of the libretto and its musical realization. For example, the libretto is saturated with references to "fede" (the wager centers on "la fede della femmine") and to "costanza" (Fiordiligi begs the two new suitors in her aria "Come scoglio immoto resta" [No. 14], "Rispettate, anime ingrate, / Questo esempio di costanza," [Respect, disagreeable souls, this example of constancy]). The tears, sighs, caresses, and swoons ("Pianti, sospir, carezze, svenimenti") that Don Alfonso correctly identifies in the opening scenes as the hallmarks of sentimentality are present in the expres-

sions and gestures of the lovers throughout. "Pietà" and "pietade" are also an important medium of exchange; Fiordiligi's *rondò* (No. 25), for example, opens with the words "Per pietà, ben mio, perdona / All'error d'un' alma amante" (For pity's sake, my dearest, pardon the error of a loving soul).

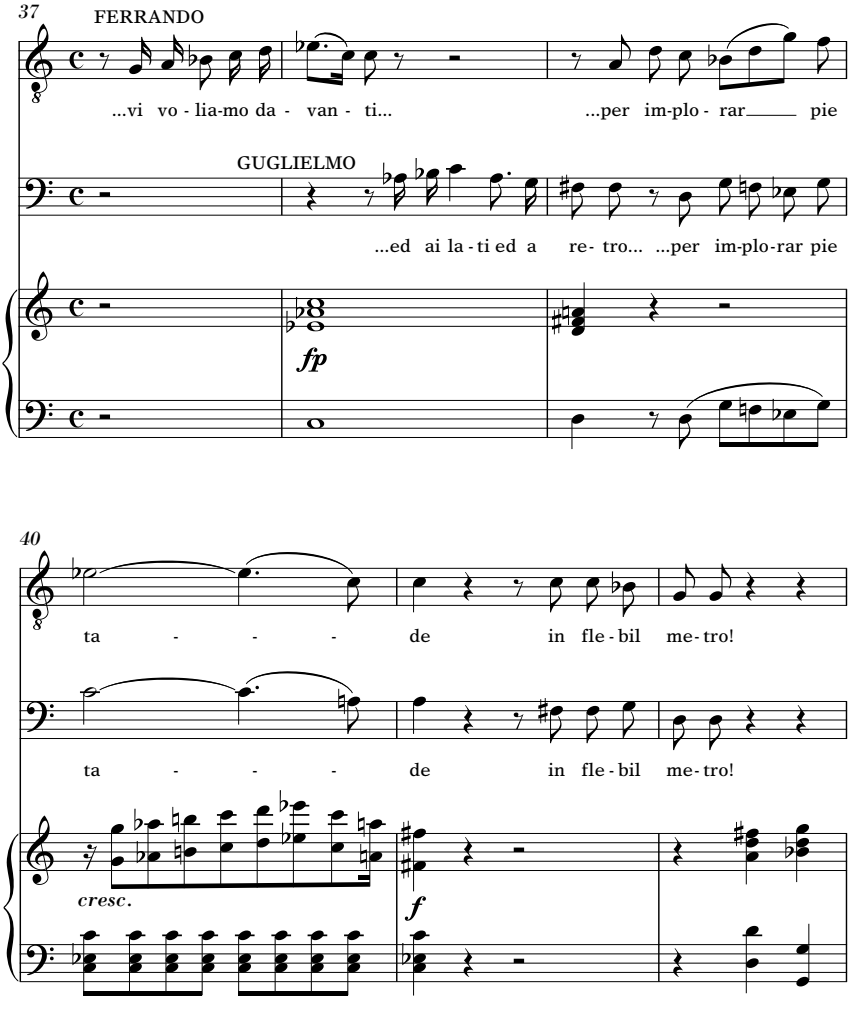
Often, however, the language of sentimental knowledge is used with pointed dramatic irony. Just before he learns of Dorabella's betrayal, for example, Ferrando expresses his confidence in her constancy: "Assai conosco / Quella sensibil alma" (I know very well her sensible soul). In the next scene, after Ferrando has admitted in his cavatina "Tradito, schernito" (No. 27) that he still loves her, Don Alfonso remarks with cutting irony, "Bravo! questa è costanza" (Bravo! this is constancy). It is with similar irony that Don Alfonso exclaims, "oh poverini! / Per femmina giocar cento zecchini?"(oh poor things! to wager a hundred sequins on a woman?) just before his brief *accompagnato* following "Soave sia il vento" (No. 10). In referring to these sentimental men as "poverini" and later "poverette," he not only identifies them with a culture that celebrates all manner of *poverini* in art, literature, and opera, he also feminizes them. (Destined to be betrayed by their lovers, Ferrando and Guglielmo perhaps deserve to be thought the *poverini* of this sentimental fiction.) The language of pity is also made the subject of ridicule at moments such as the recitative following the sextet No. 13 in which Ferrando and Guglielmo complete their absurdly disjointed love poem with the line, "Per implorar pietade in flebil metro!" (to implore your pity in plaintive meter!). The word "pietade" is held over a poignant diminished seventh chord, marked crescendo; word painting portrays the "flebil metro" in a rather heavy-handed way as the G-minor passage concludes (see example 6.1). Later, just before they ingest the fake draughts of poison in the act 1 finale, Ferrando and Guglielmo again presume on this central tenet of the sentimental faith:

Barbare, avvicinatevi:	Cruel ones, draw near:
D'un disperato affetto	see the sad effect
Mirate il tristo effetto	of a desperate passion
E abbiate almen pietà.	and at least pity us.

They ask for pity since they have been denied love. Conventional wisdom has it that one emotion may very well lead to the other, something Don Alfonso knows full well when he encourages the women, "Pietade almeno a quelli / Cercate di mostrar" (At least try to show them a little pity). The culture of sensibility has prepared the ladies all too well for this charade.

The action upon which the act 1 finale centers—the taking of (false) poison and its counterpart, the mesmeric cure—is by far the boldest and most problematic of the opera's attempts to mock the sentimental culture. The entire episode may be understood as an enactment of the things lovers say to each other—any version of "I will die without you" will do—without ever imagining death as more than a metaphor

Example 6.1. *Così,* recitative, "Che sussurro! Che strepito" (I, xi), mm. 37–42.



for suffering. When the boat appears to carry the soldiers away in act 1, for example, the sisters exclaim, "Muoio d'affanno" (I am dying of anguish). Guglielmo uses the metaphor as the prelude to his aria "Non siate ritrosi" (No. 15):

Un solo istante il core aprite, o belle,	For a single moment open your heart, my beauties,
A sue dolci facelle, o a voi davanti	to its sweet urgings, or you will see die
Spirar vedrete i più fedeli amanti.	before you the most faithful of lovers.

It is surely no coincidence that both Guglielmo and Ferrando claim to be dying of unrequited love in the principal seduction scenes of act 2: Guglielmo in the recitative before "Il core vi dono" (No. 23)—"Io mi sento sì male, / Sì male, anima mia, / Che mi par di morire" (I feel so bad, so bad, my dearest, that I think I shall die) and soon after, "Ingrata, voi burlate / Ed intanto io mi moro!" (Ungrateful one, you mock me and in the meantime I'm dying!); Ferrando in the duet "Fra gli amplessi"—"Ed intanto di dolore, / Meschinello io mi morrò" (And in the meantime I, wretched as I am, shall die of grief).

The use of such language is of course not at all uncommon in opera, and it passes for a kind of cliché in its first appearances in *Così.* But the long-standing meaning of the metaphoric formula "to die of love" takes on a new significance in an age in which intense emotion, especially excessive and unrequited feelings of love, were thought by medical professionals to lead to nervous disorders, madness, and even death.[33] In this context, the enactment of the metaphor in the act 1 finale is a disturbing burlesque. The supposed Albanian suitors have not known these women long enough to want to die for them, and their precisely coordinated sighs of agony and exaggerated palpitations appear rehearsed. But the culture of sensibility has prepared the sisters to accept just such a story. Unchaperoned and naive, the sisters are eager for romance and naturally disposed to believe in the appearance of strong feelings. The mesmeric cure, too, is exactly the sort of pantomime two such women would be unlikely to see through. Franz Anton Mesmer, the notorious Viennese doctor whose magnetic cure had astonished Europe in the 1770s, had left Vienna in disgrace in 1778 to settle in Paris, where he had a few years of extraordinary success with a mostly female clientele before being discredited in 1784 by a royal commission that included, among others, Benjamin Franklin. The first theatrical satire on mesmerism appeared in the same year at the Comédie-Italienne. (Da Ponte and Mozart may be alluding to Mesmer's success in Paris with Despina's exaggerated cadential trills on the line "Là in Francia fu").[34]

Sentimental language in opera is also a matter of the music, of course, which does not always move in tandem with the text and may intensify or undermine the libretto's implications. Take, for example, the poignant *accompagnato* quintet just before the men depart, "Di scrivermi ogni giorno" (No. 8a), in which the lovers take their reluctant farewell. Ferrando and Guglielmo are playacting, of course, but this fact does not intrude on the musical action, and the only reminder of the ruse is Don Alfonso's aside, "Io crepo se non rido" (I shall burst if I don't laugh). Mozart sets this recitative text as a short ensemble, though he labels it "recitativo" and gives it a spontaneity and consistency of affect that were missing from the earlier quintet "Sento oddio, che questo piede" (No. 6). The differences are illuminating. In the earlier quintet, reminders of the ruse intrude almost immediately. The music dramatizes the hesitation

33. See Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability,* especially chap. 5.
34. See Steptoe, "Mozart, Mesmer, and 'Così fan tutte.'"

in Guglielmo's footsteps: "Sento oddio, che questo piede / È restio nel girle avante" (I feel, O God, that this foot is reluctant to turn toward her). It similarly portrays Ferrando's inability to speak: "Il mio labbro palpitante / Non può detto pronunziar" (My trembling lips cannot pronounce a word). Dorabella and Fiordiligi react to the news together, with the much-overused invocation of death: "Fate core: a entrambe in seno / Immergeteci l'acciar" (take heart: into our breasts plunge your steel). They enter, as might be expected in an ensemble of this kind, on the dominant but turn quickly toward the minor v, with a haunting deceptive cadence on the words "a entrambe in seno / Immergeteci l'acciar," arriving with a full cadence on minor v at measure 30. The turn to minor reflects the sudden, dramatic turn of the text to thoughts of death, an overreaction that the men quickly correct with their entrance at measure 30, restoring the major dominant and the melody of their earlier entrances. The musical suggestion that nothing is wrong stands in conflict with the text ("Idol mio, la sorte incolpa, / Se ti deggio abbandonar" [My idol, blame fate if I must abandon you]) in which the men thoughtlessly (and perhaps recklessly) blame fate for a situation they and Don Alfonso have created. The thin veil of the ruse is soon lifted, when the men step outside their assumed dramatic and musical poses to make asides to Don Alfonso: "Cosa dici?" (What do you say?) and "Te n'avvedi?" (Don't you see?).

This ensemble offers an accurate musical representation of the state of affairs. The men are obviously pretending, something they reveal with the controlled word painting of hesitation at the beginning, reminiscent of Don Alfonso's control of a musical impression of something he does not feel in "Vorrei dir." Other aspects of the setting also reflect their position in the action: they betray no signs of disturbance or even sympathy at the strong reactions of their fiancées, and they break character at the first available moment to gloat to Don Alfonso. The women, however, are genuinely surprised and upset, even though the music holds them in check. Their brief hint at the tonic minor at measure 40 is never allowed to develop, and their obvious distress—whether it is an overreaction or not—is set against the clear confidence and control of the men. Of course, Fiordiligi's and Dorabella's sense of impending tragedy and their protestations of misery are taken by Ferrando and Guglielmo as the first signs of victory, and to so great an extent that the two soldiers cannot even wait until the end of the ensemble to express their elation. The action of this ensemble is thus divided between the drama concerning the lovers and that concerning the wager, and it is quite clearly governed by the reality of the latter. The reaction of the women to the state of affairs, though presented, is never allowed to take over the direction and tone of the number. Reactions to distress are here constrained not by inclination or lack of natural feeling but by the nature of the ensemble and its attempt to accomplish several goals at once.

How different is the next quintet, "Di scrivermi ogni giorno" (No. 8a). Here Mozart turns a moment of recitative text—a moment sandwiched between outbursts of the chorus "Bella vita militar," with its wryly ironic representation of mili-

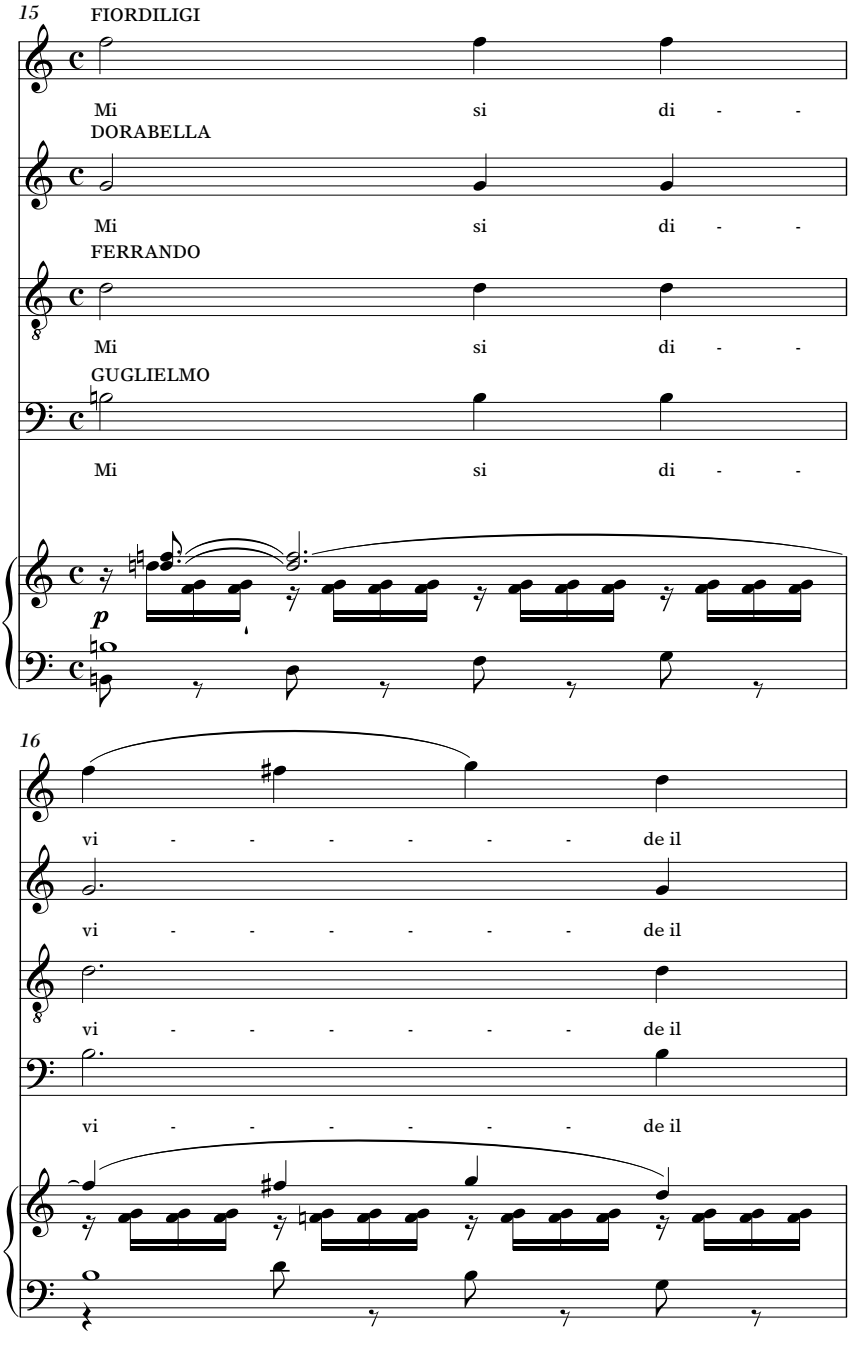
tary life—into an ensemble initiated by Fiordiligi and Dorabella and governed by their tender feelings as their lovers depart. The music presents a consistent affect and manages to distance the only aside (Don Alfonso's "Io crepo se non rido") effectively from the main drama of sentimental leave-taking. Excessive thoughts of death and the bitterness of fate are left behind as the lovers indulge in what appears to be a touching farewell, one concerned with letter writing and constancy. Entered spontaneously from the secco recitative, this *accompagnato* number appears out of nowhere, as if to suggest that the musical transparency of the simple recitative could not contain the emotion felt in the moment. The four lovers now share the hesitancy implied by the rests, which is reflected in the text of the original libretto, "Di . . . scri . . . ver . . . mi . . . ogni . . . gior . . . no / Giurami . . . vita . . . mia" (Swear that you will write to me everyday, my life) and marked *piangendo* (weeping). They participate with what appears to be equal conviction in the poignant sighs of the imitative setting of "Addio" at measure12. At measure 15 they offer a final image of grief at parting *a quattro* with virtually one breath: "Mi si divide il cor, bell'idol mio!" (My heart is split in two, my beautiful idol!) (see example 6.2). Mozart restricts his word painting of the suggestive "divide" to a brief melismatic elaboration for Fiordiligi. One imagines Ferrando and Guglielmo take genuine pleasure in this expressive number, for indulgence in grief—whether one's own or another's—was one of the greatest of sentimental pleasures.

Quite the opposite of the earlier quintet where the asides were central to the action, Don Alfonso's aside here appears to be slightly out of place and remains musically outside the quartet of lovers who do not acknowledge his comment in any way. The aside functions as a reminder of the real state of affairs, but its cynicism, though simultaneous, remains separate from the transporting emotion of this moment, whose sublimity it is powerless to interrupt. The simplicity and directness of the moment's musical setting and its consistent affect bring into view what is heartrending and compelling about this leave-taking. When it is over, it is difficult to remember that the sentimental pathos engendered here is the product of a ruse. The upbeat chorus, "Bella vita militar," which frames the quintet, presents the strongest possible contrast to this sentimental invocation. Its deliberately cheerful depiction of war reflects the double-edged irony of the situation with a self-consciousness that stands in complete contrast to the quintet's emotional intensity and consistency of affect.

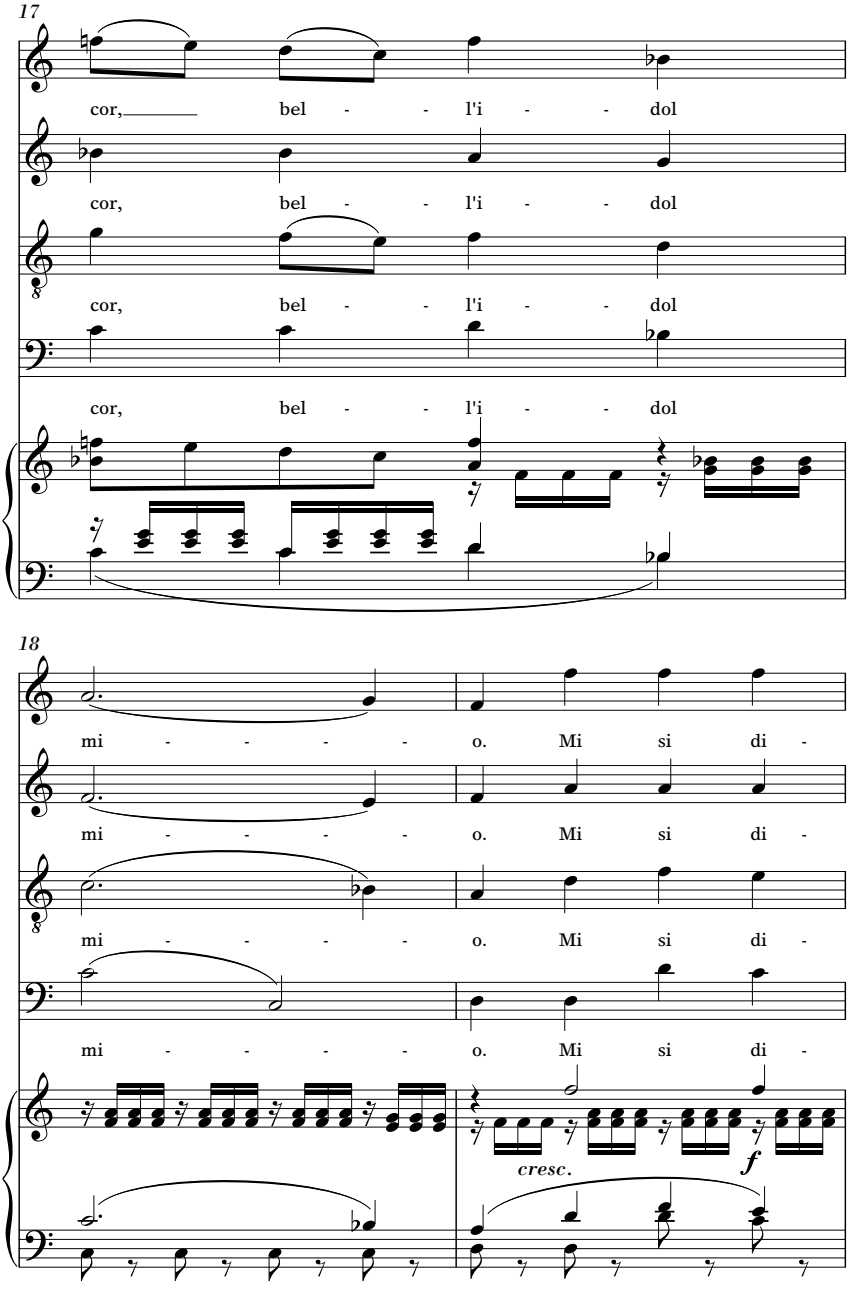
Perhaps the sentimental moment in act 1 that has received the most attention is the trio "Soave sia il vento" with its reference to the tradition of "Zeffiro" pieces in Neopolitan opera (Naples is the setting of the drama).[35] Many critics have observed the beauty and totality of the effect, for in this ensemble, unlike the two earlier quintets, Don Alfonso sings in perfect harmony with Dorabella and Fiordiligi. The irony

35. The number's breezes and nautical metaphors may be traced elsewhere in the opera, especially in "Un'aura amorosa" (No. 17), and "Secondate, aurette amiche" (No. 21); see, among others, Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 230–31; and Farnsworth, "*Così fan tutte* as Parody and Burlesque," 56ff.

Example 6.2. *Così,* "Di scrivermi ogni giorno" (No. 8a), mm. 15–23.



Example 6.2. *Continued*



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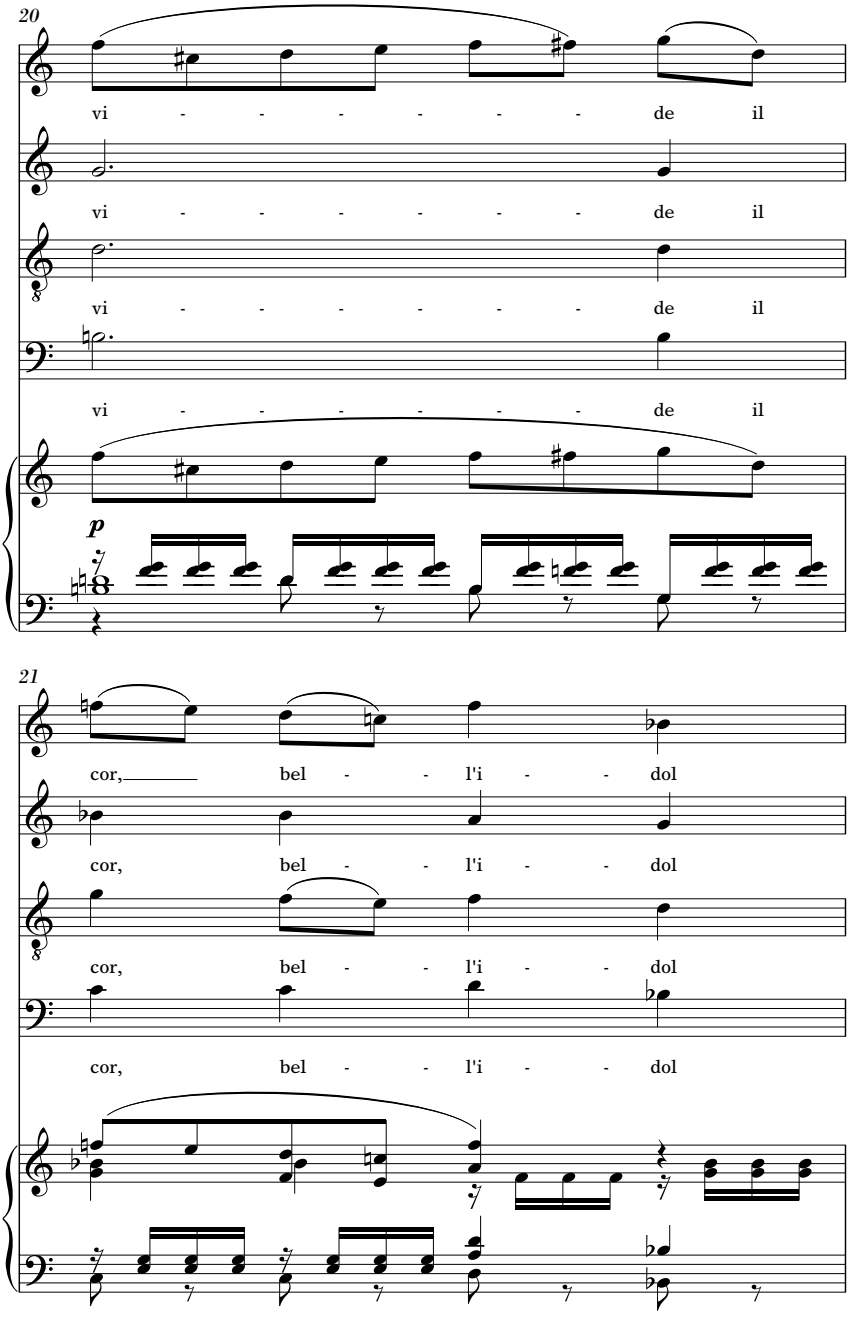

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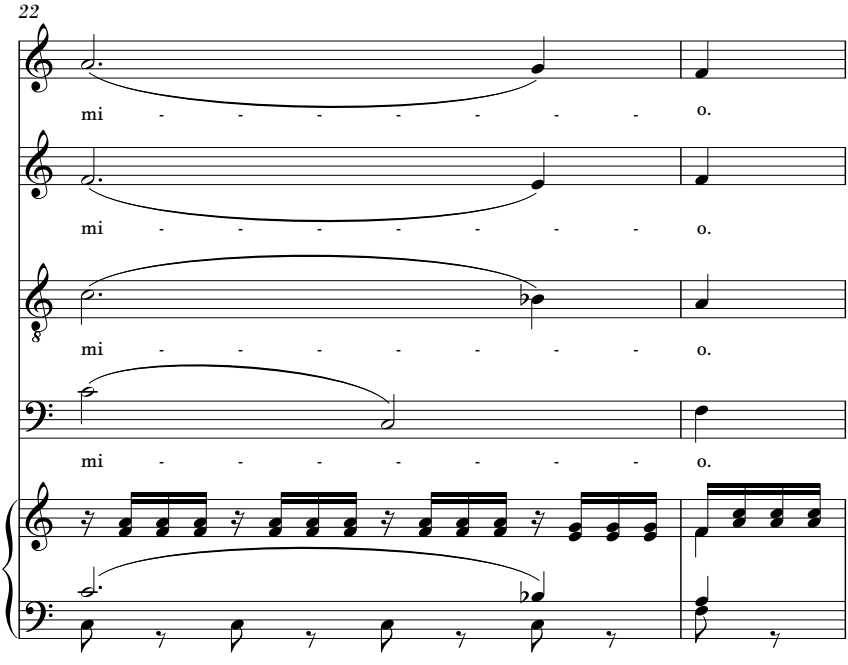


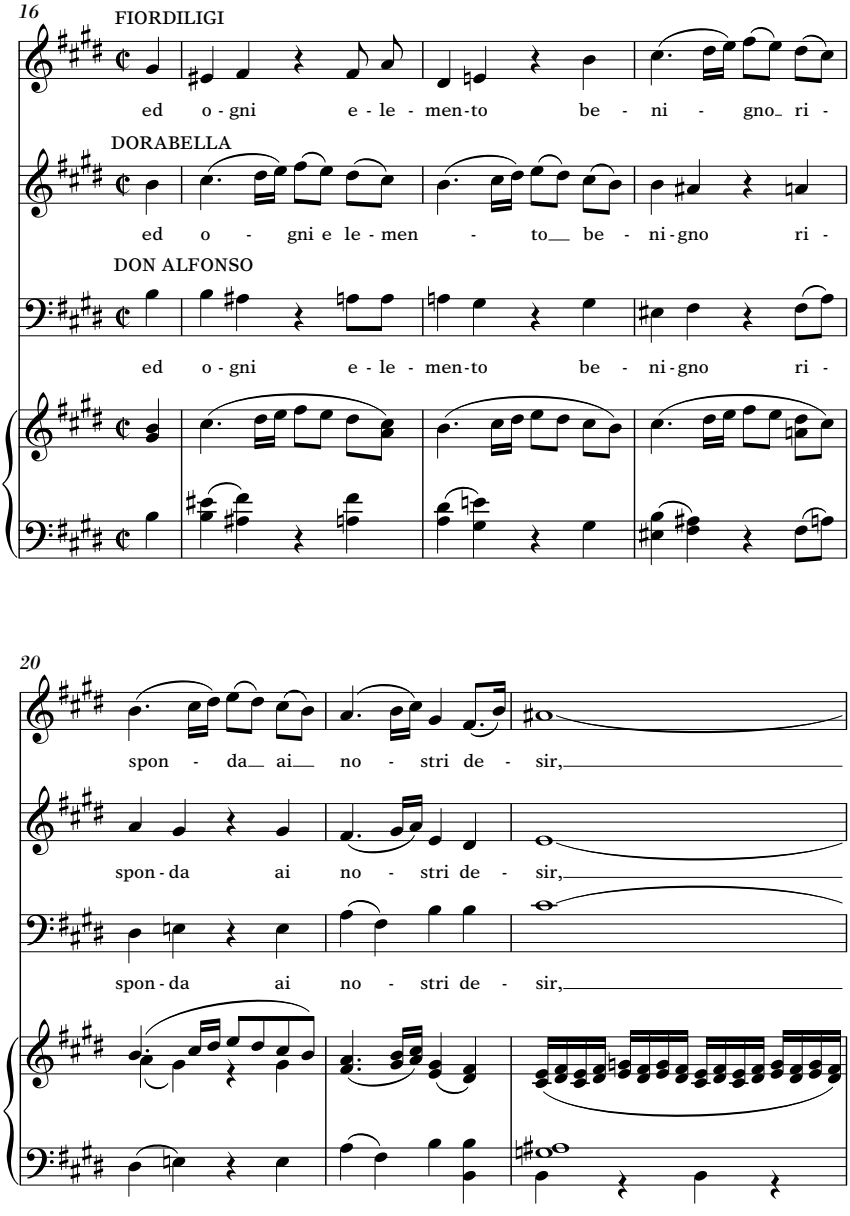
here, as Farnsworth points out, is restricted to the situation; it does not appear in the music.[36] Commentators agree about the consistency of affect in this trio as in almost no other moment in the work, and no one, as far I know, has suggested that this moment may be read as parody.[37] Yet the involvement of Don Alfonso here (as much pretense as his first entrance in "Sento oddio, che questo piede," which was not an aside) is surely a problem. His participation in the homorhythmic setting of "Ed ogni elemento / Benigno risponda / Ai nostri desir" (and [may] every element answer favorably to *our* desires [emphasis mine]) is potentially troubling. His desires are not commensurate with those of his companions, something the music perhaps reflects with its deceptive cadence of a dominant harmony to a diminished seventh over a dominant pedal on the word "desir" in measure 22 (see example 6.3). Mozart's setting of this key word captures both the beauty and the risk of desire.[38] The ambiguous harmony threatens to derail the music's beautiful realization of a sentimental departure, but does not do so; the diminished seventh turns back into a dominant preparation, and the affect remains unbroken. The danger lurking within the senti-

36. Farnsworth, "*Così fan tutte* as Parody and Burlesque," 56.

37. See, among others, Kunze, "Über das Verhältnis von musikalisch autonomer Struktur und Textbau," 220; and Goehring, "Despina, Cupid, and the Pastoral Mode," 131.

38. See B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 103.

Example 6.3. *Così,* "Soave sia il vento" (No. 10), mm. 16–28.



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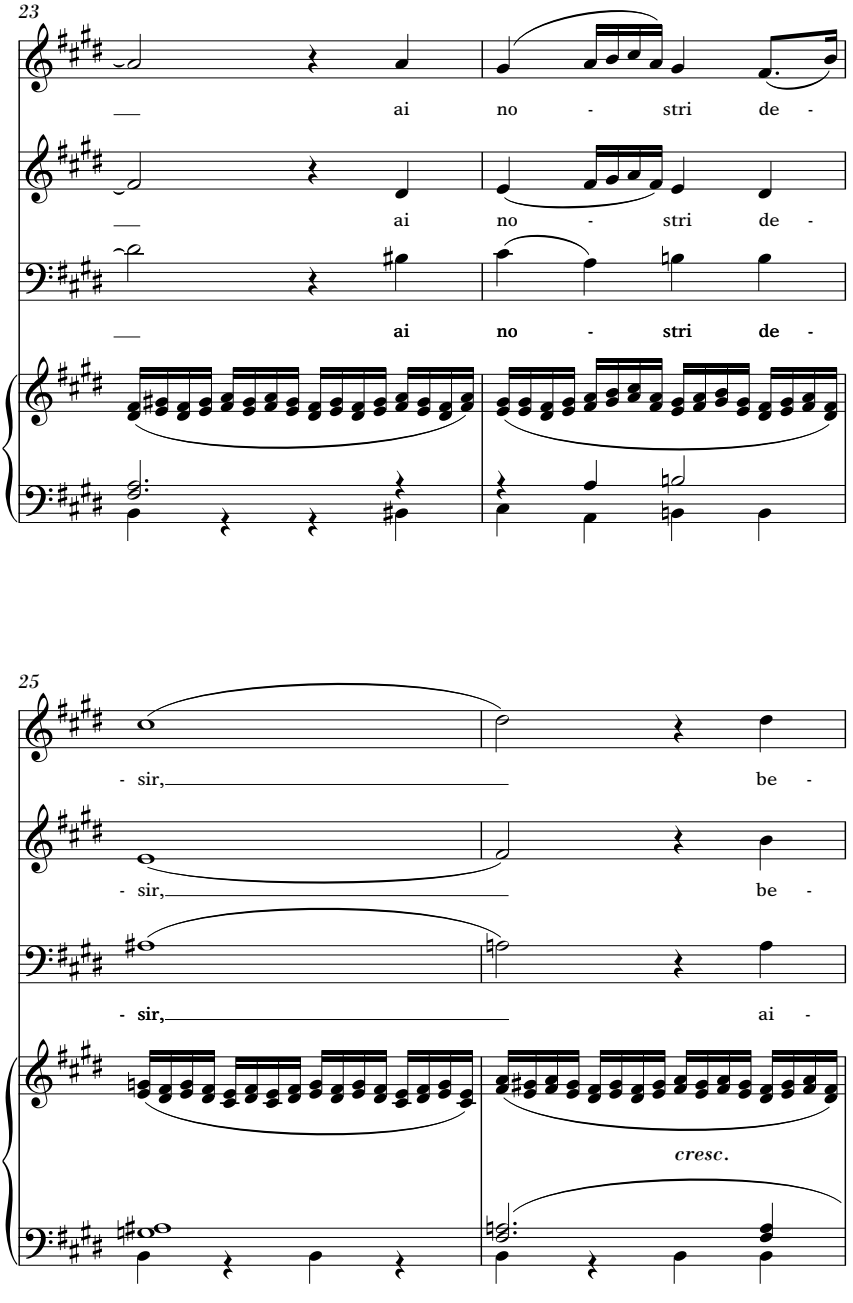

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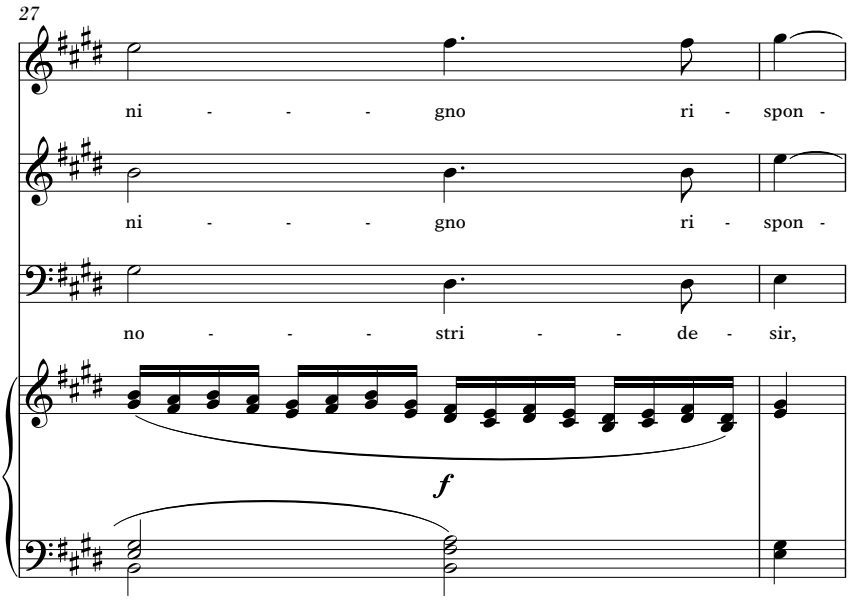


mental, however, has been signaled, a point the music emphasizes when the passage is repeated at measure 25.

It would be impossible in this context to provide a catalog of the opera's sentimental moments, attempting to discern which are ironic, which subtly corrective, which genuine, and which some combination of these. Almost every such moment cries out to be read in more than one way. What is important to the present argument is that often the sentimental feelings held up to ridicule in one instance are depicted with conviction and sympathy elsewhere. The lovers attest to sentiments that fit Don Alfonso's stereotype, but with such sincerity that they cannot be dismissed as empty. Accepting the sentimental affection demonstrated in the first act is crucial to understanding the deeper, conflicted experience of the sentimental dramatized in the second. Moments in which sentiment is represented compellingly in musical terms—as in "Di scrivermi ogni giorno," "Soave sia il vento," and "Un'aura amorosa" (No. 17), to name three relatively unproblematic examples—are more common in this opera than has been generally acknowledged and go a long way toward preparing the sympathetic portrayal of conflicted passion that nearly everyone is willing to acknowledge in "Per pietà" and "Fra gli amplessi." Here dramatic irony takes a back seat to the depiction of sentiment, though without disappearing entirely.

The sentimental portraits and moments of the first act, far from being the objects of parody, are prerequisites for the drama to unfold in the second. The opera's cru-

cial recognition scenes, in which sentimental knowledge in all its complexity is fully realized, cannot be made to function in a vacuum. The lovers—all four of them—need to be understood as sentimental figures from the start, though it may be safely assumed from the ensuing drama that they do not yet fully comprehend what that means. Their conventional protestations of feeling early in the opera reveal their half-knowledge of the sentimental and serve as the necessary precursors of its recognition in the second act. The emotional discoveries of the second act—namely, the seduction scenes—should not be understood, as they often have been, as the antidote to the supposed emptiness of the emotional involvements of the first. The growth and change of the two Penelopes into women of feeling and other explorations of deeper and more complex aspects of emotional attachment—including Fiordiligi's extraordinary moment of self-discovery in her "Per pietà," her later capitulation to Ferrando, and the final recognition and reconciliation brought about at the dénouement—are made possible by the fact that the propensity toward sentimental attachment and spontaneous feeling has already been established in earlier scenes.

"Vorrei dir," "Smanie implacabili," and Questions of Parody

Perhaps the most brilliant and compact send-up of sentimental language in Mozart's oeuvre is Don Alfonso's "Vorrei dir," the brief aria in which he attempts—but fails—to tell the two sisters the dreadful news that their affianced soldiers have been called to the front. Here is the text in its entirety:

Vorrei dir, e cor non ho . . .	I would like to speak, but haven't the heart . . .
Balbettando il labbro va . . .	my lips stammer . . .
Fuor la voce uscir non può . . .	my voice cannot get out . . .
Ma mi resta mezza qua.	but stays inside me, half there.
Che farete? Che farò?	What will you do? What shall I do?
Oh che gran fatalità!	Oh what a great tragedy!
Dar di peggio non si può . . .	It could not be worse . . .
Ho di voi, di lor pietà.	I feel pity for you and for them.

The aria is marked "Allegro agitato" in the score and gives every musical appearance of the anguish associated with the type, which, as we have seen, was often employed to dramatize the distress of the sentimental heroine. The key of F minor, the offbeat repeated orchestral figure in the strings, the breathless quality of the text delivery with rests between and even within words, not to mention the seria aspirations of the text ("Oh che gran fatalità!") all suggest the mood and physical signs of distress

common to the *aria agitata.*[39] The sense that emotion has led to a loss of control is cleverly emphasized by Mozart's setting, which begins on the dominant and before Don Alfonso has finished the text of his recitative. His exclamation "Barbaro fato!" (Cruel fate!) catapults him into the aria (see example 6.4). His supposed anguish could hardly be better portrayed in the music, which strongly suggests that he is too distressed to speak clearly. And yet we know this aria to be a forgery. Just as Don Alfonso has created the cause for distress, he now creates the musical appearance of it. Only a peculiarity in the verse gives him away. He manages to sing only *tronco* lines (see the accented words at the ends of lines—"ho," "va," "può," and so on), which, though they emphasize the exclamatory nature of his utterances, suggest a degree of control that is not likely to have been the work of the moment. And at his first opportunity, in the recitative following "Soave sia il vento" (No. 10), he compliments himself on his performance: "Non son cattivo comico!" (I am not a bad actor!).

A second layer of meaning that deserves consideration is indicated by the aria's fairly obvious recasting of certain aspects of a well-known contemporaneous aria, Lilla's cavatina in *Una cosa rara:* the use of F minor, the breathless delivery splitting words, the text itself, which centers on the inability to convey the source of distress. Lilla's text is interspersed with pauses and culminates in a statement of the thing her *aria agitata* demonstrates, namely, that she can hardly speak for lack of breath:

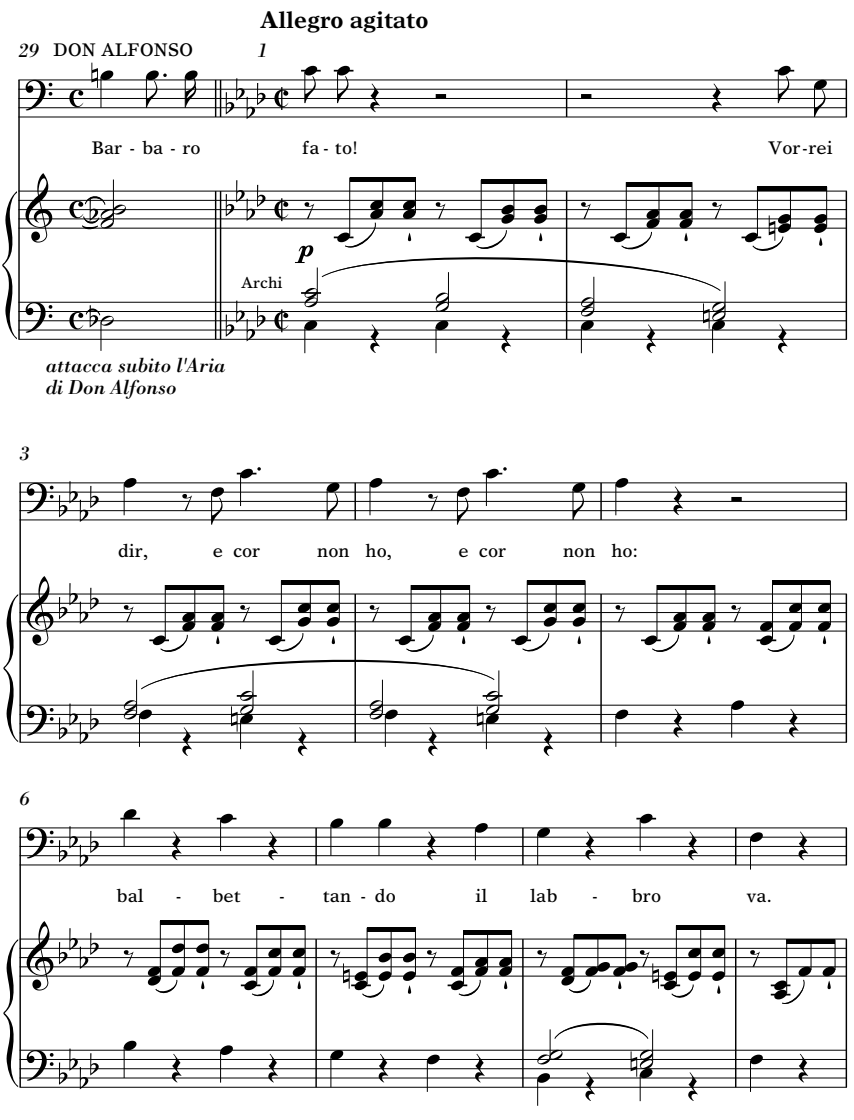
Ah, pietà . . . de . . . merce . . . de . . . soccorso!	Ah, pity . . . mercy . . . help!
Dal timor . . . dal tormen . . . to . . . dal corso . . .	from fear . . . from torment . . . from running . . .
Son si stanca . . . che il fiato . . . mi manca . . .	I am so exhausted . . . that my breath . . . fails me
Ed . . . ho . . . lena . . . d'appena . . . parlar.	and I have scarcely the energy to speak.

Given the tremendous success of *Una cosa rara* in Vienna, its sentimental subject, and the serious demeanor of this aria, Don Alfonso's borrowing from it, as others have suggested, may rightly be thought of as a reference, one that simultaneously makes a testimonial to its effectiveness and a mockery of its "sincerity."[40] The layers of meaning revealed by these connections suggest the wit of the authors' invention and enrich our understanding of "Vorrei dir," though Don Alfonso's exploitation of

39. Kunze describes this aria, which has attracted a great deal of attention, as a "textbook" example of the type (*Mozarts Opern,* 492).

40. See B. A. Brown, "Beaumarchais, Paisiello, and the Genesis of *Così fan tutte,*" 315–19; he also suggests an older model, a short passage of *accompagnato,* "L'invidia, oh ciel!" from Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (which Brown includes as example 14.1 on p. 316). See also Goehring, "Sentimental Muse of Opera Buffa," 129–35 and 139–42.

Example 6.4. *Così,* "Vorrei dir, e cor non ho" (No. 5), mm. 1–9.



the *agitata* type would have been obvious to members of a 1790 audience regardless of whether they recognized any of the aria's more particular associations.

I now turn to the only other *aria agitata* in *Così,* Dorabella's "Smanie implacabili" (No. 11), which is sung shortly after the soldiers have departed "to battle." Prepared by a seria-like *accompagnato* that punctuates Dorabella's highly dramatic rhetoric with orchestral outbursts, this aria shares many features with "Vorrei dir." It has

even been suggested that "Smanie implacabili" may have been modeled on it, although one imagines Dorabella was familiar enough with the language of sentimental expression that she hardly required such instruction from Don Alfonso.[41] Many critics have suggested that the aria is the first in "the sisters' series of parodies of operatic high tragedy," but it should be remembered that Dorabella, unlike Don Alfonso, does not make her impassioned *agitata* display with a wink and a nod to the audience.[42] As the scene begins, both Fiordiligi and Dorabella are stripping off all of their ornaments, a sign of their distraction. Dorabella bursts into *accompagnato,* beginning with the seria invective, "Ah, scostati!" She continues, imagining herself as the abandoned heroine, the victim of "un disperato affetto," on the brink of despair or even madness:

Ah scostati, paventa il tristo effetto	Ah go away, fear the dire effect
D'un disperato affetto:	of a desperate love.
Chiudi quelle finestre!. . . odio	Close the windows! . . . I hate
la luce,	the light;
Odio l'aria che spiro . . . odio	I hate the air I breathe . . . I
me stessa.	hate myself.
Chi schernisce il mio duol . . .	Who mocks at my grief . . . who
chi mi consola?	consoles me?
Deh fuggi per pietà; lasciami sola.	Ah, flee, for pity's sake; leave
	me alone.

In her passion, she turns against nature (which she believes has turned against her), against the light and the air, and even against herself, a sure sign of her deranged state of mind. The lofty language and high style of the recitative paint a vivid portrait of suffering, but the exaggeration also suggests how much she wants to play the role of "virtue in distress," to be the sentimental heroine. And her penultimate line ("Chi schernisce il mio duol"), with its partial acknowledgment of the fact that others may view her reaction as extreme, only complicates the matter by attesting to her awareness of how displays of "excessive" sensibility might be received in some quarters.

In the aria, Dorabella exclaims that either she will die of the "smanie implacabili" that torture her, or, if she remains alive, the dreadful sounds of her sighs—"suono orribile"—will provide the Furies with an example of tragic love. Since the question of how to read this aria is under consideration, it seems appropriate to cite the familiar text in its entirety:

Smanie implacabili	Implacable longings
Che m'agitate,	that torment me,
Dentro quest'anima	in this soul of mine

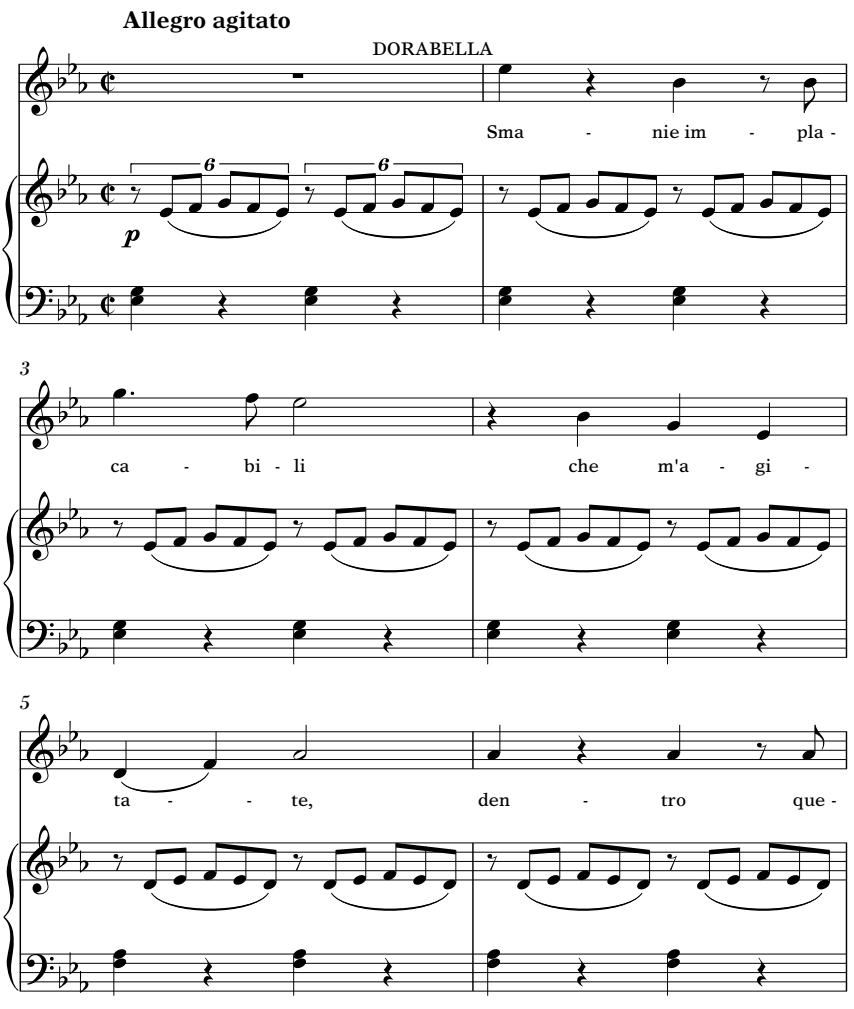
41. See, among others, Salmon, " 'Tutti accusan le donne,' " 95; and Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 492.
42. Farnsworth, "*Così fan tutte* as Parody and Burlesque," 59.

Più non cessate	do not cease
Finché l'angoscia	until my anguish
Mi fa morir.	makes me die.
Esempio misero	A wretched example
D'amor funesto	of tragic love
Darò all'Eumenidi,	I'll give the Furies,
Se viva resto,	if I remain alive,
Col suono orribile	with the horrible sound
De' miei sospir.	of my sighs.

In its exaggerations the text shows that Dorabella is not in control of the style to which she aspires. For example, it is impossible not to notice the irony of the second verse, for even Clarissa, the paradigmatic tragic sentimental heroine, would be unable to teach the Furies anything about grief. Dorabella's versification, too, like Don Alfonso's, reveals something of her character. Quite the reverse of his exclusively *tronco* lines, her text includes *sdrucciolo* endings—"implacabili," "anima," "misero," "Eumenidi," and, most striking, "orribile"—that suggest her frenzy. The music of the aria features the usual hallmarks of the *agitata* topos, the quick tempo, the repetitive orchestral accompaniment based on an offbeat figure, and breathless text delivery created by the use of rests between and within words (see example 6.5). Word painting illustrates many of the text's images vividly: how her "smanie implacabili" do not cease, the unstable quality of her "amor funesto," and the "suono orribile," which is twice held for two bars and punctuated by diminished seventh sonorities (see example 6.6). Only the key, E-flat major, perhaps betrays that Dorabella does not possess full control of the musical rhetoric either.

The central question "Smanie implacabili" raises is how it should be received: is this aria comic or serious? Is it an impassioned outburst of genuine sentiment, or, as many authors have claimed, a parody of one? Don Alfonso's "Vorrei dir" may be thought of as parody; the *agitata* topos is in his case fraudulently employed to a situation he knows does not exist. In contrast, Dorabella's aria is an immediate, passionate response to a situation she believes is real. (She has no way of knowing she will ever see Ferrando again. Indeed, the Hapsburg war with the Turks was concurrent with the opera's first run.) Her reaction, though perhaps excessive, falls well within the norms of sentimental behavior. While Don Alfonso's aria is an obvious exploitation of a sentimental type, hers is a spontaneous emotional response to a situation celebrated in fiction and opera for the distress it caused women. Her self-characterization as a sentimental figure may appear laughable—both the obvious exaggeration of her imagery and our superior knowledge of the real state of events might be thought to support such a view—but primacy of feeling is nonetheless emphasized. To accept Dorabella's aria as genuine and even to respond to it with sympathy one need only remember that she and her sister do not yet know that the little comedy Don Alfonso

Example 6.5. *Così,* "Smanie implacabili che m'agitate" (No. 11), mm. 1–9.



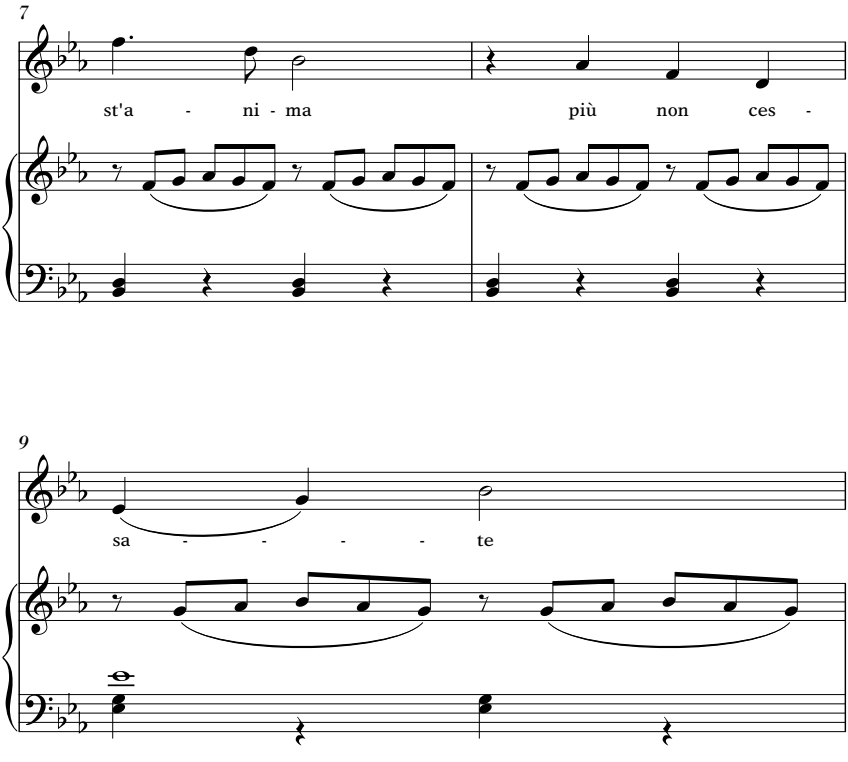
has set in motion is much ado about nothing. As Heartz suggests, "Despina may smile at Dorabella, but Mozart is warmly sympathetic to her imagined distress."[43]

Moments like "Smanie implacabili" have led many to assume that *Così* may be understood on the whole or in part as parody or burlesque or farce.[44] In this way they attempt to make *Così* knowable by parsing its comedy, just as Enlightenment scien-

43. Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 247.

44. Discussion has also been devoted to the question of what counts as parody (or irony or burlesque). See Keahey, "*Così fan tutte:* Parody or Irony?"; Warren, "'Smiling at Grief,'"; Farnsworth, "*Così fan tutte* as Parody and Burlesque"; Dent, *Mozart's Operas,* 188–208; and Abert, *W. A. Mozart,* 2:525–64.

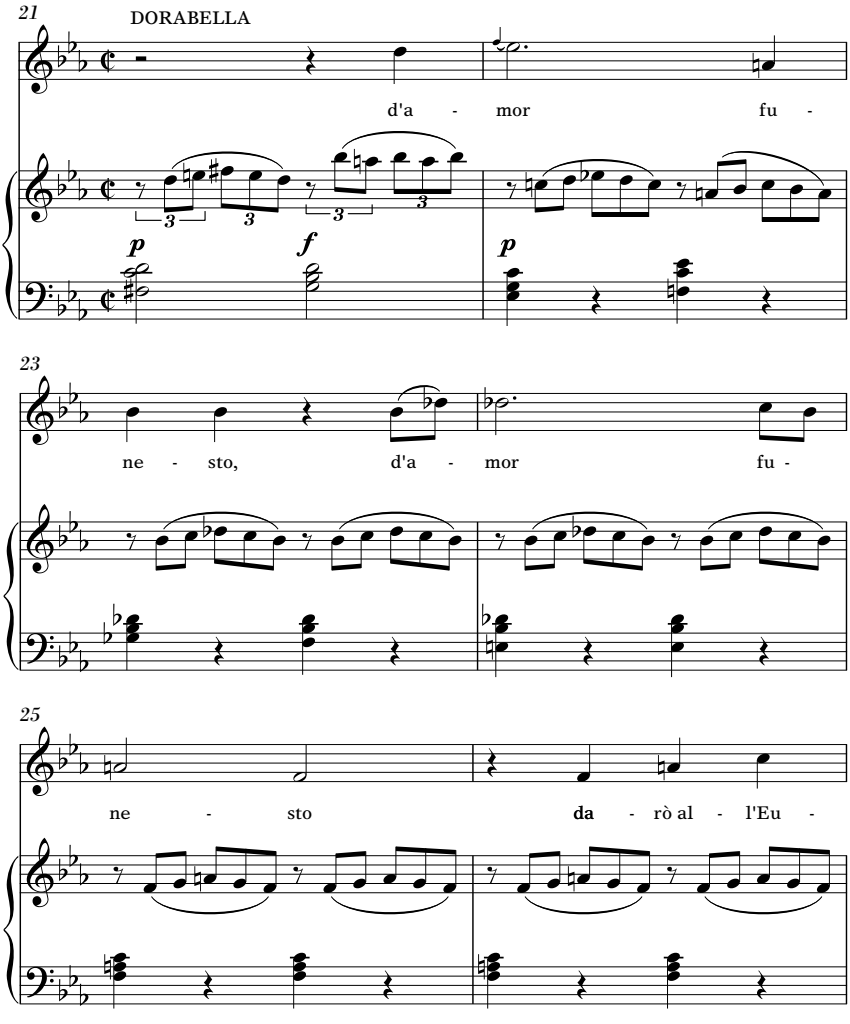
Example 6.5. *Continued*



tists attempted to make the universe knowable by naming and cataloging the species of flora and fauna. But this endeavor brings us no closer to understanding its mysteries. The question of parody in *Così* is not one likely to be settled so long as the opera's enigmatic subject, sensibility, stubbornly refuses to allow the parodic to be divorced from the sincere. Nor can this opera—in which a compelling dramatization of sentimental awareness appears in conjunction with scenes in which the sentimental is made to look ridiculous—be read in any single-minded way. One has the sense that literary terms such as "parody," "irony," and "burlesque" have attracted attention because they are much easier to talk about than the larger and more difficult questions the opera raises—why, for example, as Gombrich points out, "the interpretation of the opera as an elaborate parody breaks down precisely at the climax."[45] As Dorabella and Fiordiligi begin to emerge as sympathetic characters, and as the protagonists in a sentimental drama they do not know to be a fraud, it becomes increasingly difficult to see either as the object of parody.

45. Gombrich, "*Così fan tutte* (Procris Included)," 373.

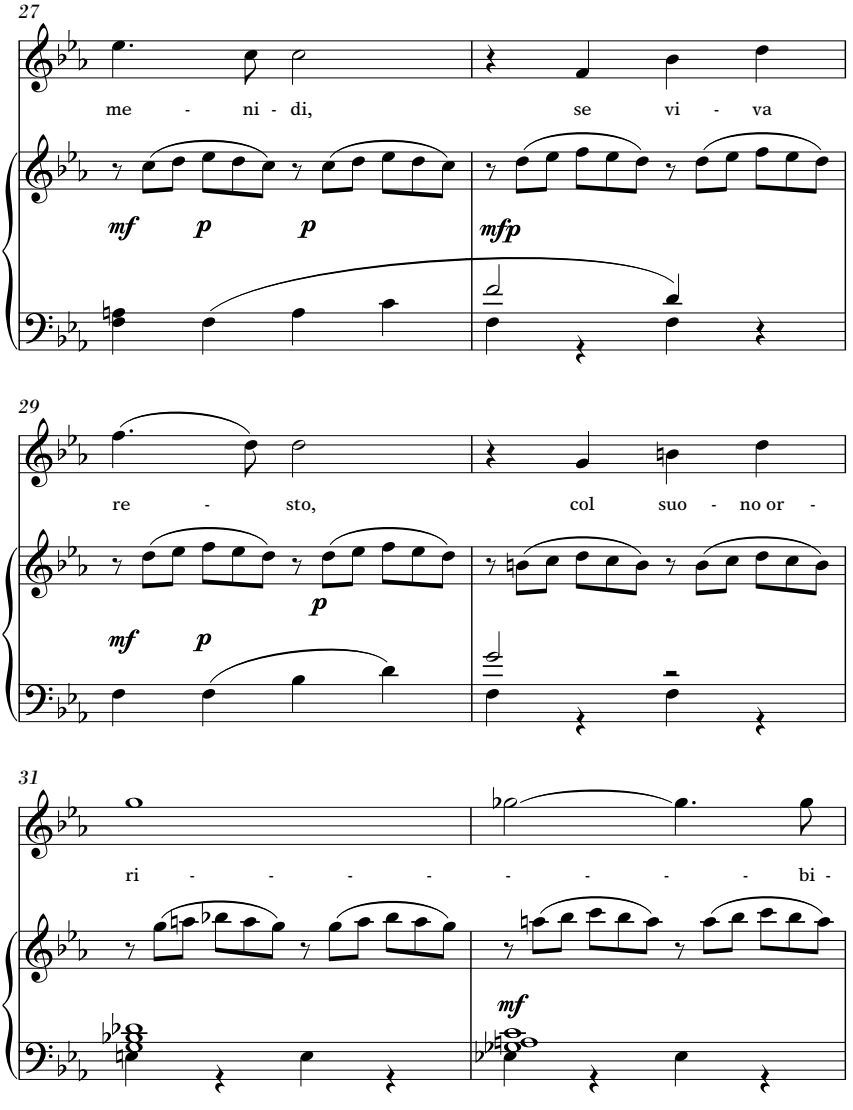
Example 6.6. *Così,* "Smanie implacabili che m'agitate" (No. 11), mm. 21–39.



Positions of Knowledge

More consistently than any other of Mozart's operas, *Così* sustains the deceptions of identity and action that propel its plot. The opera's many scenes of false love-making—those in which Ferrando and Guglielmo wish their beloveds a farewell that is not real, pretend to take poison to prove their devotion, and finally woo each other's fiancées with varying degrees of zeal—are more complex than they at first appear. Fiordiligi and Dorabella are entirely duped by the ruse and remain so until the dénouement in the act 2 finale. Despina, too, remains deceived as to the identity

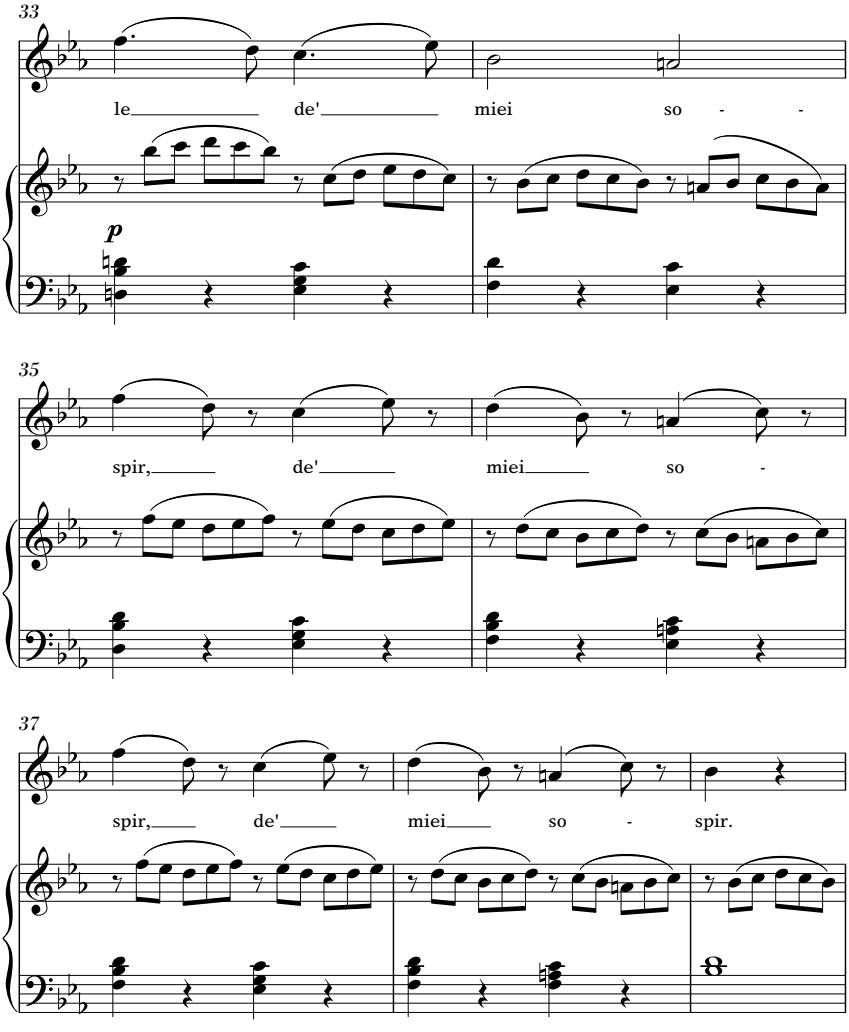
Example 6.6. *Continued*



(*continued*)

of the "Albanians" and the nature of the wager, although as Don Alfonso's confidant and a central actor in much of the opera's imbroglio she knows far more than her two mistresses. Ferrando and Guglielmo spend most of the opera in disguise, pretending to be what they are not, only to discover that they themselves have been deceived when neither of their fiancées proves to be Penelope. Only Don Alfonso re-

Example 6.6. *Continued*



mains aware of all aspects of the deception he has orchestrated, able to observe and comment on events as they transpire. The result is that only rarely do even as many as two characters have the same understanding of passing events.

The multiple positions and perceptions of the different characters create layers of dramatic irony that greatly complicate the audience's reception of events. And the burden of dramatic irony here is often painful, as when Shakespeare shares with us—but not with Romeo—that Juliet is alive. In any one of the opera's seduction scenes, for example, we are aware of (1) what the men know—that this lovemaking is a ruse;

(2) what the women are in the process of discovering—that this lovemaking makes an appeal of sentiment that they are increasingly less able to resist; and (3) what we know that the women do not. Thus the behavior of the men—contrary to their purpose—develops our sympathy for the women. In assuming the roles of rakish suitors the two soldiers prey upon the very sensibilities they claim to cherish, while the women are represented as victims of a cruel deception, (re)acting with a kind of innate honesty to emotionally complex situations. We are thus drawn into a sympathetic identification with Fiordiligi and Dorabella, and our perception of them as the opera's protagonists brings into question and complicates each new attempt to make them look ridiculous.

It has become a commonplace in critical theory of many disciplines to acknowledge the different positions (and perceptions) a work of art may imply. This multiplicity of understanding—which allows "Smanie implacabili," for example, to suggest both that it is and is not a parody—is something that cannot be avoided, nor is it something that is undesirable. A multiple view is often the key to understanding, and an artwork may require its audience to accept that the artwork itself comprises conflicting, even directly opposed, impulses, and to wrest meaning from the paradox. Michael Fried has made an argument of this kind in his *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot,* focusing on the dialectical relationship between the artwork and its beholder. He is speaking particularly of French painting in the 1750s and 1760s, but I believe what he suggests illuminates the position of the beholder of opera, particularly this opera, in a useful way. Fried asserts a complex understanding on the part of the beholder that involves "not one but two conceptions of the art of painting each of which has for its ultimate aim what I earlier termed the de-theatricalization of the relationship between painting and beholder."[46] In the first of these, which he terms the "primary or *dramatic* conception," the painting establishes the nonexistence of the beholder "through the persuasive representation of figures wholly absorbed in their actions, passions, activities, feelings, state of mind." The second "*pastoral* conception" establishes the "opposite but in important respects equivalent fiction of the beholder's physical presence in the painting, by an almost magical recreation of the effect of nature itself." The painting thus simultaneously negates and implies its audience. The position of the beholder is thus imagined in two seemingly mutually exclusive ways. Yet, according to Fried, both conceptions coexist, and both accomplish the same goal, albeit by very different means: to overcome "the estrangement of the beholder from the objects of his beholding."[47]

Opera, too, may be thought to both negate and imply its audience. In the case of *Così,* the difficulty involves the audience in attempting to reconcile two seemingly irreconcilable positions of beholding: the sympathetic and immediate, and

46. Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality,* 131; for the term "de-theatricalize," see 104.
47. Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality,* 132.

the ironic and distanced. On the one hand, *Così* implies the first conception in its self-containment, something Paolo Gallarati has argued with specific reference to Diderot's *De la Poésie dramatique:*

> The arias and ensembles of *Le nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni,* and *Così fan tutte* systematically abolish the declarative rhetoric common in earlier operas, where the characters describe their states of mind through syllogisms, similes, external images, and moral aphorisms more or less explicitly addressed to the audience. Mozart's characters, by contrast, directly express the *cri de la passion,* as Diderot demanded, revealing their states of mind directly to themselves or to other interlocutors present on the stage. In this way Mozart erects a fourth wall between the stage and the audience.[48]

The efficacy of the direct expression Gallarati describes is especially evident in moments where a character reveals his or her private thoughts, often with a sense of emotional immediacy or intensity, as in the Countess's "Dove sono" or Fiordiligi's "Per pietà." The fourth wall thus might be thought to protect and intensify the sentimental drama in *Così* as it unfolds on the stage. On the other hand, as Gallarati observes, Mozart will occasionally "breach" the fourth wall, "when, for example, Figaro or Guglielmo addresses the public ('Aprite un po' quegli occhi,' 'Donne mie la fate a tanti'), with a very powerful effect of comic alienation."[49] In *Così,* this effect of comic alienation, which is arguably far stronger than in *Figaro* or *Don Giovanni,* might be thought to bring the audience closer to Don Alfonso's perspective of ironic detachment. For example, in the course of the drama, Don Alfonso, Guglielmo, and Ferrando repeatedly refer to the "comedy" being enacted on the stage: following the duettino "Al fato dàn legge" (No. 7), Don Alfonso remarks in an aside, "La commedia è graziosa, e tutti e due / Fan ben la loro parte" (The comedy is delightful, and both are playing their parts well); in the act 1 finale, the "Albanians" step out of character to comment on the proceedings, "Più bella commediola / Non si potea trovar" (A better comedy cannot be imagined); and near the beginning of the act 2 finale, Despina and Don Alfonso comment approvingly, "La più bella commediola / Non s'è vista o si vedrà" (A better comedy has never been seen, nor ever will be). Such moments appear to distance us from the emotional content of the drama, to serve as a reminder of the fact of the theater and its stage. These moments are complemented by a surprising number of specific references and inside jokes addressed to contemporary Viennese audiences (though they may be largely lost on modern ones) that breach the fourth wall: that the two sisters are said to hail from Ferrara (a reference to Ferrarese), that the poisoning episode culminates in a mesmeric cure, that the libretto several times refers slyly to the role Louise Villeneuve played in Martín y

48. Gallarati, "Mozart and Eighteenth-Century Comedy," 109.
49. Gallarati, "Mozart and Eighteenth-Century Comedy," 109.

Soler's *L'arbore di Diana,* to name only a few.[50] Indeed, the sheer number of self-conscious moments in *Così* seems to set it apart. And although it cannot be denied that such moments play some part in the earlier Da Ponte/Mozart collaborations, in *Così* referential asides and interruptions compromise scenes of direct expression so often that they threaten to dismantle its fiction. In the end, these clever insertions only add to the interpretive questions the opera raises, distancing the viewer from the sympathetic identification that the opera's scenes of direct expression and emotional drama attempt to engender.

In sentimental drama (and opera), much as in the intimate genres of painting Fried considers, the sympathetic response of the beholder is not only a natural emotional reaction but also a prerequisite of the genre. The existence of the audience, though it may be irrelevant to the action being depicted on stage, is directly implied by the theater, which exists in the first instance for the sake of the audience, not of the characters. Thus when the sisters are confronted with two strange suitors so lovesick and desperate they have consumed poison; when Dorabella hears, as she has been longing to, that her Albanian suitor will die if she does not relent; when Fiordiligi, after long resistance, finally succumbs to her new lover's entreaties—at these and other moments we are put in the seemingly impossible position of reconciling Don Alfonso's ironic detachment with our own sympathetic identification. It is no wonder, then, that *Così* has struck critics and audiences as a disturbing and deeply conflicted work of art. The sympathetic and ironic modes of understanding the action can never be fully reconciled in one's experience of the work. Recognition is divided against itself, and the opera's sentimental and anti-sentimental trajectories collide at the dénouement, where the *lieto fine* attempts to function as a resolution. Nor can the matter be resolved by critical debate, for the problem will reassert itself every time the artwork is beheld.

50. On the opera's referential tendencies, see Hunter, *Culture of Opera Buffa,* chap. 8; and Goldin, *La vera fenice,* 116–29.

7

Fiordiligi: A Woman of Feeling

If the sentimental heroine is a woman whose moral constancy triumphs over every kind of adversity, then *Così fan tutte* has none. But if she is a woman of feeling whose affectionate sensibility and natural sympathy for the suffering of others make her vulnerable to men, and whose ultimate submission to male desire places her virtue "in distress," then Fiordiligi is certainly one. One of the opera's most disturbing ironies is its depiction of how Fiordiligi, in the very process of falling short of moral constancy, proves herself to be everything else the sentimental heroine should be: highly susceptible to emotional entreaties, acutely sensitive to the feelings of others, and easily victimized. For this reason, she is a more interesting and complex figure than the garden-variety "Pamela" of *opere buffe.* Fiordiligi's struggle to be the opera's sentimental heroine reflects the culture of sensibility's contradictory views on the role of women in society and brings into question one of its central tenets: that feeling makes its own virtue. As a result, recognition, when it comes, represents a crisis of belief and brings a reconciliation that is deeply conflicted.

That Fiordiligi's plight is presented with sincerity and compassion is an effect many have attributed to Mozart's music rather than Da Ponte's libretto.[1] The crucial element ensuring our sympathy, however, is not the music but her position in the drama. In the epistolary novel, the sentimental heroine's integrity, even in those instances where she makes terrible errors in judgment, is ensured by the style of the narrative, which requires the heroine to reveal her impressions, motives, and actions in her own words.[2] In opera, it is ensured by the drama that takes place on the stage, which reveals to us as it unfolds what the heroine does and does not know. Even though we know the Albanian suitors are part of an elaborate farce, Fiordiligi does not. It is her position in the drama that allows her to assume the role of the senti-

1. A majority of commentators attests to this view. See, among others, Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 92–98; Burnham, "Mozart's *felix culpa*"; Steptoe, *Mozart–Da Ponte Operas;* Küster, *Mozart: A Musical Biography,* 331–45; Williams, "Passion and Cynicism"; Warren, "Smiling at Grief."

2. Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* 315.

mental heroine, whose distress is caused by the assault three men make on her virtue. Like Richardson's Clarissa, Fiordiligi is duped by a determined suitor and the appearance of feeling. While these two heroines (and particularly their fates) are radically different, each holds our sympathy for the same reason: because, knowing what we do, we cannot fault them for trusting their feelings more than circumstances will later reveal to have been prudent.

In this chapter, I shall attempt to read the action of *Così* and its consequences from the perspective of its central heroine and in the context of the sentimental culture that shaped her. Read in this way, the crux of the opera, the knowledge toward which the plot has been moving, is the recognition of feeling over constancy, the moment in "Fra gli amplessi in pochi istanti" (No. 29) when she forsakes Guglielmo for Ferrando. What will become apparent in the process is that Fiordiligi's recognition scene, like Don Giovanni's, is not confirmed by the final recognition of the opera and the *lieto fine.*

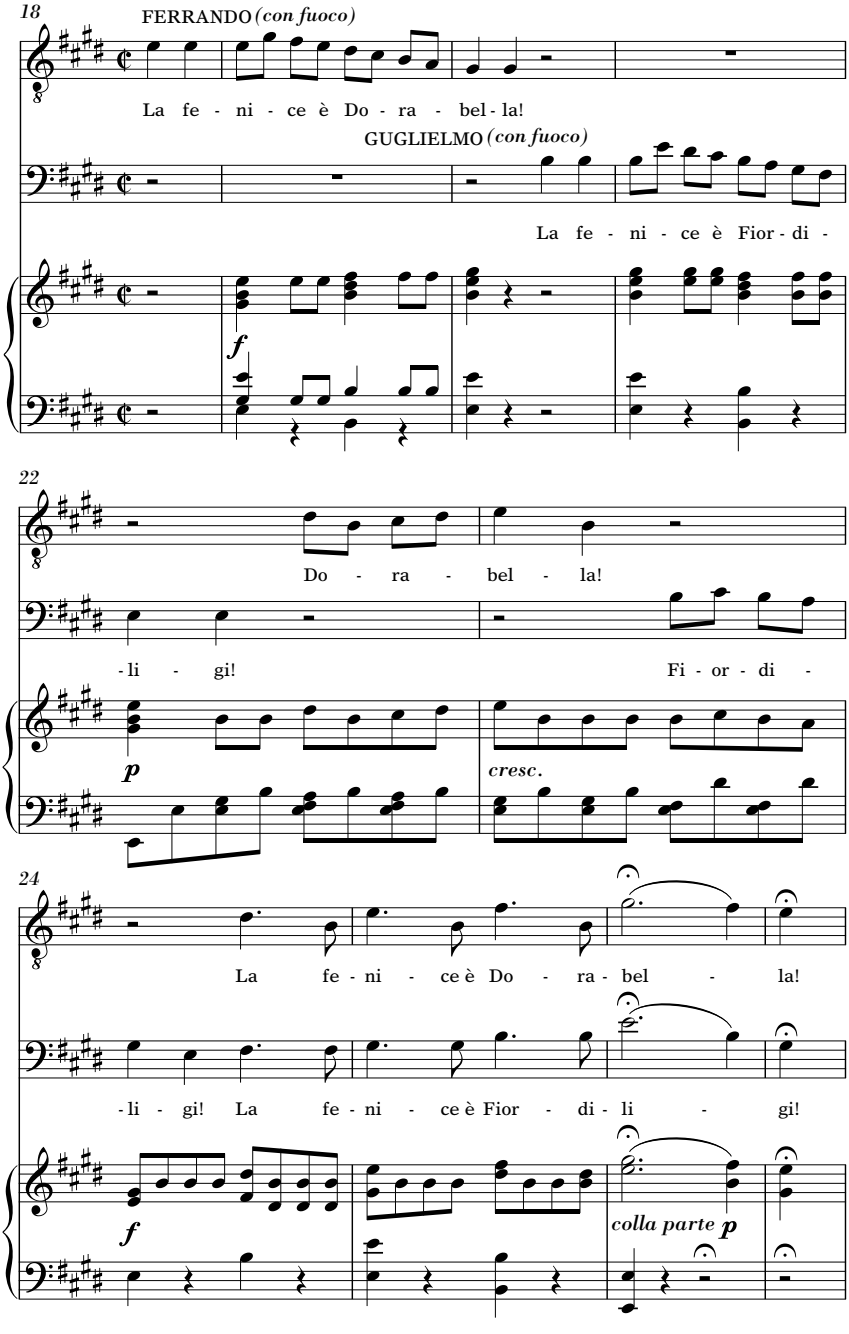
The Ideal of the Phoenix

When Don Alfonso, in the trio "È la fede delle femmine" (No. 2), compares fidelity in women to the Arabian phoenix, he offers his judgment on the sentimental heroine—Penelope, Pamela, Clarissa, and all the heroines of operas with titles such as *La buona figliuola, La vera costanza,* and *Una cosa rara.* In his view, she does not exist. But Ferrando and Guglielmo miss the point of his metaphor, for they cry out in turns "La fenice è Dorabella" (The phoenix is Dorabella), "La fenice è Fiordiligi" (The phoenix is Fiordiligi), each believing his beloved to be the chimerical, mythical creature. Mozart emphasizes their idealism by setting their exclamations to a musical extension that culminates in a fermata[3] (see example 7.1). As products of a sentimental culture, the two soldiers are devoted to their starry-eyed impressions of both women and love. This, of course, is what is really at issue for Don Alfonso: his young friends' belief in the sentimental heroine and her perfect constancy. He responds to the lovers' remonstrations by explaining his metaphor: "Non è questa, non è quella, / Non fu mai, non vi sarà" (It is neither this woman nor that woman; it never existed and never will).

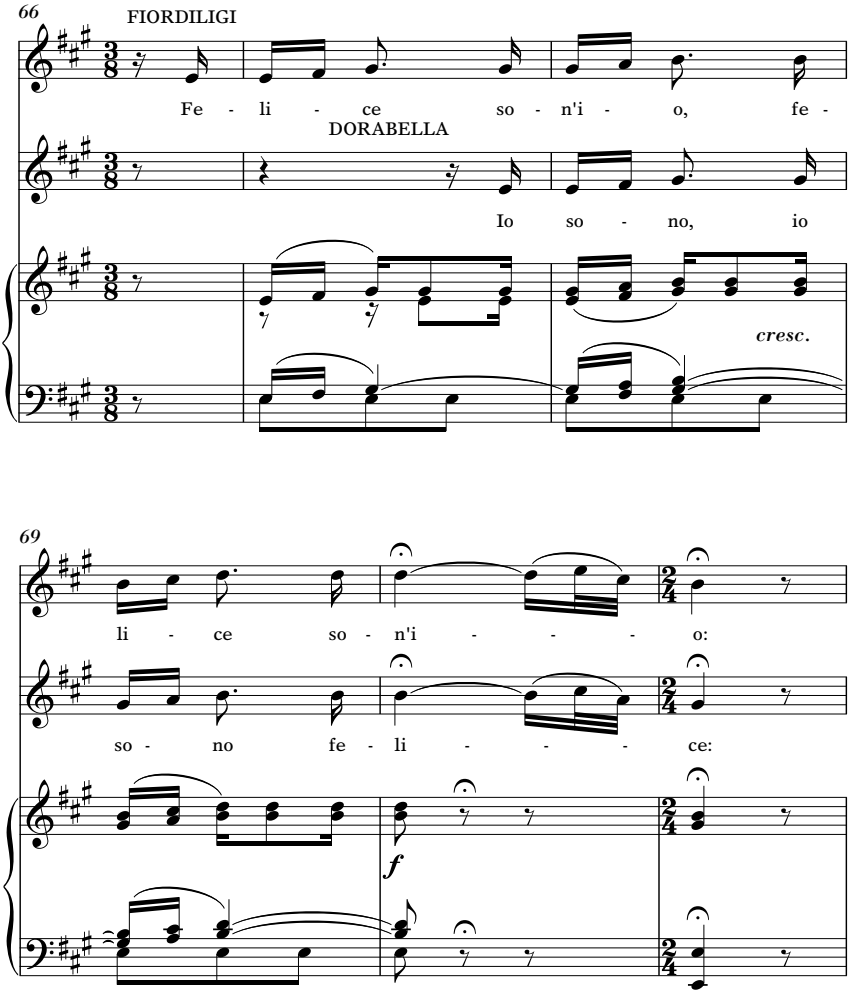
When the women enter in the next scene, they sing a paean to their lovers' portraits in the middle of which they exclaim together "Felice son io" / "Io sono felice" (Happy am I / I am happy), coming to rest over a fermata at measure 71 (see example 7.2). Set apart from the main melody of the verse, this passage is striking in a way that seems pointed, a way that the characters Fiordiligi and Dorabella could not intend. In the actual construction, "Felice son io," the women are claiming only what is

3. Salmon suggests that this "outburst" climaxes over a "horncall," connecting this moment to the opera's most striking—and troubling—use of horns, in Fiordiligi's *rondò* "Per pietà" (No. 25), which I will come to below. The gesture may then be read as a sign that the men are making an impossible argument, one that will bring about their own cuckolding. See "'Tutti accusan le donne,'" 92.

Example 7.1. *Così,* "È la fede delle femmine" (No. 2), mm. 18–27.



Example 7.2. *Così,* "Ah guarda, sorella" (No. 4), mm. 66–71.



true, but in the play on words that the libretto and its musical realization suggest, the women are immediately drawn into the opera's conflicted representation of female sensibility. The rhyme of "felice" with "fenice" in combination with the prominence of the setting (in both cases) and the proximity of the scenes in the opera allows a mishearing in which the women appear to be saying, "Fenice son io" (The phoenix am I).[4] Indeed, once the ruse is underway, paragons of virtue and constancy are exactly what Fiordiligi and Dorabella attempt to be. That they will fail in their attempt is a foregone conclusion, determined by a wager they know nothing about. The differ-

4. I am grateful to Carol Rosen for first drawing my attention to this point (in conversation).

ence between what the women are (*felice*) and what society desires them to be (*fenice*) could hardly be introduced with more resonance. The key to Don Alfonso's scheme is its simplicity; he relies on exploiting contradictions that inhere in the culture of sensibility itself.

As *Così* demonstrates, the demands society makes on the woman of sensibility are so contradictory that even the most devoted heroine might easily stumble on the culture's conflicting directives. While Fiordiligi and Dorabella exaggerate their feelings in keeping with fashionable notions of sensibility, these same fashionable notions allow their hearts to lead them away from the constancy deep feeling was supposed to engender. This contradiction cuts across the very ideas the culture of sensibility espoused. For the woman who strives, as both sisters do, to embody the culture's ideal of womanhood, constancy appears to be both an independent choice and a means of expression. The culture of sensibility encouraged fidelity in women not only for the traditional moral and social reasons but also because it was thought that one's deepest instincts recommended such behavior. To be faithful to a lover was to be true to oneself. In indulging in sentiment—in fiction, drama, and real life—women probed their hearts, pursued their romantic fantasies, and expressed their desire for emotional fulfillment and matrimony in culturally defined and socially acceptable ways. What is more, in doing so they served the desire of men for women who made a virtue of feeling.[5]

At the same time, the culture of sensibility sent mixed messages to women. The ideal of moral constancy could easily be undone by the desire for romance, and the acute sensitivity that marked the woman of sensibility often led to her victimization. Fiordiligi's and Dorabella's sentimental understanding leads them at first to take imaginative pleasure in their romances, as when in their first scene we see them congratulating themselves on their happiness and preparing for matrimony; later it supports their resistance to new suitors, in the act 1 sextet (No. 13) and in Fiordiligi's impressive aria of resistance, "Come scoglio immoto resta" (No. 14). But their vulnerability opens them to victimization, and the events of act 2 set their desire for romance against their "wished-for resistance to men."[6] The crux of Don Alfonso's ruse, as I suggested in the previous chapter, is to force the women's natural sensibilities into just such a contradiction: to set their susceptibility to feeling *against* their vows of constancy. The weakness Don Alfonso reveals, as it turns out, is fundamental to the culture of sensibility itself, which proves to be as fragile as the feeling it celebrates.

But the question of fidelity may not be the most interesting one this opera poses. More important is the opera's exploration of why women should strive to be like the phoenix, and of what pitfalls inherent in the very ideals of "sensibility" guarantee their failure. The opera's dramatization of sensibility is in this respect more complex than the question of fidelity alone can suggest. What may be regarded as "excessive"

5. For a discussion of the culture of sensibility more generally, see chapter 4.
6. Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* 36.

(the exaggeration of the departure of lovers into a tragedy, the representation of absence as unbearable anguish, the overwrought claims of constancy even to the point of death from women so young and not yet married) is gently ridiculed in ways that point less to the absurdity of the women themselves than to the absurdity of a culture that expects the impossible of them.[7] This "excessive" sensibility is then set against the genuinely sympathetic representation of the sisters' susceptibility to feeling (the scenes in which the false suitors make significant claims upon the women's natural inclination toward pity and affection, and the scenes in which first Dorabella and then Fiordiligi are finally unable to resist the two mysterious figures Don Alfonso conjures up from the realm of female fantasy). Whatever position the opera appears to take at its conclusion, there can be no question that what lies at the heart of it is an exploration of the tenets of sensibility, and one that uncovers the great difficulties the movement has imposed on the woman of feeling.

Fiordiligi, Ferrarese, and "Come scoglio"

On her first appearance, in the duet "Ah guarda, sorella" (No. 4), Fiordiligi appears to be virtually indistinguishable from her sister, Dorabella. (The dramatic effect is very similar to that achieved in the first two ensembles, in which Ferrando and Guglielmo were presented as a like-minded pair.)[8] As the act unfolds, however, Da Ponte and Mozart begin to make small distinctions between the sisters (as they did with Ferrando and Guglielmo as early as No. 3). It is Fiordiligi who possesses the more refined, Dorabella the more excessive, sensibility. When Fiordiligi asks Guglielmo for a dagger, Dorabella exclaims, "Morrei di duol; d'uopo non ho d'acciaro" (I would die of grief, I would not need a dagger); when Fiordiligi sighs, "Io manco" (I'm fainting), Dorabella exclaims, "Io moro" (I'm dying); and after the lovers have left, while both sisters show their distress by stripping off their ornaments, it is Dorabella who assumes the role of the abandoned lover complete with stormy *accompagnato* and an *aria agitata,* "Smanie implacabili che m'agitate" (No. 11), as we saw in the previous chapter. But in act 2 while Dorabella warms quickly to the entreaties of the two Albanians, Fiordiligi remains hesitant, and long after Dorabella has exchanged the high drama of sensibility for the easy "song style" of her duet with Guglielmo (No. 23) and her aria "È amore un ladroncello" (No. 28), Fiordiligi is still struggling to maintain her constancy.[9]

7. On "excessive sensibility," see Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility,* 287ff.

8. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 96.

9. As Link and others have suggested, Dorabella's music here, unlike her earlier "Smanie implacabili," demonstrates the popular "song style" generally associated with the pastoral and familiar to Viennese audiences from Louise Villeneuve's role as Amore in Martín y Soler's *L'arbore di Diana;* see Link, "'Così fan tutte': Dorabella and Amore," 891. Both Salmon ("'Tutti accusan le donne,'" 97) and Goehring ("Despina, Cupid, and the Pastoral Mode," 129) suggest that Dorabella learned this style (a change from her act 1 "Smanie implacabili") from Despina.

Fiordiligi's distinct sensibility emerges boldly for the first time in her grand aria "Come scoglio," a number that has been widely celebrated as one of the opera's greatest parodies.[10] The elements most often cited as parody, however, are at least as affecting and poignant as those we have observed in her sister's "Smanie implacabili," if not more so. Fiordiligi's desire to control an elaborate demonstration in a seria idiom is born of her desire to make the strongest possible stand on the question of constancy. Her failure to do so has often been held against her, but the cultural context suggests another reading perhaps more in keeping with the spirit of the opera: that the musical setting attempts to undermine her text to make the tenets of sensibility that she represents—and not her—look ridiculous. In the recitative preceding her aria, Fiordiligi responds to the repeated entreaties of the disguised suitors with resolution and fire: "Temerari, sortite," she exclaims, "fuori di questo loco! E non profani / L'alito infausto degli infami detti / Nostro cor, nostro orecchio e nostri affetti" (Reckless ones! Leave, get out of this house! And do not profane with the ill-omened breath of [your] base words our hearts, our ears, and our affections). Her words are punctuated by impressive dotted rhythms in the orchestra. The display is enough to frighten Despina, who runs off the stage, though fortunately it does not scare off the two gentlemen to whom Fiordiligi plans to address her *bravura* aria. She warns the lovers in elevated language that she and her sister will be faithful to their fiancés even unto death, despite the world and fate: "A dispetto del mondo, e della sorte."

In "Come scoglio," drawing on a well-known convention, Fiordiligi likens her constancy to a rock that is unmoved by tempests. It has become a commonplace that this aria represents a parody of seria conventions with its wide leaps and other aspects of its setting, especially its postlude, during which the sisters attempt to make the exit required after such an aria but are detained by Ferrando and Guglielmo. It might be added that in this way Da Ponte and Mozart subtly undermine not only Fiordiligi's avowal of constancy, but the overused simile she invokes: nothing human and mutable is as steadfast as a rock. Charles Rosen calls this aria "magnificently comic,"[11] Rodney Farnsworth suggests it exhibits aspects of the burlesque.[12] Patricia Lewy Gidwitz argues that in it "Fiordiligi is portrayed as ridiculous":

> Mozart's use of stock *seria* gestures to convey character are [*sic*] evident in 'Come scoglio.' Both the vocal part and the accompaniment—emphatically pointed dotted rhythms, syncopated unisons, descents to the chest voice in

10. Among others, see Dent, *Mozart's Operas,* 196; Gidwitz, "Mozart's Fiordiligi," 212–13; Steptoe, *Mozart–Da Ponte Operas,* 221–30; and Farnsworth, "*Così fan tutte* as Parody and Burlesque," 59–62. Keahey, following Abert, describes this aria as irony; see "*Così fan tutte:* Parody or Irony?" 121, and *W. A. Mozart,* 2:547, respectively.

11. Rosen, *Classical Style,* 315.

12. Farnsworth, "*Così fan tutte* as Parody and Burlesque,"61.

> the recitative and convulsive shifts of register for the opening simile—are exaggerated and obvious.[13]

Bruce Alan Brown offers a detailed reading of the aria as parody, pointing to the discrepancy between Fiordiligi's leaping melody and the "immobility of which she sings."[14] He also notes several musical indications that she is unable to control the genre. For example, "the first two clauses . . . are set in a fairly ridiculous musical syntax, straddling a sectional division," and "her (notated) repeated notes on the words 'scoglio' and 'resta' demand to be sung as prosodic appoggiaturas, according to late-eighteenth-century practice."[15] Central to Brown's interpretation, which is far richer than this brief summary can suggest, are two points: (1) Fiordiligi's credibility is seriously undermined by Mozart's setting, and (2) the musical setting undercuts Fiordiligi in ways that are particular to the vocal profile and reputation of her first interpreter, Adriana Ferrarese del Bene. To address these points, let me turn now to a brief consideration of those aspects of Ferrarese's dramatic and vocal style that many believe invited mockery, after which I shall return to the difficult question of whether and to what extent "Come scoglio" may be read as parody.

It is generally acknowledged that certain aspects of Fiordiligi's characterization may be thought to be generically determined. That the company's prima donna should be cast as the more serious (and more constant) of the two sisters, given the opera's only *rondò,* and paired with the tenor in a love duet is only to be expected. This characterization may also be thought particular to her first interpreter; recent scholars have argued that Ferrarese's dramatic and vocal profile, to the extent it can be reconstructed from studying the roles created for her at the Burgtheater and other contemporary evidence, sheds new light on the role of Fiordiligi.[16] Indeed, the tendency to view Fiordiligi as a part created for a particular singer—a singer whose vocal agility and seria style, it has often been suggested, easily lent themselves to parody in a buffa context—has dominated the literature to such an extent that one must make a conscious effort when reading to remember that it is Fiordiligi, not Ferrarese, who is the character in the drama.

It seems indisputable that certain aspects of Mozart's musical setting were not only tailored to Ferrarese's voice but were also designed to exploit her abilities for comic effect. Here is Brown:

13. Gidwitz, "Mozart's Fiordiligi," 212–13.

14. B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 129.

15. B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 35 and 129, respectively.

16. See, among others, Steptoe, *Mozart–Da Ponte Operas*; Rice, "Rondò vocali di Salieri e Mozart"; Gidwitz, "Mozart's Fiordiligi." For a discussion of the extent to which Fiordiligi may be thought to be related to the character of "Diana" (played by Ferrarese in Martìn y Soler's *L'arbore di Diana*) in dramatic terms, see Hunter, *Culture of Opera Buffa,* 252–54.

> The qualities that suited Ferrarese to the prime roles in the Viennese repertory—her agility in passage-work and powerful lower register—left her prone to mockery, as when Mozart gives her a burst of coloratura in a thick ensemble texture (No. 13, Finale I), or exaggerated leaps between registers in inappropriate situations (before and during 'Come scoglio').[17]

Contemporaneous opinions of her differ, but most support Gidwitz's assessment that, although she was better suited to seria roles, she was often found wanting in them: "Her comic and dramatic skills were uneven, her vocal equipment impressive but incomplete and her performances less than inspiring."[18] Of her performance in the role of Cleonice in Cherubini's *Demetrio* at the King's Theatre in London in 1785, for example, one contemporary wrote: "[Ferrarese] had a sweet voice and sang with taste, but she was not calculated to shine as a *prima donna.*"[19] Despite some favorable reviews during this, her first, season in London, posterity has remembered her as unsuccessful in seria roles. Most damning is Charles Burney's oft-cited criticism of her performance in Cherubini's *Il Giulio Sabino* in the same year:

> His opera of GIULIO SABINO [1786] was murdered in its birth, for want of the necessary support of capital singers in the principal parts; Babini, the tenor, being elevated to first man, and the Ferraresi [*sic*] first woman, were circumstances not likely to prejudice the public in favour of the composer.[20]

Da Ponte, who had an affair with Ferrarese, includes a flattering description of her in his *Memoirs:* "Her voice was delicious, her method new, and marvelously affecting." But even he acknowledges her limited ability to act: "She had no striking grace of figure. She was not the best actress conceivable."[21]

Mozart makes reference to Ferrarese's acting twice in his letters, and both comments are less than flattering. In the first, he uses her as a standard by which to measure a singer in Dresden: "The leading woman singer, Madame Allegranti, is far better than Madame Ferarese [*sic*], which, I admit, is not saying very much."[22] In preparation for her role as Susanna in the 1789 revival of *Le nozze di Figaro,* Mozart composed two new arias for Ferrarese, one of which was a *rondò,* an aria type of which she apparently made something of a specialty. About the first of these, "Un moto di gioia" (K. 579), which replaces a duet in the second act, Mozart writes, "The little aria, which I composed for Madame Ferraresi [*sic*], ought, I think, to be a suc-

17. B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 160.

18. Gidwitz, "Mozart's Fiordiligi," 199. For a discussion of contemporaneous reviews, including two positive ones, see this essay, page 199, especially note 2.

19. Cited in Gidwitz, "Mozart's Fiordiligi," 199. The source is a musical memoir by W. T. Parke describing the "general state of music in England" from 1784 to 1830.

20. Burney, *General History of Music,* 2:899–900.

21. Da Ponte, *Memoirs,* 89.

22. W. A. Mozart, letter of 16 April 1789, *Letters,* 924.

cess, provided she is able to sing it in an artless manner, which, however, I very much doubt."[23] It is often observed, however, that Mozart's addition of the *rondò* "Al desio di chi t'adora" (K. 577) to act 4, which replaces Susanna's "Deh vieni non tardar" (No. 28), was precisely tailored to take advantage of Ferrarese's strengths—a brilliant coloratura, a low-lying tessitura, and an imposing stage presence better suited to the drama of the *rondò* than to the "song style" of Louise Villeneuve.[24]

Gidwitz argues that "Fiordiligi was fashioned out of the temperament, vocal style and dramatic abilities—and limitations—of his [Mozart's] soprano."[25] That Da Ponte and Mozart designed the part to capitalize on Ferrarese's particular gifts, no one would attempt to deny. Clearly two such men of the theater were well practiced in the art of using singers to their best advantage. But when Gidwitz concludes that in Fiordiligi "Da Ponte and/or Mozart devised a role that parodied the singer's vocal technique and wooden acting," she perhaps goes too far.[26] The fact that Fiordiligi ultimately fails to present a consistent and convincing seria persona does not necessarily mean that librettist and composer set out to make their prima donna look "ridiculous."[27] It seems more likely that Da Ponte and/or Mozart set out to show how the sentimental notions to which Fiordiligi clings in "Come scoglio" are at odds with the more natural inclinations of human feeling she expresses later.[28]

In Gidwitz's view, "Familiarity with Ferrarese's personal style allows us to hear the role as the delicious 'in-joke' it surely was to contemporary audiences."[29] This argument is one that centers on Ferrarese, however, not Fiordiligi. The references to Ferrarese's style and other roles may well have breached the fourth wall of the stage without affecting the drama. The heavy emphasis that has to date been placed on the relationship between Fiordiligi and Ferrarese has tended to obscure other readings of the character that are at least as compelling. For while we have the profound sense that Fiordiligi is changed by experience over the course of the drama, we may be confident that during the opera's run in 1790 Adriana Ferrarese del Bene remained exactly as she was.

The immediate historical context, though it may illuminate any number of textual and musical questions (why, for example, the two sisters are said to hail from Ferrara), sheds no light on internal matters of characterization and plot. Clever references to the original performers, other operas, and even the overture's obvious reference to Basilio's "Così fan tutte le belle" from the act 1 trio (No. 7) of Mozart's own *Figaro* are incidental to the plot, which unfolds without any awareness of them on the part of the characters. They do, of course, contribute yet another layer to this

23. W. A. Mozart, letter of 19 August 1789, *Letters,* 933–34.

24. For a discussion of arias in *rondò* form written for Ferrarese, see Rice, "Rondò vocali di Salieri e Mozart"; and B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 160–62.

25. Gidwitz, "Mozart's Fiordiligi," 199.

26. Gidwitz, "Mozart's Fiordiligi," 211.

27. Gidwitz, "Mozart's Fiordiligi," 213.

28. See Steptoe, *Mozart–Da Ponte Operas,* 222.

29. Gidwitz, "Mozart's Fiordiligi," 211.

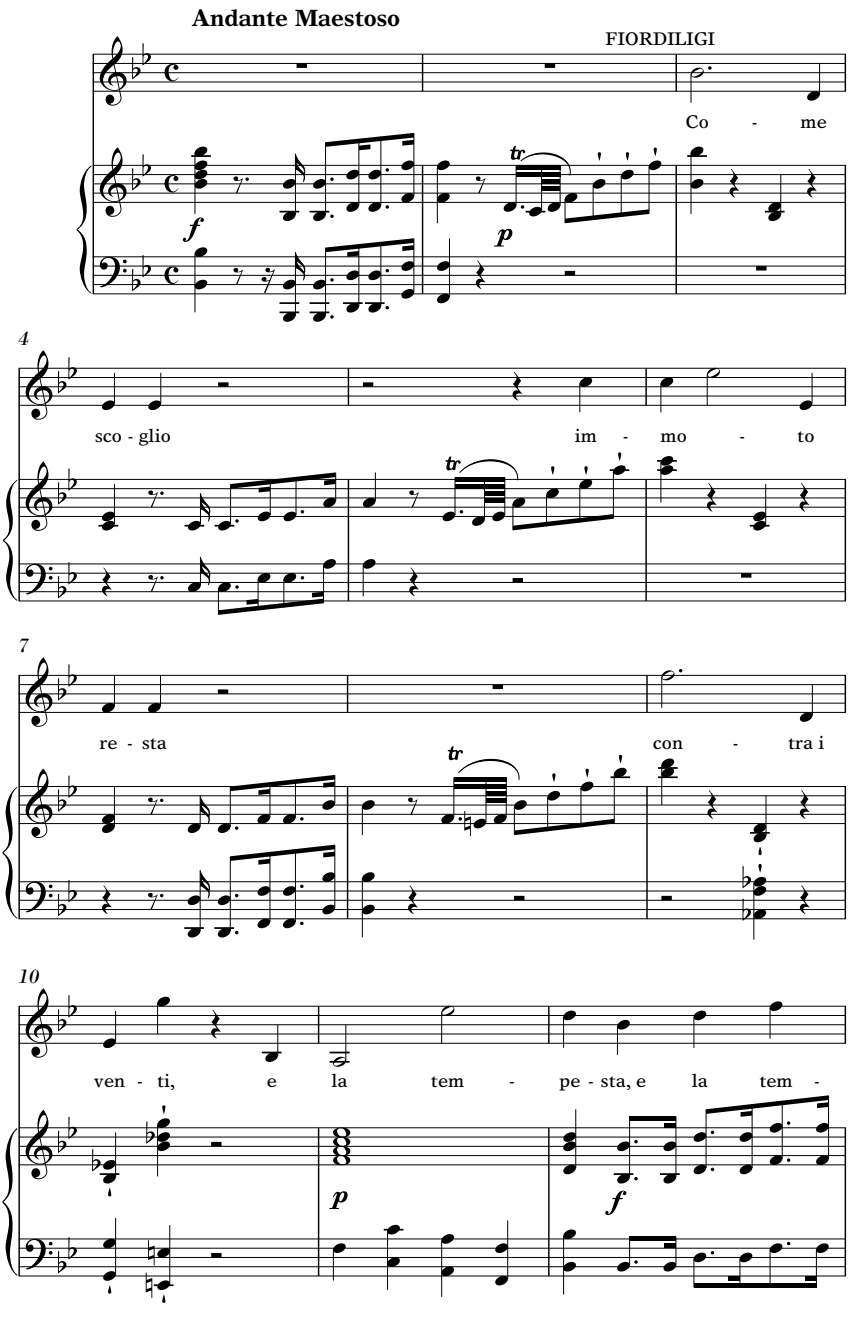
opera's complex dramatic irony, though, as others have observed, such references are often lost on present-day audiences. And however much research on opera in Mozart's Vienna and its singers may reveal about *Così* (and it has revealed a great deal), we cannot limit our reading of the character to what we do and do not know about her first interpreter. We may as well restrict our understanding of *Romeo and Juliet* to readings that bear in mind that Juliet was first created on the stage by a boy.

Turning now to "Come scoglio," to what degree, if any, should it be regarded as parody? There can be no question that the aspects of parody that Brown, Gidwitz, and others point to are resonant. At the same time, however, I would argue that in emphasizing the historical context, the facts of Mozart's theater, we run the risk of neglecting the dramatic context. To whatever extent Fiordiligi suggested Ferrarese (and her shortcomings) to the original audience, the impression was surely not so overwhelming that it prevented acceptance of the fourth wall of the stage and the imaginary world it protects. Within this world, I would argue, "Come scoglio" may be understood rather differently from the way in which it has often been viewed, and the features that have suggested parody to many interpreters may be read in other ways.

Take, for example, the aria's unusual three-tempo design.[30] It appears to be an expansion of the more usual two-tempo structure in which the first tempo ordinarily sets two of the three stanzas with a return to the tonic in the form ABA, while the second tempo is faster and sets the third verse, which usually marks a shift in thought or mood. Fiordiligi attempts a more complex version of this form that appears in several respects to be more than she can control. Her first tempo, Andante maestoso, sets only two lines of text, culminating in a cadence at measure 14 before the first stanza is concluded. The texture is almost *accompagnato* and, while striking in its own right, does not represent the strong contrast one expects here, where the move to a melody-dominated texture customarily distinguishes the start of the aria from its preceding accompanied recitative. This first tempo thus seems to prepare the second tempo, Allegro, which enters at measure 15, but it is this section beginning at measure 15 that appears to be the first tempo in structural terms, though its actual tempo gives it more the character of a second tempo than a first (see example 7.3). Does Fiordiligi get to the second tempo too soon? Or does she intend to sing two tempos in the place where the first tempo would ordinarily be? Either way, the effect is unsettling to the ABA form in a number of respects. For example, despite the fact that Mozart sets the first fourteen measures of the aria as a kind of slow introduction, maintaining the idiom of the preceding accompanied recitative, he must allow it to return after the B section. As a result, the Andante maestoso (the first half of A)

30. Among many discussions of "Come scoglio," three are of special relevance: B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 128–35; Steptoe, *Mozart–Da Ponte Operas,* 221–30; and Gidwitz, "Mozart's Fiordiligi," 212–13.

Example 7.3. *Così,* "Come scoglio immoto resta" (No. 14), mm. 1–22.



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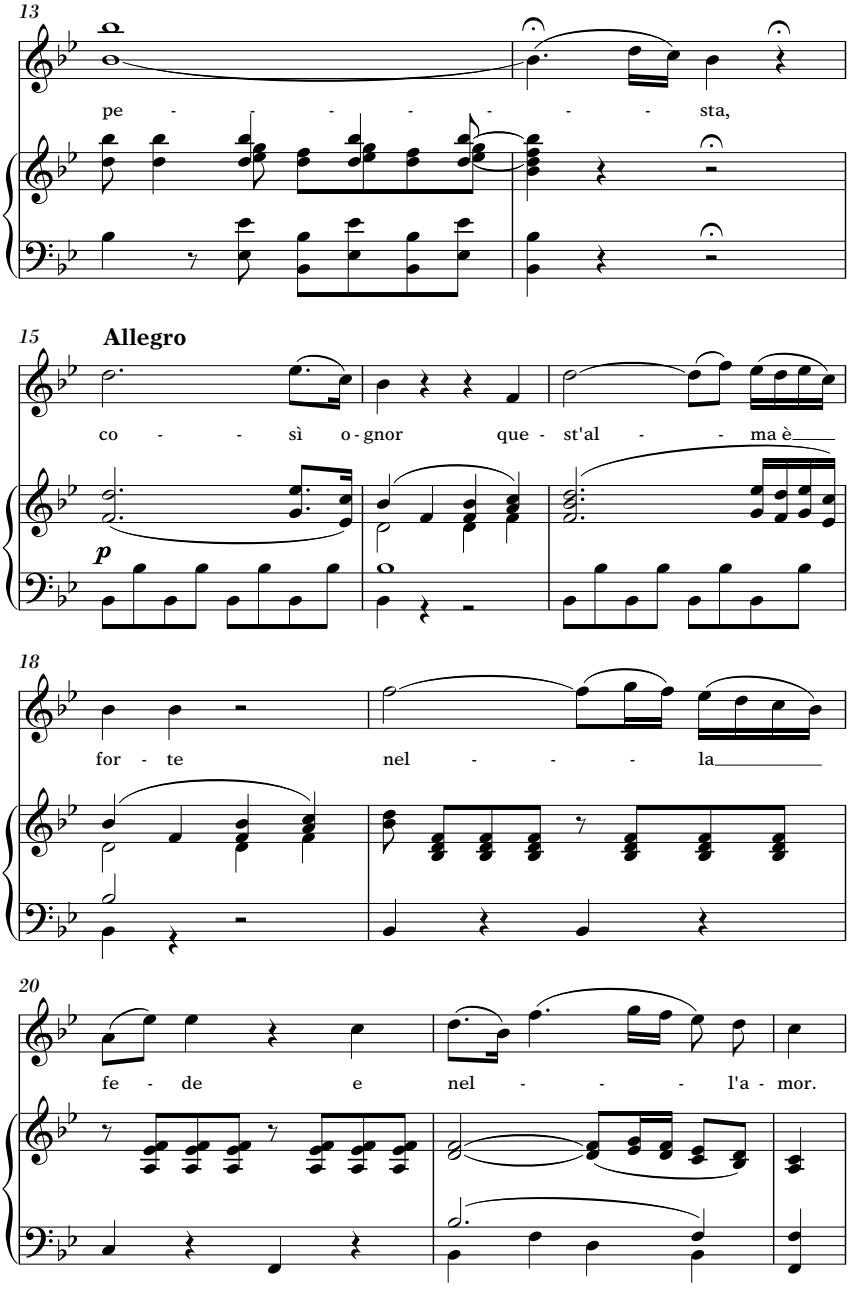
Example 7.3. *Continued*



makes a slightly problematic return at measure 83 in terms of text and gesture, even though the tonic is not restored until the return of the Allegro at measure 90.

The effect of the Andante maestoso is thus curiously mixed. On the one hand, it suggests the premeditation and grandeur of "maestoso" with its dotted arpeggios in the orchestra, stately declamation of the text, and regal tempo; on the other, it suggests spontaneity and a lack of composure and control that would allow aria text to be set as recitative, a first tempo to end midverse, and a contrast of affects to attempt to represent a single simile.[31] Fiordiligi speaks of likeness:

Come scoglio immoto resta	Like a rock standing unmoved
Contra i venti, e la tempesta,	amid winds and tempest,
Così ognor quest'alma è forte	so stands my heart ever strong
Nelle fede, e nell'amor.	in faith and in love.

But she illustrates difference by shifting tempo, texture, melodic style, dynamic level—all midsimile at measure15. Her premature cadence on "tempesta," complete with its high B-flat, is surely an attempt at word painting, an effect designed to imbue her text with fiery determination, and one that is undermined by the Allegro starting up on the other side of the fermata. The aria gives the impression that Fiordiligi is striving on several levels—textually, gesturally, structurally—to be something she is not, which, of course, is precisely the case. And her desire to attempt the form, gesture, and control of the seria style is as telling as her failure to succeed in this attempt. Indeed, a completely successful seria demonstration here would be out of place and would not fit with the later events in which the moral constancy Fiordiligi claims, and really believes herself to possess, is set in conflict with her vulnerability to the immediacy of feeling.

The most interesting question of parody this aria finally poses is not where the moments of parody are to be found but how such moments are made subordinate to the larger goals of the opera's plot. The pyrotechnics of the Più Allegro, for example, are more than impressive, and even if one does not take Brown's view that here "Mozart suggests Fiordiligi's state of near-hysteria, with initial five-bar phrases, long melismas in triplets, and a sudden outburst on high B-flat," one must acknowledge the emotional intensity Fiordiligi's display suggests.[32] In striving to make a fiery *bravura* demonstration and in failing to do so in either a conventional or a commanding way, Fiordiligi betrays something about her character beyond what she understands. The aria is a valiant but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to adopt an imposing seria style that would be appropriate to the situation if the opera's take on sentiment were destined to show that moral constancy could withstand anything.

31. See B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 128, where he explains that the "Come scoglio" text is not a parody of the Metastasian simile aria, as has often been claimed: "the 'Come' / 'Così' opposition of [the aria's] first stanza . . . seems to have originated in operas from the earlier generation of Apostolo Zeno, and was widely imitated by librettists of works both serious and comic."

32. B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 35.

As things are, such a display, like Constanze's aria "Martern aller Arten" (No. 11) in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail,* for example, would be out of place. Fiordiligi only aspires to such constancy; she does not finally prove capable of it. She is not, in the end, the phoenix the culture of sensibility and her fiancé's wager desire her to be.

"Per pietà": Recognition Denied

The tendency to read "Come scoglio" as parody is matched, curiously, by an equally strong inclination to read Fiordiligi's act 2 *rondò,* "Per pietà," with sympathetic understanding. "If the music which Mozart gives Fiordiligi's situation in the second act is a *parody,*" Bernard Williams writes, "then we have no reason to trust our emotional reactions to anything in Mozart's music at all."[33] It is widely thought that something of great import happens in this aria. As Joseph Kerman suggests, "we cannot shake off the impression of sorrow in her second aria, 'Per pietà,' for all its preposterousness."[34] Indeed, the move from act 1 to act 2 is often presented as a transformation in which Fiordiligi's characterization "starts from parody and then transcends it."[35] The transformation is made to be dependent on a contrasting reading of her two arias in which the excesses of "Come scoglio" are presented as the self-evident counterpart to the genuine emotion of "Per pietà." Charles Rosen, for example, contrasts the "mock grandeur" of her first aria to the "real grandeur" of her second.[36] But I think their differences have perhaps been exaggerated and their similarities minimized to heighten the sense of contrast between them. "Come scoglio" is not such complete satire, nor "Per pietà" so unproblematic a declaration of affection, as many have claimed.

"Come scoglio," "Per pietà," and the events that bring them about are all part of a recognition process in which Fiordiligi makes the opera's most important discovery of sentimental knowledge and which culminates not in her *rondò,* as one might expect, but in her aria-cum-duet, "Fra gli amplessi," when she submits to her new passion for Ferrando. If she is the fully drawn character that one has come to expect from Mozart, then one should expect to find aspects of later developments prepared in her first aria, and traces of a character in the process of change in her second. Such a view would seem to necessitate that one find at least a few elements these two arias share. Both represent Fiordiligi's struggle to remain faithful to Guglielmo. Indeed, in textual and dramatic terms, "Per pietà" may be seen as developing out of "Come scoglio," rather than as representing a contrast to it, for both arias uphold the ideal of moral constancy and both imagine—at least in terms of their texts—a future in which constancy will prevail.

In "Per pietà" Fiordiligi still wishes to believe herself capable of constancy, although, having acknowledged tender feelings for her new suitor in the preceding recitative,

33. Williams, "Passion and Cynicism," 361.
34. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 96.
35. Warren, "'Smiling at Grief,'" 82.
36. Rosen, *Classical Style,* 315.

she dare not embark on a demonstration as ambitious or as single-minded as that of "Come scoglio." Chastened by experience, her claims are not so great, her leaps not so large, as in her act 1 display. She now knows what it means to be unfaithful (she has already betrayed Guglielmo in her heart), and this knowledge deepens her desire to be constant. The move from accompanied recitative to *rondò* is one of denial. While the former centers on Fiordiligi's new affection for Ferrando and the betrayal it represents, the latter expresses her desire to remain faithful to Guglielmo, returning to the topic of "Come scoglio." Even though she acknowledges her culpability and shame with great pathos, she does not yet fully understand the significance of the recognition made in the preceding recitative.

The *accompagnato* begins with the first explicit confirmation of something the audience already suspects: that Fiordiligi is now filled with passionate feelings for the disguised Ferrando. She calls out to him, "senti!" (listen!), and then thinks better of it: "Ah no . . . partir si lasci, / Si tolga ai sguardi miei l'infausto oggetto / Della mia debolezza" (Ah no . . . let him go, let my sight be free of the unlucky object of my weakness). And she acknowledges what the gentlemen neglected to consider in the first scene of the opera, namely, that a lover's suit should not be treated as a joke: "L'altrui querele / Dovea volger in gioco?" With new understanding and regret she admits her betrayal:

Io ardo, e l'ardor mio non è più effetto	I burn, and my ardor is no longer
Di un amor virtuoso:	the consequence of a virtuous affection.
è smania, affanno,	It is frenzy, anguish,
Rimorso, pentimento,	remorse, repentance,
	thoughtlessness, treachery,
Leggerezza, perfidia, e tradimento!	and betrayal.

The exaggeration of distress with such highly stylized language, the reaching out after a kind of pure seria affect inappropriate to this context and emphasized by Mozart in the setting, is clearly open to parodic readings. (And it is of some interest that the characterization of distress here, with its "most Metastasian list of guilt-related affects," is as open to parodic reading as the *accompagnato* that preceded Fiordiligi's sister's earlier "Smanie implacabili," though as most commentators seem to agree, they remain more affecting than comical in Mozart's setting.)[37] What is striking here, however, is how the impossibility of moral constancy—something to which the parodic readings of "Come scoglio" consistently draw attention—now permeates Fiordiligi's consciousness. Here is the failure the musical setting of "Come scoglio" foretold. What Fiordiligi has learned of sentimental experience allows her to express her feelings far more effectively, but she uses her deeper understanding of sentiment to delude herself in a new way on the matter of constancy. She imagines that what she has learned

37. B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 132.

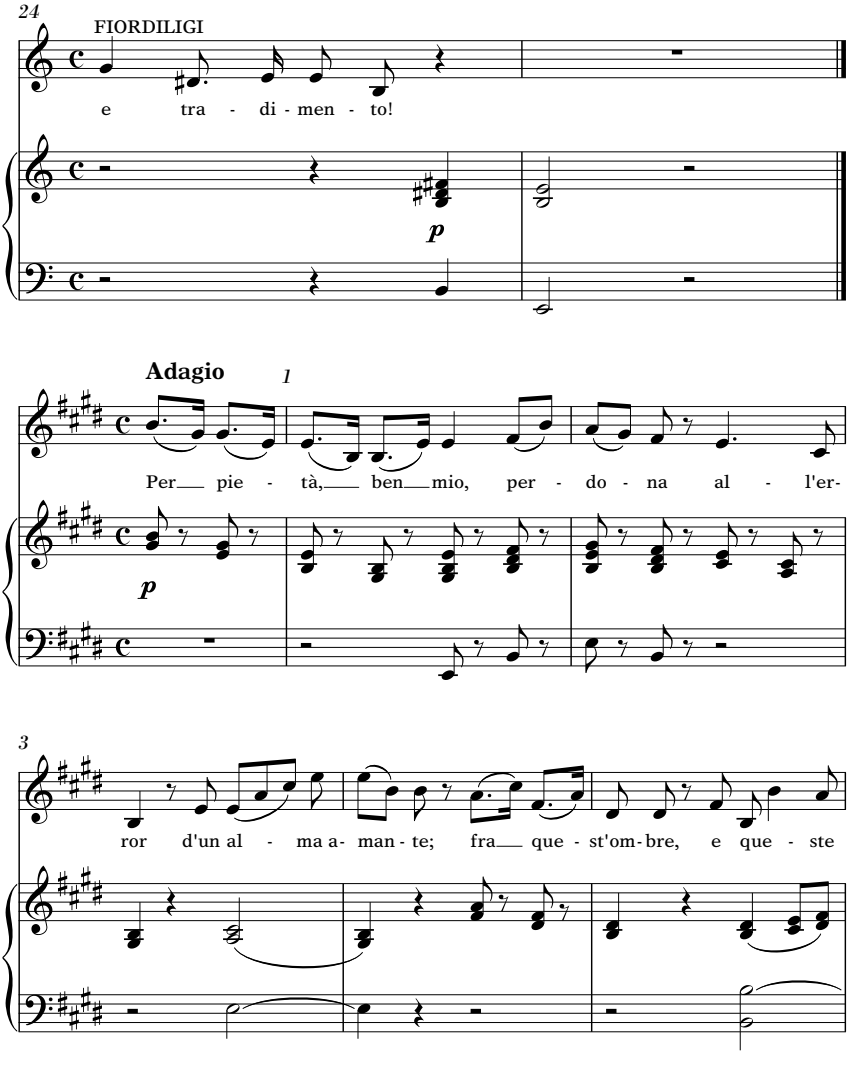
is that her new promise of constancy will be strengthened by her experience of involuntary, unwitting betrayal. But the opposite will prove to be true, for experience has revealed constancy to be a contradiction of human nature, a false promise, no matter how sincerely it is intended.

In the aria, however, Fiordiligi imagines that her remorse and her lover's forgiveness can erase the recognition of sentimental knowledge (her new passion for Ferrando) she has just made in the recitative. Unlike her sister, Fiordiligi cannot be made to take either the engaging or betrayal of affection lightly, and once she is caught in the trap, in love with two suitors, the pain it causes her makes her an object of sympathy and pathos, something Mozart makes all the more poignant and compelling in the music. Her text is centered squarely on her virtuous love for Guglielmo and her need to banish all other sentimental feelings:

Per pietà, ben mio, perdona	For pity's sake, my dearest, forgive
All'error d'un' alma amante;	the error of a loving soul;
Fra quest'ombre, e queste piante	among these shadows and these plants,
Sempre ascoso, oh Dio, sarà!	oh God, it shall forever be hidden.
Svenerà quest'empia voglia	My courage, my constancy
L'ardir mio, la mia constanza,	will overcome this wicked desire,
Perderà la rimembranza,	and I shall banish the memory
Che vergogna e orror mi fa.	that fills me with shame and horror.
A chi mai mancò di fede	[And] whom has this vain
Questo vano, ingrato cor!	ungrateful heart betrayed!
Si dovea miglior mercede,	Your trust deserved,
Caro bene, al tuo candor.	dear beloved, a better reward.

She begs forgiveness in the first stanza, takes comfort in her constancy in the second, and thinks tenderly of Guglielmo in the third. But one suspects that the depth of feeling here is not all for Guglielmo. Fiordiligi has discovered in her newfound feelings for Ferrando that love is more complex than she thought, and her affecting testimonial to the contrary is about to be overturned by the ensuing action. One of the most poignant and magical effects of this aria is that it manages to dramatize Fiordiligi's remorse sympathetically at the same time it confirms a newfound emotional depth that will make it impossible for her to ever recapture the unproblematic constancy of which she speaks. Between Da Ponte's lines one easily reads the effort to deny what is most significantly present (though only by implication) throughout the aria. This aria purports to be about moral constancy and a new determination to remain faithful, when in fact its language of constancy is really a blind, an attempt to conceal the profound discovery of affection and its attendant remorse that Fiordiligi has just acknowledged in the recitative.

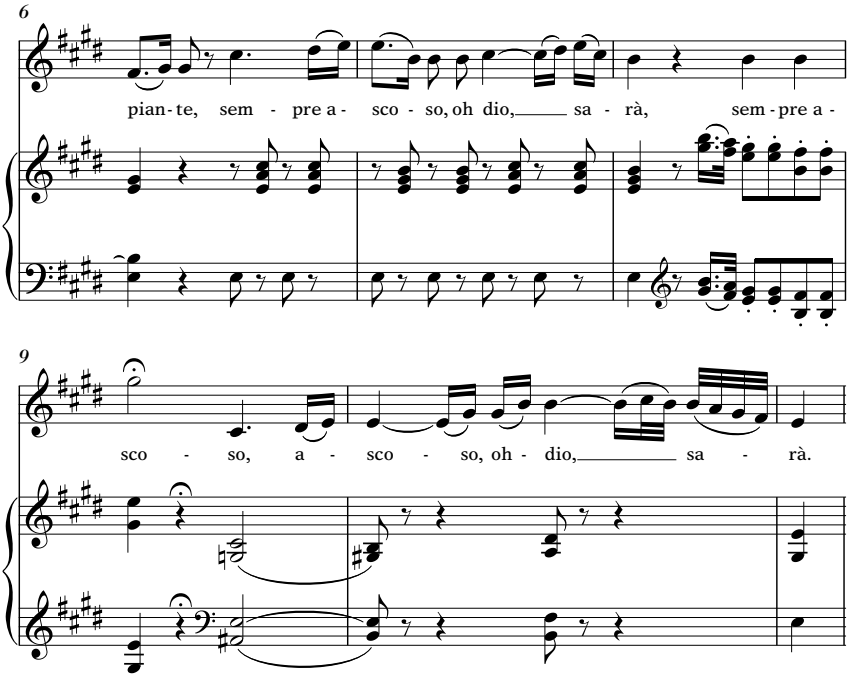
Example 7.4. *Così,* the end of the preceding *accompagnato* through the opening of "Per pietà, ben mio, perdona" (No. 25).



(*continued*)

The complexity of this new awareness, representing both the possession and denial of knowledge, is illustrated beautifully by the harmonic juxtaposition of the recitative and aria. The acknowledgment of the recitative, that Fiordiligi is in love with Ferrando, culminates in an attempt to establish E minor, which might be thought to reflect in its color and mode the import of such a discovery; the aria, however, begins unambiguously in E major (see example 7.4). E minor and the betrayal it char-

Example 7.4. *Continued*



acterizes are left far behind, and the forgiveness for which Fiordiligi longs in the aria's first stanza appears to have been already granted by the sudden appearance of the parallel major. The perfectly balanced first tempo presents two contrasting affects: the A and B of *rondò* form. While the first seeks forgiveness with the frequent descents to chest voice, at which, as Gidwitz has shown, Ferrarese was especially adept, the second presents a military-sounding endorsement of the courage with which Fiordiligi hopes to banish her desire ("Svenerà quest'empia voglia / L'ardir mio, la mia costanza") and establishes the dominant. The return of the first stanza (A) and the tonic has the balance and poise that were noticeably lacking in the return of the first-tempo A section in "Come scoglio." Other musical elements open to parodic reading in the earlier aria also appear unproblematic in "Per pietà." For example, it is generally agreed that Fiordiligi appears to have much better control over her leaps and descents than she did in "Come scoglio," and to have integrated them into a graceful melody.[38]

Much of the aria's power stems from its denial. If the feelings Fiordiligi has acknowledged in the recitative have taught her anything, it must be that protestations

38. Among others, see Warren, " 'Smiling at Grief,' " 81–82; Gidwitz, "Mozart's Fiordiligi," 213; and B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 132ff.

of constancy like the ones she makes in the aria are far more complex and fragile than she is willing to credit even now. Our sense that here Fiordiligi is in the grip of strong feelings over which she has no control comes as much from the contrast of recitative and aria as from the music of the aria itself. And one senses, too, a poignancy and depth of understanding in the music that are belied by the oversimple text, which couples the beseeching of forgiveness with new promises of fidelity. As he did with "Come scoglio," Mozart responds with great sensitivity to the dual implications of the text. He sets Fiordiligi's plea for forgiveness to a heavenly melody and allows the second tempo to scale ever greater technical heights as Fiordiligi reflects warmly on her love for Guglielmo and the constancy he deserves. At the same time, however, Mozart gives the voice with which she appears to be in dialogue, the obbligato solos that articulate her thoughts and respond to her phrases, to a pair of horns. Mozart has used the horn at times as an instrumental pun on the notion of a cuckold's horns, as he does, for example, in Figaro's aria on the subject of women's fidelity (or lack of it), "Aprite un po' quegl' occhi" (No. 27). Brown treats the horn as an unambiguous signifier: "the virtuosic horn solos, beginning at the reprise of this section, hint strongly at infidelity."[39] As with every gesture open to parodic interpretation, however, the horn obbligato is more complex than it first appears to be.[40]

The role of the obbligato is precisely to engage the singer's thoughts, to raise questions or emphasize moments with music. Given the text of this aria, it is surely the role of the obbligato to question the ease with which Fiordiligi turns from the awareness of the recitative to the false consciousness of the aria, deluding herself again as to the nature of constancy. Even now, though experience has shown her how her feelings may divide against her constancy, she still clings to a conventional formulation of fidelity. Her recognition reflects both a new level of self-awareness and of self-delusion, something strongly hinted at by the setting, which casts doubt upon her renewed vows of constancy by putting them in dialogue with a pair of horns. And if we look to the circumstances of the first performance for confirmation of one interpretation or another, it is surely of some interest that arias composed earlier for Ferrarese by Mozart and Salieri anticipate "Per pietà" in this respect: "The hornharmonies which hint openly at cuckoldry at the opening of 'Al desio' [an insertion aria for the 1789 production of *Figaro*] were imitated—without justification—in 'Sola e mesta' (likewise in F major), and appear again in 'Per pietà,' with all their connotations intact."[41]

At the same time, not everyone will want to accept these horns as a musical reference to a cuckold's horns. But there are several reasons why they may be inter-

39. B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart:* "*Così fan tutte,*" 46. Brown is not alone in his reading of the horns; see also Salmon, "'Tutti accusan le donne,'" 81–102; and Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 512–13.

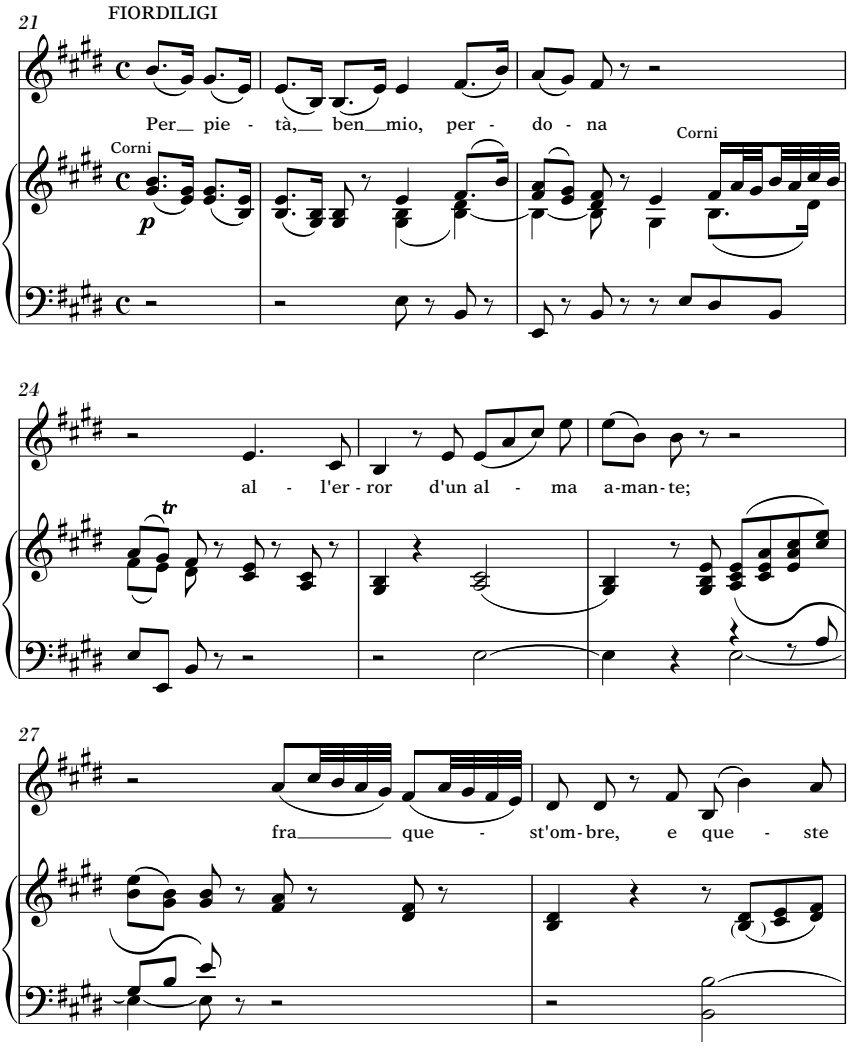
40. Noiray, for example, has attempted to show that in French opera the horn was occasionally used in this way to suggest an absent lover. See his "Commentaire musical et littéraire," 113 (cited in B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart:* "*Così fan tutte,*" 134).

41. B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart:* "*Così fan tutte,*" 160; see also Rice, "Rondò vocali di Salieri e Mozart."

preted in this way, as they often have been. For one thing, Mozart had used the horn in just this way before and in far less ambiguous circumstances. For another, Mozart chose to set Fiordiligi in dialogue with a *pair* of horns. The tradition of using an obbligato instrument in dialogue with the voice at such moments is well known, and it is not entirely unusual to find an obbligato part for a pair of solo instruments, as in "Come scoglio," which features a pair of trumpets. But one is tempted to imagine that, though he clearly had several choices, the instrumentation Mozart settled on more completely represented to his sense of humor a cuckold's pair of horns. Mozart's setting, in which the obbligato horns seem to predict the betrayal of which Fiordiligi was fearful in the recitative, actively interferes with any single-minded understanding of text and music.

Most important, the internal deployment of the obbligato horns in "Per pietà" is precisely orchestrated so that their presence as a voice in dialogue with the singer draws particular attention to phrases of constancy and forgiveness, raising doubt as to their veracity. For example, the horns make their first entrance in measure 8, as Fiordiligi emphasizes the words "Sempre ascoso" in the context of her desire to hide her shame: "Fra quest'ombre, e queste piante / Sempre ascoso, oh, Dio, sarà!" Just as her exposed leap to G over a fermata on "ascoso" (hidden) suggests its opposite (see example 7.4, m. 9), the horns point to feelings of infidelity that are still with her, despite her denials, feelings that will govern her actions in scenes to come. In the military-like setting of the second stanza it is the horns (along with the winds) that imitate trumpets, undermining their own suggestion of a soldier's courage. So much, it might be argued, could be thought to be coincidence, until one considers what happens next. As the A section makes its important structural return within the first tempo, Mozart allows the horns to double Fiordiligi's plea for forgiveness (see example 7.5). They punctuate the ends of phrases, responding to Fiordiligi's thoughts with elaborate echoes of her words (mm. 23–24, 26–27, and 29–30). In the second tempo they interfere with her reiteration of lines from the first tempo, making prominent, driving, *fortepiano* gestures on a dominant pedal against Fiordiligi's text: "Svenerà quest'empia voglia / L'ardir mio, la mia constanza." Finally, they interrupt her extended invocations of "caro bene" three times (beginning in mm. 46, 76, and 114), on the last of which they are preceded by flutes and clarinets (see example 7.6). The duality of effect here cannot be overemphasized. While this aria, especially in its second tempo, makes a sincere and compelling display of deep regret and heartfelt devotion that asks to be taken very seriously, that display is simultaneously complemented and questioned by a pair of obbligato horns that remind us of what Fiordiligi attempts to forget and that suggests strongly not the insincerity of the feelings expressed but the likelihood that all will not fall out as Fiordiligi here hopes and predicts. Thus while I would strongly disagree with a reading that attempted to reduce "Per pietà" to the potential parody of its two horns, I do not believe one can properly comprehend either the significance of the aria itself or its role in the drama without taking the obbligato horns into account.

Example 7.5. *Così,* "Per pietà" (No. 25), mm. 21–35.



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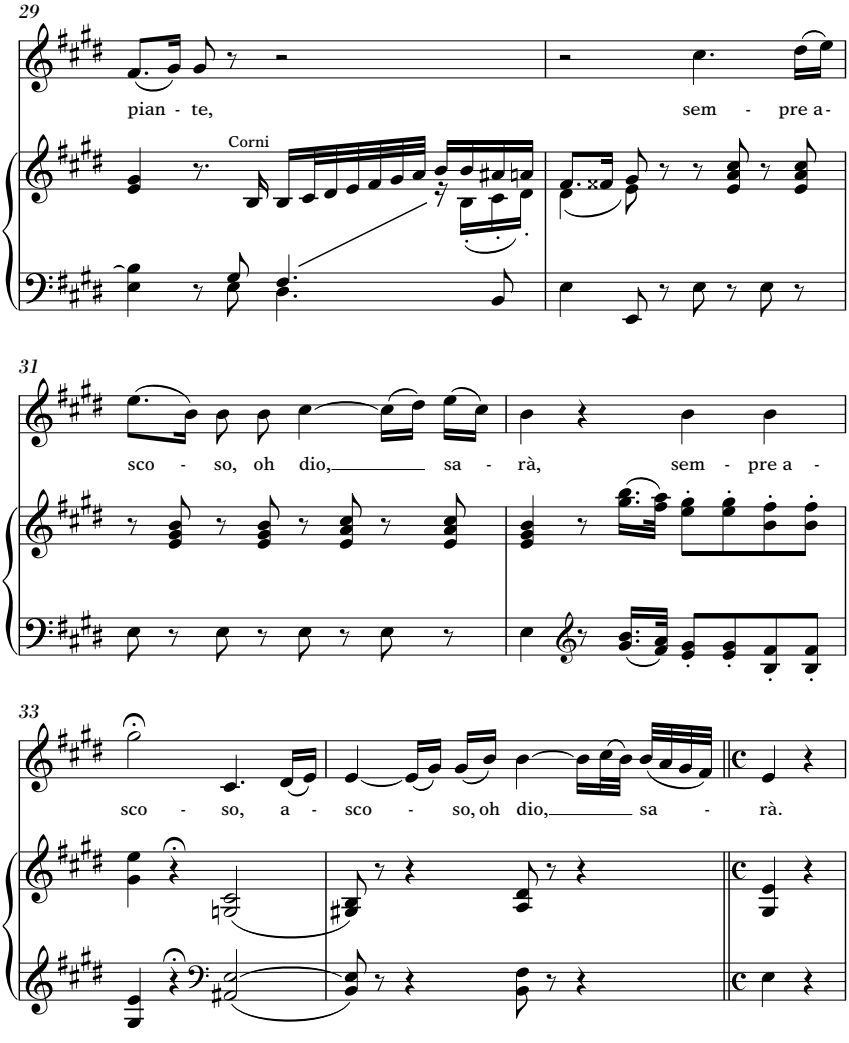
One question of importance regarding this aria remains: what does it mean that this aria is a *rondò?* The *rondò,* a two-tempo aria form of special significance, became an important feature of Italian opera in the 1780s. Sentimental in nature and reserved for a pivotal moment in the drama, the *rondò* provided a showcase for the prima donna or primo uomo. Mozart applied the form (and the term) sparingly: for example, *Don Giovanni* features only one, Donna Anna's "Non mi dir, bell' idol mio" (No. 23); the 1788 revision of *Le nozze di Figaro* features one for Ferrarese, Susanna's

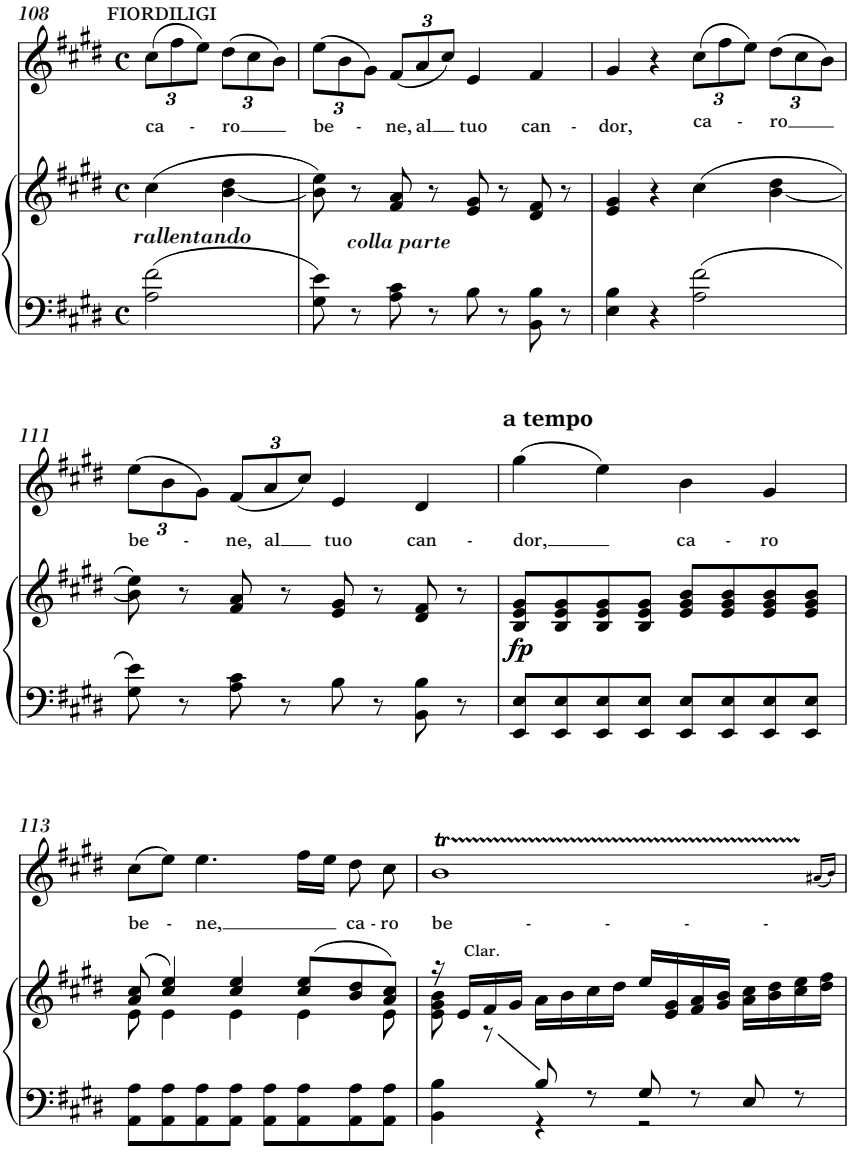
Example 7.5. *Continued*



"Al desio"; *La clemenza di Tito,* somewhat of a special case, features two, Vitellia's "Non più di fiori vaghe catene" (No. 23) and Sesto's "Deh per questo istante solo" (No. 19). Don Neville has suggested that "the 'rondò,' always identified with a sincerity of expression, became, for Mozart, a means of expressing moments of profound psychological self-awareness for the characters concerned—an arrival point in a pattern of conduct—a 'moment of truth.'"[42] Of special interest in the present context is Neville's association of the form itself with a particular dramatic significance

42. Neville, "'Rondò' in Mozart's Late Operas," 141.

Example 7.6. *Così,* "Per pietà" (No. 25), mm. 108–21.



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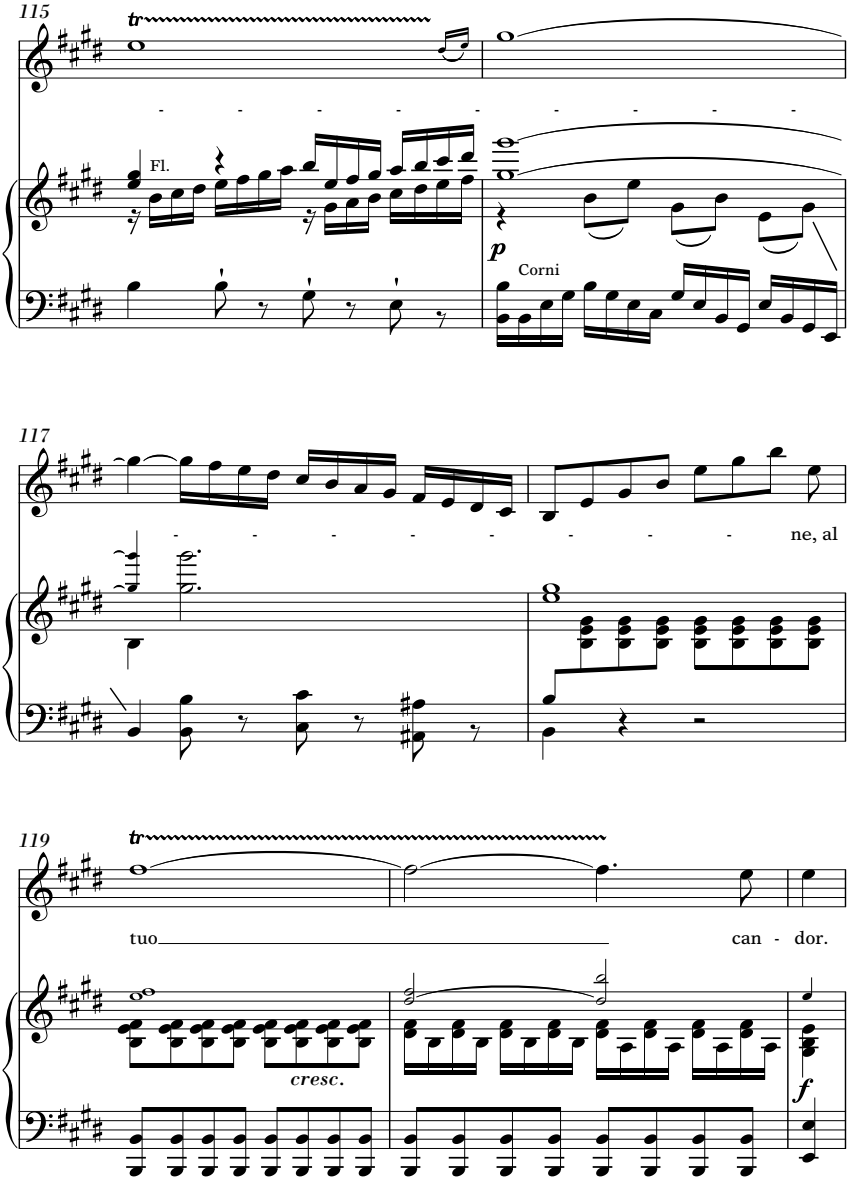
Example 7.6. *Continued*



and psychological weight within the opera as whole. Not every two-tempo aria in which the first tempo conforms to the usual ABA form may be properly called a *rondò,* a distinction Neville demonstrates in Mozart's own use of the term.[43] The Countess's "Dove sono," for example, was not given the designation by Mozart.[44] Repeatedly in Mozart's last operas, Neville argues, the term distinguishes an aria that marks the "culminating point in the depiction of a consistent psychological process," as he suggests of Sesto's "Deh per questo istante solo."[45]

Fiordiligi's *rondò,* however, differs from Sesto's and others in a crucial way. Unlike Vitellia's compelling "Non più di fiori," Fiordiligi's aria represents only a temporary culmination of a psychological process, one that ultimately proves to be false. It is not the product of a reversal; nor does it attempt to dramatize one. At this point in the drama, Fiordiligi has admitted to herself her newly discovered attraction to Ferrando, but has not yet acknowledged what this attraction really implies. Her aria is devoted to asking for the forgiveness that would absolve her of her newfound affection, but in doing so acknowledges the infidelity she wishes to forget. Hers is a recognition that is still in denial, a discovery accompanied by false understanding. The aria's potency comes not from what it says, but from what it attempts to deny. And yet the false recognition here is the necessary prelude to her capitulation to Ferrando in their duet No. 29. We only believe her feelings to be deep and heartfelt there because of what we witness here. The sincerity and pathos of this denial, more than anything, demonstrate how much she has changed from her earlier "Come scoglio," for this second aria evinces a depth of feeling that the Fiordiligi who sang the earlier aria had not yet experienced. None of this is to disagree with Neville's theory that, for Mozart, the *rondò* holds "a special expressive function."[46] But I would suggest that he is not quite right about "Per pietà," which might be thought the exception that proves his rule.

Here is Neville:

> Fiordiligi may hold in her hand a portrait of Guglielmo, but her words describe Ferrando with whom she is subsequently paired. The awakening of a genuine attraction for a soulmate naturally overpowers love idealized and imagined, and the "rondò" to which Mozart assigned the full impact of this discovery is as profound for her as those of Sesto and Vitellia in "Tito," a "twin" opera to "Così" in several respects.[47]

But Fiordiligi does not address Ferrando in her *rondò;* while its text speaks of feelings that have been widely accepted as heartfelt, we should not forget that her protestations of love and constancy are addressed to Guglielmo, and that they are state-

43. Neville, "'Rondò' in Mozart's Late Operas," 142–43.

44. Neville, "'Rondò' in Mozart's Late Operas," 154. See also Heartz, "Constructing *Le nozze di Figaro,*" 95–96.

45. Neville, "'Rondò' in Mozart's Late Operas," 141.

46. Neville, "'Rondò' in Mozart's Late Operas," 148.

47. Neville, "'Rondò' in Mozart's Late Operas," 154–55.

ments Fiordiligi is destined to betray in the following scenes. It may still be that "Per pietà" marks the culmination of a psychological process, but it does so in a way Neville's theory does not anticipate. While the aria represents how "the awakening of a genuine attraction overpowers love idealized and imagined," it is not to this *rondò* but to Fiordiligi's next appearance, in "Fra gli amplessi," that Mozart assigns "the full impact of this discovery."[48] What is heartfelt in "Per pietà" is the recognition of deeper sentimental truths than the opera has yet acknowledged—that Fiordiligi is capable of deep feeling, that despite the atmosphere of carnival the wager is having real consequences, that an affectionate heart may be forced into the realization that the choice between constancy and feeling is an unhappy one. But this moment of half-knowledge in which we are so moved by Fiordiligi's struggle to convince herself (and us) of something she knows to be less than the full truth unfolds into her next, true recognition scene, in which her insistent denials will give way to the desire from which she so movingly attempted to shield herself in "Per pietà."

To some extent, this recognition scene, unlike any in Mozart's oeuvre with the exception of that in *Don Giovanni,* is divided against itself and points away from the reconciliation of the dénouement and *lieto fine* that it helps to make possible. Immediacy of feeling and moral constancy are here revealed to be incompatible goals, and the dilemma Fiordiligi finds herself in (to acknowledge her own desire would be to betray both her lover and herself) is one that would not be likely in life to find the easy solution that it does in this opera buffa. "Per pietà" attests not to the way in which events will unfold, but rather to the efficacy of feeling. Here, for the first time, and even though she does not capitulate to Ferrando at this point, she gains an understanding of fidelity—by experiencing her own betrayal of it—in emotional and personal rather than societal and conventional terms. That is, while in terms of public morality she remains faithful to Guglielmo, in the world of private sensibility she has already betrayed him. That she immediately denies the import of this recognition (made in the recitative) by making new pledges of constancy in the aria only makes her situation more sympathetic and compelling. Though she wants to believe in the ideal of the phoenix, the Fiordiligi of "Per pietà," unlike the Fiordiligi who sang "Come scoglio" in act 1, is troubled by a disturbing new understanding of affection. This recognition of her desire (despite her attempt to deny it) makes possible the later acknowledgment of her affection to Ferrando in their duet.

The Triumph of Feeling over Constancy

While the drama of Fiordiligi's *rondò* is one in which a heightened emotional awareness is masked by denial, her duet with Ferrando, "Fra gli amplessi," is the moment in which denial finally gives way to recognition. It is the necessary counterpart to "Per pietà," for it works out in terms of the plot what the earlier recognition scene had

48. Neville, "'Rondò' in Mozart's Late Operas," 155.

implied. Having admitted her love for Ferrando, her shame and embarrassment, and having declared her determination to maintain control over herself ("Io saprò vincermi") in the recitative preceding Dorabella's aria "È amore un ladroncello," she still seeks to be true to Guglielmo. Events have not yet carried her beyond her realization in "Per pietà" as, imagining she is alone on the stage, she begins "Fra gli amplessi" with what she thinks is another soliloquy, addressed to Guglielmo. Her text plays out the denial of "Per pietà" again, perhaps headed for the same contradictory conclusion. What pushes her past denial to capitulation—and transforms what she imagines as an aria into a love duet—is the fact that Ferrando interrupts her and makes a direct appeal to the very feelings she is trying to repress. Whatever power denial has to repress her emotions, it cannot sustain itself in the presence of the object of her affection, something the libretto had foreshadowed in the previous scene when Fiordiligi exclaimed, "agli occhi miei / Mai più non comparisca" (my eyes must not fall on him again). Now, face to face with Ferrando, she is overwhelmed by her feelings. Her attraction to a new suitor and romance overwhelms her sense of obligation to a principle, and she yields.

It is generally accepted that this duet represents the crux of the opera, the place where the development of amorous feeling is most fully realized. E. H. Gombrich, Roger Warren, Andrew Steptoe, and many others, though they may agree on little else, treat this moment as the opera's climax.[49] Kerman, who calls this moment the "expressive center of the opera," writes, "No theory of *Così fan tutte* will do that does not take full measure of this wonderful piece. Fiordiligi is closer to emotional truth here than anyone anywhere else in the play."[50] After over three hours of music, we long to hear a love duet that reinforces the affections the opera's plot has developed, and this number stands in the place where such a duet might be. What is more, knowing how the opera ends, and feeling the disturbing effect of its apparent rationality, we long for a sentimental happy ending: a pair of noble lovers who transcend the obstacles of the plot to fall in love—to really fall in love—with each other. (As Daniel Heartz has pointed out, "We arrive on musical grounds alone at the verdict that the new pairing is better than the old. Fiordiligi belongs with the tenor Ferrando because by all the laws of opera, if not of Heaven, high voices should be paired together."[51] Critics and audiences alike have long been persuaded by Ferrando's performance and by what Williams calls "the undeniable presence of passion in the seductions of the second act.")[52] Kerman writes, "If ever a lover was sincere, it is Ferrando in the duet with Fiordiligi."[53] But it is Ferrando's anger rather than his affec-

49. Gombrich, "*Così fan tutte* (Procris Included)," 373; Warren, "'Smiling at Grief,'" 83; and Steptoe, *Mozart–Da Ponte Operas,* 242.

50. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 96–97.

51. Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 250. See also Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 475.

52. Williams, "Passion and Cynicism," 361.

53. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 97. Others who assume that Ferrando is sincere include Warren, "'Smiling at Grief,'" 83; and Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Vienna,* 342.

tion that is engaged here. His motivation, we recall, is the fact that he has just learned that Dorabella has been unfaithful to him. Spurred by Guglielmo's taunts ("Ti pare che una sposa / Mancar possa a un Guglielmo?" [Do you think a woman could fail a Guglielmo?]), and Alfonso's determinism ("Abbiate pazienza: infin domani. . . . Venite; io spero / Mostrarvi ben che folle è quel cervello / Che sulla frasca ancor vende l'uccello" [Have patience: until tomorrow. . . . Come, I hope to show you what folly it is to count your chickens before they're hatched]), Ferrando's objectives have changed. No longer eager to win the bet, or even the half of it left to be won by proving Fiordiligi faithful to Guglielmo, he now makes a Herculean effort to prove Don Alfonso's point. In "Fra gli amplessi" he proves himself a very capable seducer, deploying his artillery of exaggerated affects and gestures, protesting that he will die if she will not yield one minute, only to adopt the strategy of an eloquent and beautiful serenade the next. That his manner and music should have convinced audiences and critics he is now really in love with Fiordiligi is perhaps the necessary by-product of his being convincing enough once and for all to win her. We would be sorry to see Fiordiligi succumb to a suitor who appeared less worthy.

It is not Fiordiligi's intention, however, to succumb. In the recitatives before "Fra gli amplessi," Fiordiligi initiates plans for the two sisters to avoid temptation by following their lovers to the front. She calls for Ferrando's and Guglielmo's uniforms to be brought, and sends Despina to fetch Dorabella. With characteristic irony, and with Don Alfonso, Guglielmo, and Ferrando watching from the sidelines, Da Ponte has her observe that it is Ferrando's uniform that fits her; Dorabella will have to take Guglielmo's ("L'abito di Ferrando / Sarà buono per me; può Dorabella / Prender quel di Guglielmo"). She imagines herself to be the heroine now of a rescue opera: "in questi arnesi / Raggiungerem gli sposi nostri, al loro / Fianco pugnar potremo, / E morir se fa d'uopo" (in these outfits we'll join our fiancés; we can fight beside them and die, if need be). Guglielmo rejoices in an aside, "Si può dar un amor simile a questo?" (Could there be a love like this?). But Fiordiligi's text betrays how strange her newfound resolution seems to her, for even as she takes off her headdress to put on Ferrando's helmet, she exclaims on looking in the mirror: "oh come / Ei mi trasforma le sembianze e il viso! / Come appena io medesma or mi ravviso!" (Oh how it transforms my whole appearance! I hardly recognize myself!). Her comment makes a curious but telling introduction to a recognition scene. She does not recognize herself in Ferrando's helmet in part because she is unused to appearing in uniform, but in part, and primarily, because she is trying once again to be what she is not.

That this duet must articulate a most unusual and strained dramatic situation is strongly suggested by its rather exceptional design, in which, as Rosen suggests, "Mozart abandons the immediately perceptible formal clarity that he commanded so readily."[54] Of course, the break with formal expectations is not at all haphazard or accidental. Mozart deliberately undermines specific formal suggestions or ges-

54. Rosen, *Classical Style,* 315.

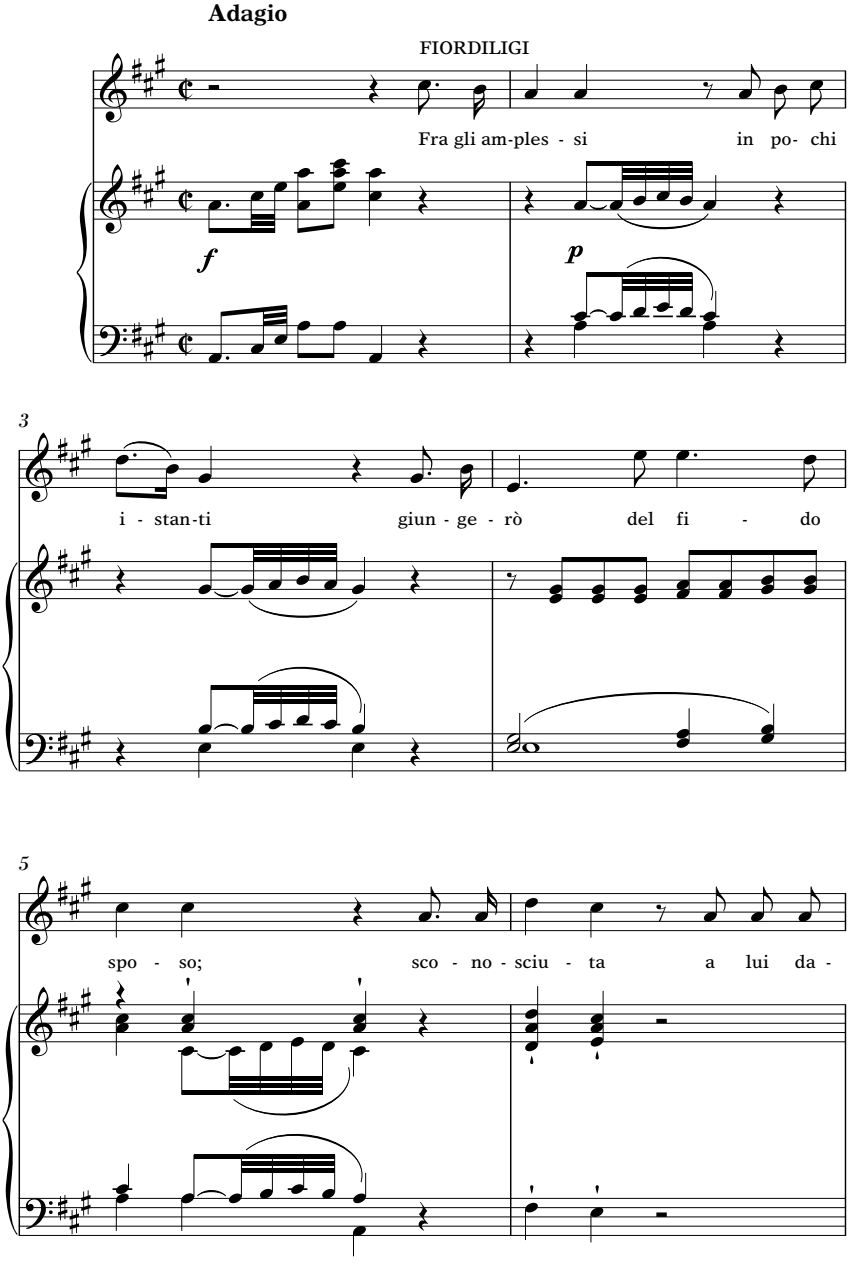
tures at different points as a way of articulating the conflict being worked out in the drama. For example, the number is billed as a duet but begins as an aria, it boasts a large C-major section that retains its A-major key signature, and it features a striking musical return—of Ferrando's "Una bella serenata" melody from the trio No. 3—the significance of which is still a matter of conjecture and dispute. The sections of this number—the opening aria, which is interrupted (mm. 1–23), the extended C-major section (mm. 24–75), and the seduction duet with its conventional two tempos, Larghetto (mm. 76–100) and Andante (mm. 101–42)—function with an internal logic almost akin to that of an act-ending ensemble or finale. Sudden shifts of key or meter appear to be motivated by the action, with emotional and psychological events in this case substituting for the usual plot surprises, entrances, and exits of characters, and so on. The break with formal predictability in the music suggests the struggle in which Fiordiligi engages to maintain her constancy and, perhaps, the break with conventional expectations to which she relents when she yields to Ferrando.

I begin with the opening, a private moment in which Fiordiligi, believing she is alone, musters her courage to journey to the front. The number is prepared as if it were an aria and, as Brown has pointed out, with an orchestral flourish similar to the one preceding Ferrando's act 1 "Un'aura amorosa" (No. 17).[55] In a stately Adagio, Fiordiligi attempts, once again, to represent herself as the sentimental heroine, willing to fight and even to die to preserve her constancy (see example 7.7). Once interrupted (when Ferrando steps forward at m. 16), her soliloquy is never completed, and appropriately so in dramatic terms since at its start Fiordiligi speaks of hopes that Ferrando's entrance causes her to abandon. The key of A major, with its amorous associations—it is the key of the famous seduction duet "Là ci darem la mano" (No. 7) in *Don Giovanni* and the more problematic "Crudel! perchè finora" (No. 17) in *Figaro* (which begins in A minor but concludes in A major), and also, perhaps more significantly, the key of Ferrando's "Un'aura amorosa"—is certainly important, though it functions as an ambiguous signifier. Whether it connotes genuine affection for Guglielmo, if taken as the key of the aria she initiates, or suggests the transformation into a seduction duet this number will shortly take (and in which she will succumb to her affection for Ferrando), is unclear. Perhaps it suggests both.

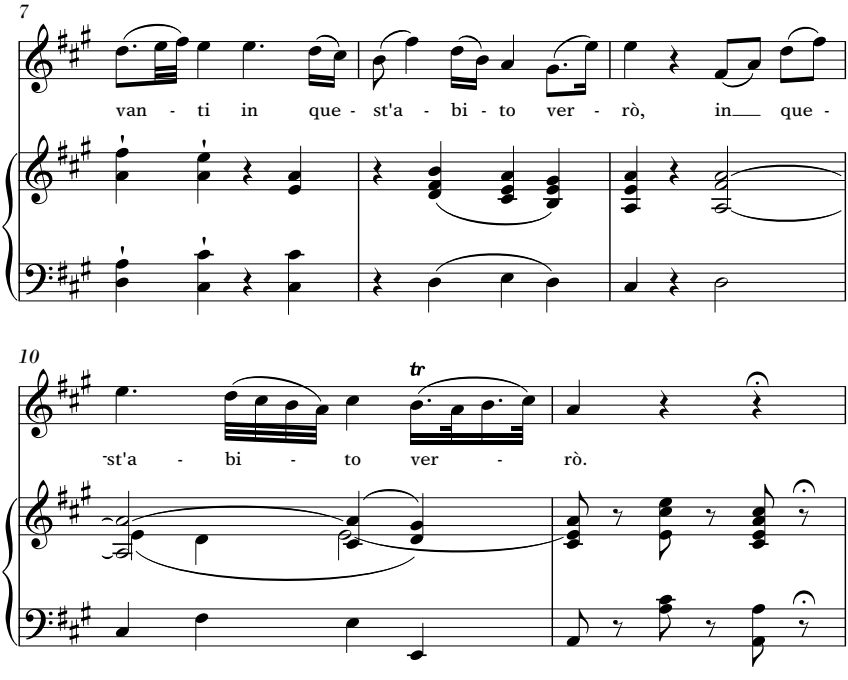
For the aria's second verse, she moves to the dominant (E major) and initiates a new melody in a quicker tempo (con più moto) and suggestive of the joy of which she sings: "Oh che gioia il suo bel core / Proverà nel ravvisarmi!" (Oh what joy it will bring to his heart when he recognizes me). But Ferrando interrupts her midverse, completing her rhyme scheme and taking the music to the dominant minor (E minor). He demonstrates with his words that he has been observing her and knows her plan, returning to the exaggeration that, as he learned in the act 1 finale, is so well calculated to affect her: "Ed intanto di dolore / Meschinello io mi morrò" (And in the mean-

55. B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 50.

Example 7.7. *Così,* "Fra gli amplessi in pochi istante" (No. 29), mm. 1–11.



Example 7.7. *Continued*



time, I, wretched as I am, shall die of grief). Rhyming "core" with "dolore," and "verrò" with "morrò," he attempts with his sudden shift to the parallel minor to make a sentimental appeal: the joy of a lovers' reunion is strongly contrasted to his dark rendition of the wretchedness of grief. Fiordiligi's reaction to Ferrando's entrance seems directly born of her earlier insistence that she will be lost if she sees him: "Cosa veggio!" Her distraction is suggested in the music by her move to C major (an unusual point of arrival for a piece in A major) and the shift to a new tempo, Allegro (m. 24). Thus her soliloquy ends in a duet. Her private moment of reflection, it turns out, was never private at all. She was being observed the whole time. And even after Ferrando presents himself, unbeknownst to her, Alfonso and Guglielmo are still watching. Voyeurism is central to the action, for the presence of the men creates a stage within the stage, removing Fiordiligi from the center of events and making her a pawn in a course of action of which she remains unaware. The scene is full of contradictions. Her soliloquy is not a soliloquy; observed and interrupted, she is not free to pursue her own moment of resolution. Ferrando's seduction is not a seduction; he is not prompted by amorous feeling (at least not for her), and her acquiescence is not won for the sake of his feelings, but rather for the sake of the wager, whose interests are represented by the two men watching from the other room.

The C-major section, beginning at measure 24, is based on the melody with which Ferrando began the trio "Una bella serenata," imagining the beautiful serenade he

would bring Dorabella once he had won the bet: "Una bella serenata / Far io voglio alla mia Dea." The musical return is complete and at pitch (the earlier number was in C major), something very rare in Mozart's operas unless the return occurs in quotation marks (as, for example, the returning melodies in the act 2 finale of this opera do).[56] But two further things about this musical return are peculiar: first, that Ferrando should use music that earlier expressed his affection for Dorabella to woo Fiordiligi (although perhaps it could be argued that this is what motivates him now); and second, that this return of his music should be so perfectly prepared for him by Fiordiligi, who first suggests the opening gesture of the melody to him in measure 25 and has by some extraordinary coincidence brought about the modulation (from E minor) to C major, the very key of his earlier melody in No. 3. (See examples 7.8a and 7.8b to compare the two passages.) Ferrando appears to take his cues from Fiordiligi here, though we know this key and melody were his first, much earlier in the drama. Taking up one of the soldiers' swords from the table, he now makes a showy demonstration of how she should pierce his heart with it, setting his eloquent appeal to the complete "Una bella serenata" melody. As he cadences on "Io la man ti reggerò" (I will guide your hand), Fiordiligi exclaims "Taci . . . ahimè!" (Be silent, alas!) and Mozart changes the key signature (finally) to C. That the key of C major has remained unconfirmed in the score up to this point is puzzling. Küster suggests it is "as if Fiordiligi might still have the strength to regain the opening key."[57] Of course, the delayed change of key signature cannot be heard, only seen. Without clearly articulating its role in the drama, the A-major key signature offers a kind of textual resistance to this passage in C.

The presence of Ferrando's "Una bella serenata" melody, though well known and often commented upon, resists interpretation. Kerman calls it "a mysterious echo."[58] Konrad Küster takes it as evidence of "Ferrando's complete disillusionment."[59] Heartz suggests that we are "meant to take the whole passage from the duet as a recall" and "to take delight in the irony whereby Ferrando's ardor for Dorabella has been redirected, even intensified, while he has been wooing Fiordiligi."[60] But since the melody is prepared and initiated not by Ferrando but by Fiordiligi, who is unaware of its significance, the agency of this musical return, which may or may not be a "recall," remains uncertain. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that the return is both complete and at pitch, and thus anything but coincidental. As far as I know, the only

56. For consideration of the musical quotations of the finale, especially the second one, Ferrando's nonquotation in D minor, see Tyson, *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores,* 177–221; Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 244–46; and Clark, "Recall and Reflexivity in *Così*," 339–54.

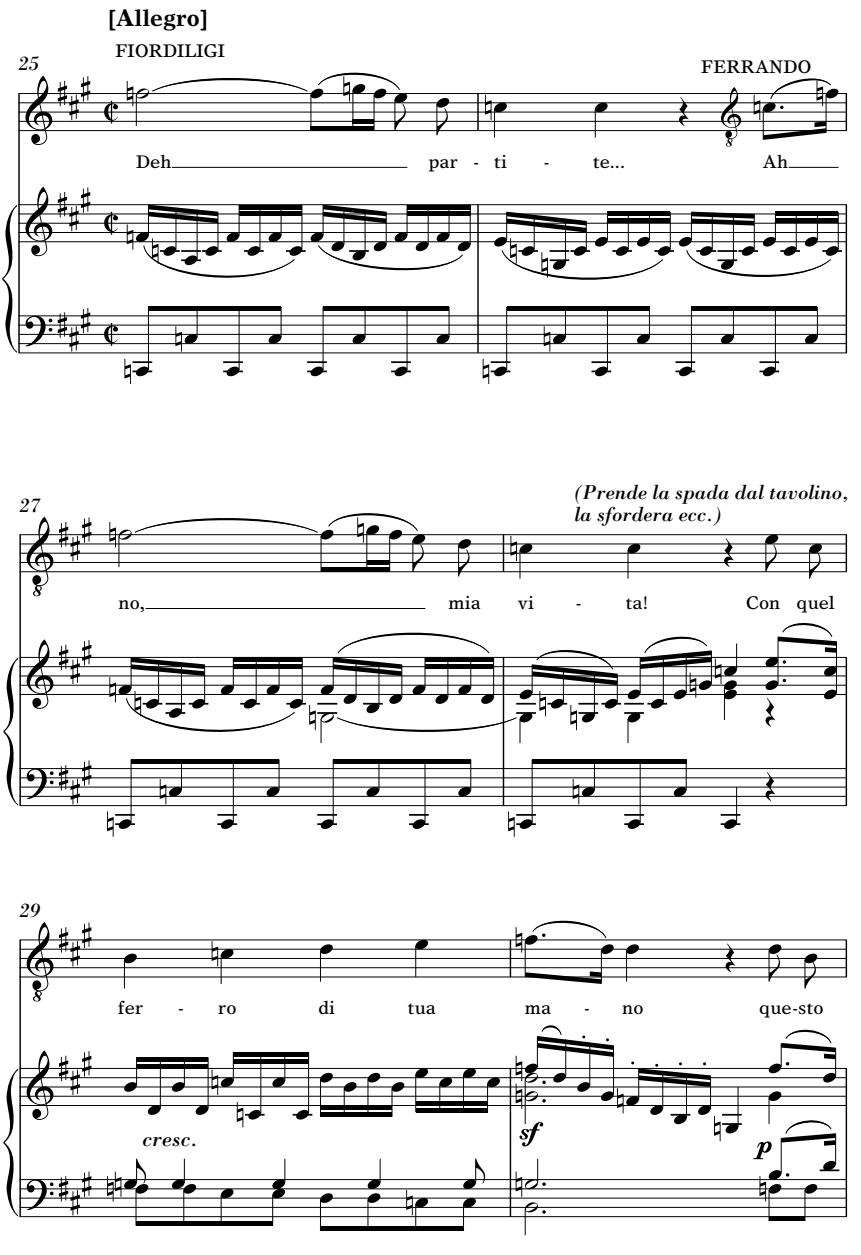
57. Küster, *Mozart,* 340. For a similar argument about a different passage, see Keller, "Mozart's Wrong Key Signature," 21–27.

58. Kerman, *Opera as Drama,* 97. This musical return has attracted commentary; see, among others, Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 237; Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 473; and B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart:* "*Così fan tutte,*" 123–34.

59. Küster, *Mozart,* 341.

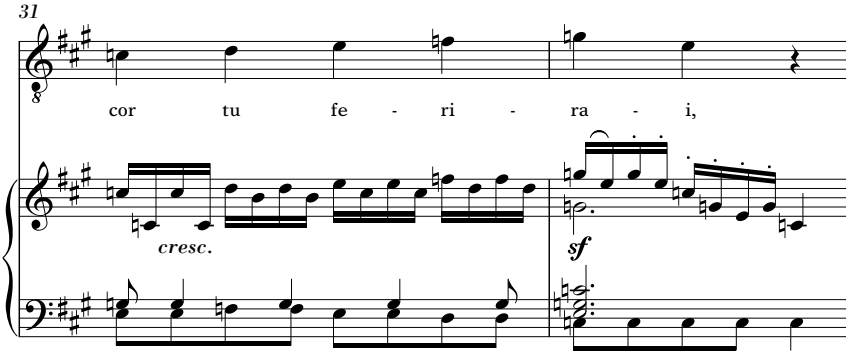
60. Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* 137.

Example 7.8a. *Così,* "Fra gli amplessi in pochi istante" (No. 29), mm. 25–32.



(*continued*)

Example 7.8a. *Continued*

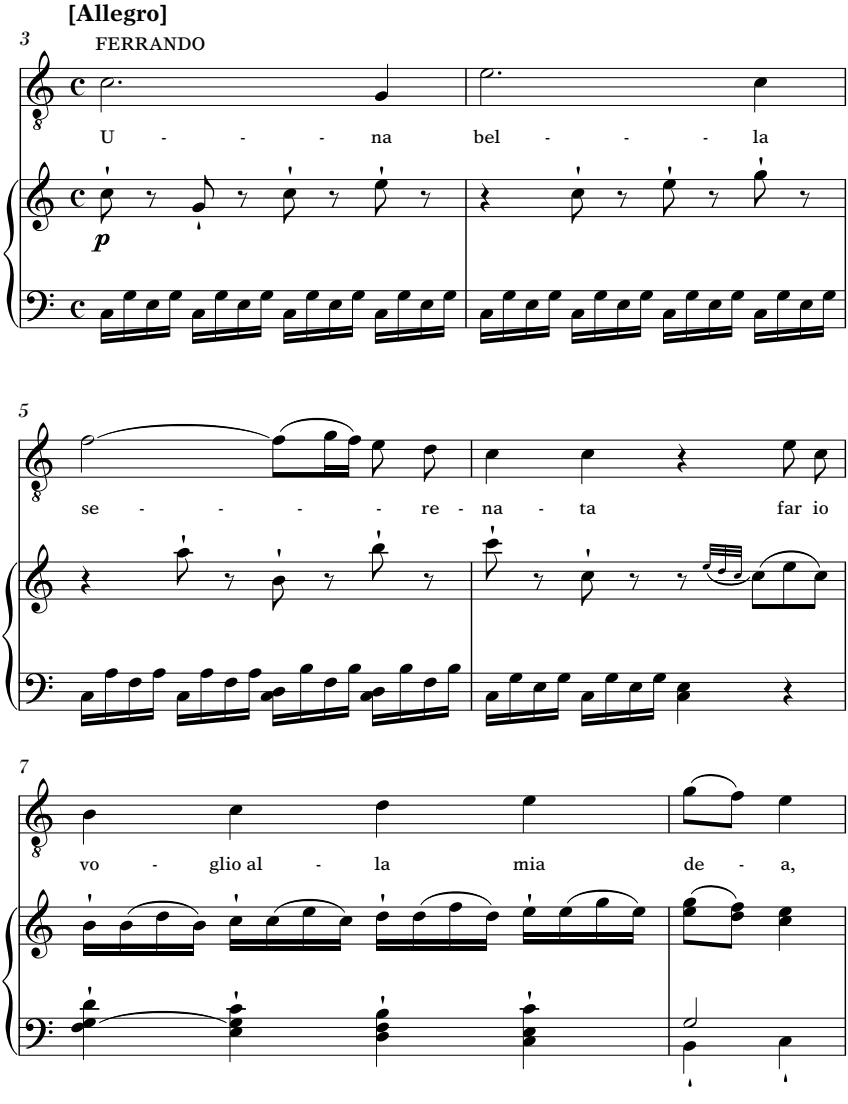


other instance in Mozart's oeuvre of an entire melody from elsewhere in the body of the opera (that is, internal to the acts as opposed to from the overture or a source outside the drama) recurring in a situation outside of quotation marks and where it would not necessarily have been recognized by the characters themselves is Don Giovanni's anticipation of the serenade melody he has prepared to sing to Elvira's maid, "Deh, vieni alla finestra" (No. 16), in the seduction ensemble immediately before, "Ah, taci, ingiusto core" (No. 15). (See examples 7.9a and 7.9b.) Interestingly enough, "Ah, taci, ingiusto core" and "Fra gli amplessi" have a great deal in common. Both are seduction ensembles in A major, both open as soliloquies for women who do not realize they are being observed (and are about to be interrupted), both center on the seducer's use of an imported melody for the purposes of persuasion, and both share the same tonal plan, moving from the tonic of A major to the dominant (E major) and then to the unexpected key of flat III (C major).[61] Significantly, C major, a distant key, is introduced in both cases as something of a surprise and in company with a new melody imported from elsewhere in the drama, a melody significantly associated with love, though not with love for the lady addressed in the seduction. Both ensembles dramatize a kind of false seduction scene in which the gentleman's feelings are not engaged, despite the fact that the appearance of sincerity is required to win the lady. It will be remembered that Don Giovanni attempts to seduce Elvira not to win her, but to lure her from her rooms so that he may gain access to her maid.

The similarities of dramatic and tonal strategy are remarkable. The effectiveness of C major and the imported melody in each case suggest something about how to read the other. Still, there are important differences. In "Ah, taci, ingiusto core," the imported melody appears as a musical anticipation—that is, one only realizes that Don Giovanni's serenade was destined for the maid in hindsight; the "return" occurs

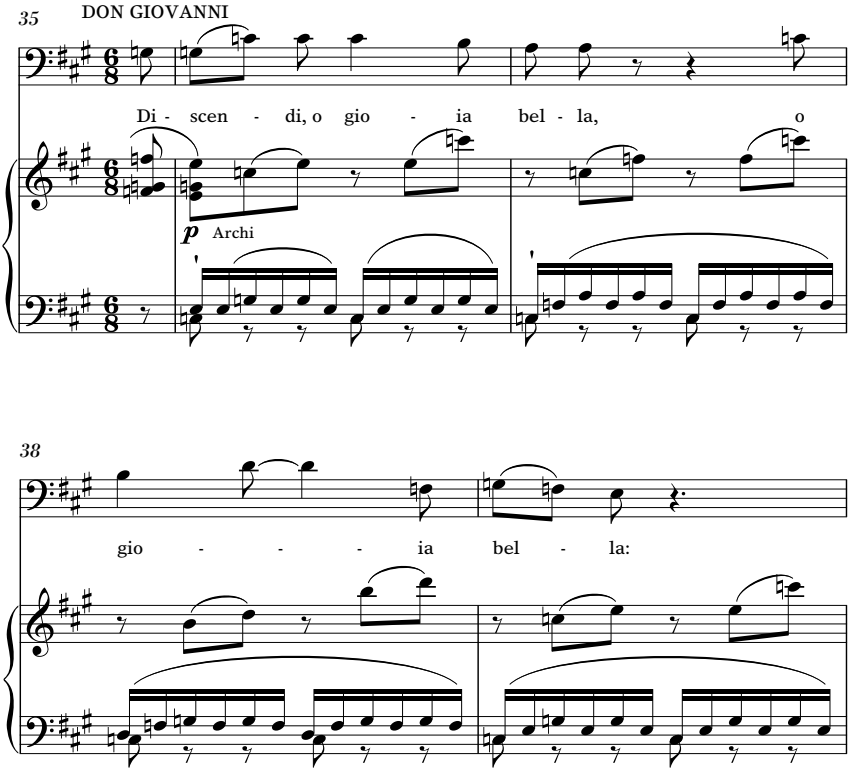
61. See B. A. Brown, *W. A. Mozart: "Così fan tutte,"* 101.

Example 7.8b. *Così,* "Una bella serenata" (No. 3), mm. 3–8.



before the primary exposition of the melody, which appears in the following number. In this case, the new key, C major, remains unconfirmed by the key signature throughout, perhaps suggesting Don Giovanni's intention to return to A (and Elvira's tune). (The C major section here is much shorter.) In addition, though it is perhaps of little consequence, the serenade tune appears in a different key, D major, in the real serenade, "Deh vieni alla finestra." Most important, here the key *and* the melody

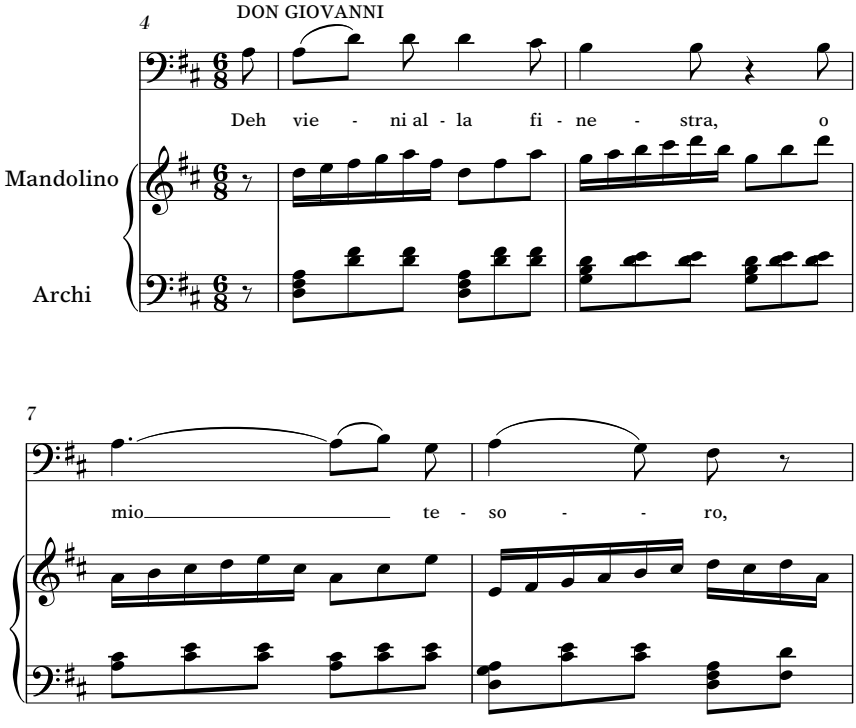
Example 7.9a. *Don Giovanni,* "Ah, taci, ingiusto core" (No. 15), mm. 35–39.



are initiated by the character in possession of the tune (and its significance). One might argue convincingly in Don Giovanni's case that he is the agent of the borrowing. The importation of the serenade melody in that case may be understood as part of the seducer's vocabulary. Don Giovanni has already tried singing Elvira's melody back to her without effect, and turns abruptly to the serenade melody and a new key area in the hope that with this tune he will have greater success. (For all we know, he has used it before.) It may be argued of course that we cannot know for certain the origin of this melody. It is possible that the "return" is the appearance of the tune in the serenade. But the implications are unchanged. The presence of this melody in two places, used for exactly the same purpose, tells us something about the character of the music and its role in the drama.

In "Fra gli amplessi," on the other hand, the question of agency seems infinitely more complicated. Here the musical return eludes every attempt to read it as an unambiguous signifier. It is Fiordiligi, not her seducer, who initiates both the shift to C major *and* the imported tune (her "Deh partite" [given in example 7.8a] is set to the

Example 7.9b. *Don Giovanni,* "Deh vieni alla finestra" (No. 16), mm. 4–8.



musical figure that had set the single word "serenata" in No. 3). But here C major is not confirmed by the key signature until the next section of the duet, and it remains unclear whether Ferrando, in taking Fiordiligi's melodic suggestion, "recalls" his earlier melody or not. To some degree Mozart distances the return from the characters by having it be Fiordiligi rather than Ferrando who makes the modulation to C and introduces the melodic fragment. Imagine how different the effect might be if, for example, Ferrando introduced both the modulation and the melody. It certainly does not have the effect of Don Giovanni's importation of a melody to which only he has access. The musical repetition of "Una bella serenata" is perhaps something beyond the characters' cognition, like the repetition of Basilio's phrase "Così fan tutte le belle" in the overture to the opera, something only the initiated in the audience would recognize and understand the significance of.[62] But it might be argued

62. The theme of the overture at measure 29 is taken from Basilio's setting of "Così fan tutte le belle" in the trio No. 7 of *Figaro* (compare m. 184 of the act 1 trio [No. 7] to m. 43 of the *Così* overture). The significance of this borrowing is magnified by Mozart and Da Ponte's choice to call the opera *Così fan tutte.*

that it has the effect of making Fiordiligi complicit in her own undoing. The suggestion of "serenata," which Ferrando's text frustrates with its talk of death, hovers over the music. Whether either Fiordiligi or Ferrando can really be considered the agent of the return remains an open question. Perhaps the return has greater significance if it is imagined that neither character is aware of what the return implies, for surely the greatest irony of this moment is that Ferrando here employs the serenade he had earlier conceived for Dorabella to woo Fiordiligi. What is more, he does so in order to lose the very bet that, when he sang "Una bella serenata," he had imagined he would win.

However difficult it may be to determine the dramatic significance of the imported melody, its effectiveness has never been in doubt. Both Ferrando and Fiordiligi attest to the success of Ferrando's little charade immediately after the confirmation of the key change in a pair of asides:

Ah che omai la mia/sua costanza	Ah, now my/her constancy
A quei sguardi, a quel che dice	before these looks and these words
Incomincia a vacillar.	begins to falter.

Ferrando introduces a new melody at measure 43, and Fiordiligi takes her cue from him exactly, until they approach the cadence at measure 57 *a due.* Ferrando is evidently still kneeling with sword in hand, observing his effect upon her ("Ah che omai la sua costanza"), for she asks him to get up in measure 57: "Sorgi, sorgi." His insistent plea, "Il tuo cor, o la mia morte" (your heart or my death) works even better here than it did in the act 1 finale, for Fiordiligi weakens in response: "Ah non son, non son più forte!" (Ah, I am no longer strong!). Realizing that she is lost, Fiordiligi prepares the dominant of A minor in measures 74–75. Knowing that he has won, Ferrando now begins the first tempo of the seduction duet proper in A major with the Larghetto at measure 76. The two-tempo seduction duet,[63] beginning at the Larghetto (m. 76), is perhaps more abbreviated, especially in its first tempo, than would be possible if it were not preceded by seventy-five measures of continuous ensemble preparing Fiordiligi's capitulation. But even so, the final moment of capitulation, the climax of the Mozartian seduction duet at which seducer and seducee sing *a due,* is delayed to the expected place—the arrival of the second tempo—and preceded by a fermata. In the Andante finale of this duet there are no real surprises, save how beautifully Ferrando and Fiordiligi sing together, something that has seemed to so many to belie the situation of the drama in which only Fiordiligi's heart is truly engaged.

63. "Là ci darem la mano" might be thought a model seduction duet with its two-tempo structure, climaxing in the moment when, at the start of the second, faster tempo, the "lovers" sing the same text and melody *a due.* See Stiefel, "Mozart's Seductions"; and Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 469.

It is one of the opera's many paradoxes that this recognition scene, in which Fiordiligi capitulates to her new love, something so long awaited and so much required by the plot, should, in its turn, bring about such a painful recognition for the audience. For the duping of Fiordiligi seems far more cruel than the duping of Dorabella, whose seduction by Guglielmo appears to have transformed her into a soubrette who not only sings "È amore un ladroncello" in a song style that is the very antipathy of her earlier seria-like "Smanie implacabili," but appears to have adopted Despina's outlook on life. We recall that when Fiordiligi remarks, "Ma non so come mai / Si può cangiar in un sol giorno un core" (But I don't know how one can change one's affections in a single day), Dorabella responds, "Che domanda ridicola! Siam donne!" (What a silly question! We're women!). Fiordiligi's affection, on the other hand, was hard won, has caused her great pain, and has been kept secret out of a sense of fidelity to Guglielmo for a long time. When she finally betrays her constancy to submit to Ferrando's protestations, it suddenly seems terribly sad that he does not really love her and that all of this was done to prove a point. And thus the most profound moment of recognition for her, the moment at which she chooses the immediacy of feeling over virtue and constancy, proves to be an emotionally motivated mistake, one that is not rewarded by the plot. Despite testimonials to the contrary in various commentaries, Fiordiligi and Ferrando do not share a mutual affection, a disturbing fact that both Fiordiligi and we bring to bear on the ending. It is no wonder that the opera's *lieto fine,* which is based on the denial of feelings whose development was the goal of so much of the plot, resounds for many with a hollow ring.

At the end of the opera, as Fiordiligi is restored to Guglielmo and renews her vows of constancy to him, it might be argued that she compromises her status as the opera's sentimental heroine. She has proven unable to withstand the plot's various assaults on her constancy. She has succumbed to the immediacy of passionate feeling but has found neither the happy nor the tragic ending that usually confirms the status of the sentimental heroine. On discovering that the object of her affection was only attempting to compromise her fidelity to another, she returns her affections to her first love without the appearance of emotional struggle. Her story has a very unsentimental, unsettling ending. Yet as Don Alfonso's rational principles are confirmed by the re-pairing and rejoicing of the couples at the end, the question I raised at the beginning of the chapter of whether feeling makes its own virtue remains unresolved. The widely held belief that the ending of this opera is conflicted is based on the idea—on our very desire to believe—that feeling does indeed make its own virtue, and, consequently, that Fiordiligi would be happier with Ferrando. But this was not the point of Don Alfonso's demonstration of the perils of the sentimental fallacy. His rational, conventional view is certainly not a romantic one, but neither, it must be said, is it one entirely devoid of sentimental understanding. Thus in the very speech, the Andante (No. 30), in which he asks his two "pupils" to repeat after

him, "Così fan tutte," Don Alfonso reveals his own indoctrination into the culture of sensibility by offering a moving testimonial to the woman of feeling:

Tutti accusan le donne, ed io le scuso	Everyone blames women, but I forgive them
Se mille volte al dì cangiano amore;	if they change their affections a thousand times a day;
Altri un vizio lo chiama, ed altri un uso,	some call it a sin, others a habit,
Ed a me par necessità del core.	but to me it is a necessity of the heart.

8

The Sense of the Ending in *La clemenza di Tito*

La clemenza di Tito, based on Metastasio's libretto of 1734, was commissioned of Caterino Mazzolà and Mozart in 1789 for the Prague coronation of Leopold II as King of Bohemia in September 1791.[1] The selection of this subject for the coronation of a monarch already celebrated as a "modern-day Titus," and soon to be crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire at his first coronation in Frankfurt (in October 1790), could hardly have been more propitious, whether or not it was the Bohemian Estates' first choice, and whether or not the impresario Domenico Guardasoni made any effort to commission a new libretto on either of the two subjects given him by Governor Rottenhan (questions no one has yet been able to answer definitively).[2] Metastasio's libretto had been conceived in the first instance to pay homage to the clemency of a Hapsburg monarch and had premiered in a setting by Antonio Caldara composed for the name-day celebrations of Charles VI (Leopold's grandfather) in 1734. The opera's political allegory had been explicit from the first. As Metastasio declared, addressing Charles VI in the epilogue to the first edition, "I see well that everyone recognizes you in him."[3] That this association of Hapsburg rulers with the Roman Titus maintained its value as political propaganda over the course of the century is suggested by the following inscription, which the Elector of Bohemia at

1. Mozart described the adaptation of this libretto with the singular phrase "ridotta á vera opera dal Sig^{re}:Mazzolá" (*Mozart's Thematic Catalogue,* folio 28v and p. 57), often rendered as "reduced to a true opera," and sometimes interpreted as an indication of Mozart's dissatisfaction with either the seria enterprise or the source libretto, or both. More likely, however, the phrase reflects the adaptation that was necessary to reconfigure a Metastasian libretto to suit the custom of the day, "ridotta á" meaning "adapted as" or "transformed into." See, among others, Durante, "Mozart and the Idea of 'Vera Opera,'" 21; Rice, *W. A. Mozart: "La clemenza di Tito,"* 40; Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Vienna,* 391; and Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 526–27 and 553.

2. For the details of Guardasoni's contract and an account of Leopold's association with Titus, see Rice, *W. A. Mozart: "La clemenza di Tito,"* 5–6 and 10–15, respectively. See also Rice, "Political Theater in the Age of Revolution," 147–48.

3. Rice, *W. A. Mozart: "La clemenza di Tito,"* 12.

Frankfurt put up for Leopold's 1790 coronation: "You [Germany] have an emperor who is a Trajan in goodness, a Titus in clemency, and an Aurelius in wisdom."[4]

How greatly altered by the current political climate must the implications of this association have appeared to audiences by September 1791. In a world shaken by the French Revolution and its aftermath, the story of a wise and benevolent ruler who overcomes a potentially devastating rebellion that includes an attempt on his life and who responds to betrayal and treason with clemency would have resonated with a significance and force unimaginable during the reign of Charles VI. Various scenes in the opera demonstrate the value of clemency as a central tenet of enlightened governance; the events of the plot, when taken together, also suggest the futility of revolution. The timeliness of the opera's subject matter must also have contributed to the success this work enjoyed in the years following its premiere, when it received more performances in Germany, Austria, and elsewhere in Europe than any of Mozart's other operas (a fact that the opera's problematic reception history for most of the past two centuries has tended to obscure).[5] Gaining popularity from the end of the eighteenth century through the first three decades of the nineteenth, *Tito* was performed in Vienna, Prague, Berlin, Dresden, Frankfurt, Paris, Naples, Milan, St. Petersburg, and London (where, when it premiered in 1806, it became the first of Mozart's operas to be performed there).[6]

Given the awareness of recent events (not to mention the fear of future revolutionary upheaval) that contemporaneous audiences would have brought to the theater, it is interesting to observe how the libretto's *argomento* emphasizes the drama of character to the virtual exclusion of the revolutionary aspects of the story:

> Non à conosciuto l'antichità nè migliore, nè più amato Principe di Tito Vespasiano. Le sue virtù lo resero a tutti si caro, che fu chiamato la delizia del genere umano. E pure due giovani Patrizi, uno dé quali era suo Favorito, cospirarono contro di lui. Scoperta però la congiura furono dal Senato condannati a morire. Ma il clementissimo Cesare, contento di averli paternamente ammoniti, concesse loro, ed' à loro complici un generoso perdono.
>
> Antiquity knew no prince who was better or more beloved than Tito Vespasiano. His virtue endeared him to all, and he was called the delight of hu-

4. Rice, *W. A. Mozart: "La clemenza di Tito,"* 13.

5. Disparaging of the source libretto and ill-disposed toward opera seria in general, many biographers and critics have assumed that the very existence of this work so late in Mozart's oeuvre requires an explanation. See, among others, Oulibicheff, *Nouvelle biographie de Mozart,* 3:375–99; Abert, *W. A. Mozart,* 2:602–18; Dent, *Mozart's Operas,* 211–15; Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Vienna,* 389–93; and Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 525. Three dissertations played a crucial role in the rehabilitation of this work: Parakilas, "Mozart's *Tito* and the Music of Rhetorical Strategy"; Neville, "Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* and the Metastasian *Opera Seria*"; and Durante, "Mozart and the Idea of 'Vera Opera.'" See also Heartz, *Mozart's Operas,* chaps. 17 and 18.

6. Rice, *W. A. Mozart: "La clemenza di Tito,"* 106–17. See also Loewenberg, *Annals of Opera,* cols. 491–93; and Senici, *La clemenza di Tito di Mozart.*

> manity. But two young patricians, one of whom was his favorite, conspired against him. Once the plot was discovered, they were condemned to death by the Senate. But the most merciful Caesar, content to give them a paternal warning, granted them and their accomplices a generous pardon.

The rebellion that reaches a point of crisis with the burning of Rome and culminates in the quintet with chorus at the end of act 1 is not even mentioned here. The drama is centered not on the actions of the conspirators, Sesto and Vitellia and their followers, but rather on Tito's virtue and forgiveness. Clemency is represented not merely as the chief attribute of the title character, but as the main subject of the drama and the goal of its plot. The opera dramatizes a trial of Tito's clemency at the levels of both personal conviction and public policy.

The events of the opera emphasize the way clemency and the Enlightenment values it represents are threatened by dark tendencies in human nature: Vitellia's jealousy and ambition, Sesto's abandonment of reason for passion (which leads him to betray honor, friendship, and country), and, most significantly, Tito's short-lived renunciation of the merciful policies for which he is known. Like the Queen of the Night and the attack she mounts on Sarastro's realm, Vitellia and the rebellion she incites are fundamentally opposed to enlightened order. But the solution in the Italian opera is not the vanquishing of the powers of darkness; it is rather the unconditional pardon of Vitellia, Sesto, Lentulo, and the other conspirators. For while in the German opera darkness is championed by a virtual caricature, the wicked Queen of a fairy tale, in the Italian opera Vitellia and Sesto are characters who, though fictionalized, are imagined in a historical setting as participants in a conspiracy against the empire that Suetonius chronicles in his *Twelve Caesars.*[7] They are therefore drawn to a more human scale, and their behavior proves to be motivated by an excess of feeling unrestrained by reason. The Queen either will not or cannot recognize the values of Sarastro's enlightened realm; she is irrevocably opposed to his governance. Vitellia and Sesto, however, prove themselves deserving of the pardon Tito grants them; they are, in the end, fully reconciled with the world they had wronged. The crux of the plot here is the emperor's experience of and response to betrayal; the definitive recognition is the moment at which he reclaims his policy of clemency and recovers his identity as an enlightened ruler.

To all outward appearances, Mozart's last two operas, *Die Zauberflöte* and *Tito,* could hardly be more dissimilar. One is a German opera, the other an Italian opera seria; one features the singers of Schikaneder's suburban theater, the other a *musico,* or male soprano, and an Italian *prima donna;* one features much spoken dialogue and low comedy, the other high style and seria situations throughout; one is a fantastic tale of magic talismans and supernatural happenings, the other a historical drama of betrayal and forgiveness. Despite these apparent differences, however, the

7. Rice, *W. A. Mozart: "La clemenza di Tito,"* 20.

two operas draw upon similar strategies of musical language, music and text relations, and interdependence of plot and theme. In each, the German and the Italian, the threat to the existing social order takes the form of enmity, secrecy, and treachery in thought and action, and in each the unfolding of events dramatizes the futility of rebellion against a virtuous and benevolent ruler.[8] What is more, both operas center on the discovery (or recovery) of Enlightenment values and foreground the recognition process in ways that invite comparison. Scenes of self-discovery in both become the dramatic focus for themes of clemency and enlightened rule, especially at the ends of the operas, in which public scenes dramatize the experience of knowledge—and its value—for the imagined society represented on the stage and the wider culture it reflects.

To the extent that these points of similarity may be associated with contemporaneous thought about political and philosophical questions, it is important to remember that the two operas came into being at virtually the same historical moment: *Tito* was composed in approximately eight weeks (not the oft-cited eighteen days) before its premiere, a period during which Mozart was still occupied with *Zauberflöte* (though that opera was nearly complete) and the *Requiem.* The Italian opera premiered first, on the day of the coronation, 6 September, the German opera on the 30th of the same month. In a letter of 7–8 October 1791, Mozart himself reports the success of both operas to Constanze in some detail, drawing attention to the close proximity of the two runs: "And the strangest thing of all is that on the very evening when my new opera [*Zauberflöte*] was performed for the first time with such success, 'Tito' was given in Prague for the last time with tremendous applause."[9]

The Language of *Clemenza* and *Pietà*

In the final scene of act 2, Tito reconstructs the events of the day as a test of his renowned clemency:

Ma che giorno è mai questo? Al punto stesso,	But what a day is this! No sooner
Che assolvo un reo, ne scopro un altro? e quando	do I absolve one offender, than I discover another! When
Troverò, giusti Numi,	will I find, just Gods,
Un'anima fedel? Congiuran gli astri,	a loyal soul? The stars conspire,
Cred'io, per obligarmi a mio dispetto	I believe, to compel me against my will
A diventar crudel. No: non avranno	to turn cruel. No: they will not have
Questo trionfo. A sostener la gara	this victory. My strength is already sworn

8. Heartz made this point with the title of his 1983 essay, "La Clemenza di Sarastro," which is reprinted in his *Mozart's Operas.*

9. W. A. Mozart, letter of 7–8 October 1791, *Letters,* 967.

Già m'impegnò la mia virtù. Vediamo,	to sustain the battle. Let us see
Se più costante sia	which will prove more constant,
L'altrui perfidia, o la clemenza mia:	the perfidy of others, or my clemency:
Olà: Sesto si sciolga: abbian di nuovo	ho there: release Sesto: Lentulo and his
Lentulo, e i suoi seguaci	followers shall again enjoy
E vita, e libertà: sia noto a Roma,	life and liberty: let it be known in Rome,
Ch'io son lo stesso, e ch'io	that I am myself, and that I
Tutto sò, tutti assolvo, e tutto oblio.	know all, forgive everyone, and forget everything.

Tito's clemency at the beginning of the opera is the enlightened policy of a virtuous ruler, but it is also presented as a kind of inherited wisdom, a principled faith (but, at times, also a blind one) in the goodness of others. When this faith is challenged, Tito is thrown into a crisis of doubt. The betrayal by a friend, the rebellion and threat of revolution it represents, and later the discovery that Vitellia, whom he had resolved to marry, was involved in the conspiracy against him, offer such strong temptations to set clemency aside that Tito imagines he is being challenged by the heavens: "Congiuran gli astri, / Cred'io, per obligarmi a mio dispetto / A diventar crudel." But he recognizes that to turn cruel would be to go against his will ("a mio dispetto"), which is to say against his reason, against his very nature. The choice he makes, to forgive Sesto and stand firmly by his policy of clemency—despite the Senate's resolution to sentence the traitors to death—is the victory ("trionfo") of which he speaks. His language emphasizes his resolve in the face of conflict: the battle ("la gara") is one of wills, and the victor already implicit in the formulation of his rhetorical question, "Vediamo, / Se più costante sia / L'altrui perfidia, o la clemenza mia." Since clemency is a matter of both principle and faith, and thus necessarily implies constancy, and since perfidy, or treachery, by definition requires a breach of faith and thus cannot be reconciled with any notion of constancy, the victor here can only be clemency. The knowledge Tito gains through this process recalls Kant's idea of knowledge. When Tito uses the first person at the end of his speech, we recognize in his words the triumph of an enlightenment that is won (like Tamino's), as Kant advocates, through self-discovery. The key to the speech—and the opera's recognition drama—lies in its final thought: "sia noto a Roma, / *Ch'io son lo stesso*" (Let it be known in Rome *that I am myself* [emphasis mine]).[10]

10. The authorship of the simple recitatives (of which this speech is one) has long been considered problematic. They do not appear in Mozart's autograph. On the question of whether Süssmayr wrote the recitatives, see Durante, "Mozart and the Idea of 'Vera Opera,'" 115–47. Whether or not this issue is ever resolved conclusively, it is hardly a pressing one in a critical climate in which operas are understood to be collaborative.

The clemency Tito shows in this final scene is prefigured and shaped by the language of the libretto. Recognition of his "clemenza" is the end toward which many individual speeches, arias, and ensembles are plotted. Having been described in the *argomento* as "il clementissimo Cesare," Tito is repeatedly addressed with the word "clemenza": in his soliloquy near the end of act 1, Sesto describes his Prince as "Il più grande, il più giusto, il più clemente / Principe della terra" (the most grand, most just, most merciful prince on earth); in the long dialogue between Tito and Sesto in act 2, Sesto, now in disgrace, calls to his sovereign, "Ah Tito, ah mio Clementissimo Prence." Even Vitellia acknowledges his disposition toward mercy as his greatest strength when she admits in the recitative before the act 2 trio (No. 14), "Il suo rigore / Non temo già, la sua clemenza io temo" (His severity I do not fear; his clemency frightens me).

Just as the idea of "clemenza" is set forth in the language of the libretto and the action of the plot, so the idea of "pietà" is developed in the text as a concept of mercy, understanding, and forgiveness. It is "pietà" that Tito feels after his confrontation with Sesto in act 2. Later in the same scene, he remarks that it is not only his friendship but also his "pietà" that Sesto has abused: "Ah giacchè puoi / Tanto abusar di mia pietà" (As you can so abuse my compassion). In the following scene, when Tito is alone, he reconsiders the value of "pietà" in deciding whether to condemn or pardon Sesto. He wonders whether he will be remembered for his "clemenza," as was Silla, or for "crudeltà," as was Augusto. Near the end of this soliloquy, Tito formulates his choice as follows:

E se accusarmi il mondo
Vuol pur di qualche errore,
M'accusi di pietà non di rigore.

And if the world wishes
to accuse me of some fault,
let it accuse me of mercy, not
of severity.

"Pietà," developed here as an enlightened conviction that embodies Christian teachings, is one response to betrayal; "rigore," represented as the barbarism of throwing live men and women to wild beasts in the Roman amphitheater, is the other. (When Publio comes to get Tito for the last time, it is to tell him that the people are awaiting him in the arena [act 2, scene 11].) In an age in which many leading writers and thinkers led the fight against penal torture and in which clemency was widely espoused in philosophical writings, in public theater, and in the reign of a ruler such as Leopold II, "pietà" and the clemency it makes possible are the only choices for an enlightened emperor such as Tito.

Because of the connection between "pietà" and "clemenza," as it is developed in the language of the libretto, the opera's conception of enlightened rule includes the notion that ordinary compassion should inform human actions, including decisions of state. The compassion Tito feels for Sesto is empowering, and the clemency he shows as a result is crucial to the opera's dénouement. Compassion one feels but lacks

the conviction to act upon—Vitellia's compassion for Sesto in act 2, for example—stands in stark contrast to Tito's "pietà," as Servilia suggests in her short aria, "S'altro che lacrime." Servilia cannot understand why Vitellia, who is obviously moved by Sesto's predicament, will not go to the Emperor immediately to plead on his behalf. With the succinctness characteristic of Metastasian verse, Servilia suggests the futility of Vitellia's "pietà" in a single quatrain of *quinari:*

A quest'inutile	This useless pity
Pietà che senti,	that you feel,
Oh quanto è simile	Oh how like it is
La crudeltà.	to cruelty.

With this simile, Servilia transforms "pietà" into its opposite, "crudeltà." Her point is clear: "pietà" is not true mercy if it is not acted upon. Vitellia, of course, is prevented from acting on her compassionate impulse by self-interest. In order to help Sesto, she would first have to reveal her role in the conspiracy. In this way, the opera suggests that compassion is only truly "pietà" when it is purposeful and selfless, as is Tito's clemency. Publio makes a similar statement about the pity Sesto begs of Vitellia in the trio No. 14. Sesto pleads for "pietà" as the reward of suffering, but Publio seems to recognize the "uselessness" of Vitellia's "pietà," for he makes the following remark about Vitellia's tears:

(L'acerbo amaro pianto,	(The stinging, bitter tears
Che da' suoi lumi piove,	that flow from her eyes,
L'anima mi commuove,	move my soul,
Ma vana è la pietà.)	but pity is useless.)

"Pietà" also figures prominently in the two great arias in *rondò* form in act 2. Here are the relevant quatrains from Sesto's "Deh per questo istante solo" (No. 19) and Vitellia's "Non più di fiori vaghe catene" (No. 23), respectively:

Sesto (No. 19)	
Di pietade indegno è vero,	Unworthy of pity it is true,
Sol spirar io deggio orror.	I should inspire only horror.
Pur saresti men severo,	But you would be less severe,
Se vedessi questo cor.	if you could see into my heart.
Vitellia (No. 23)	
Infelice! qual orrore!	Wretched me! How horrible!
Ah di me che si dirà.	Ah, what will they say of me.
Chi vedesse il mio dolore,	But he who could see my sorrow
Pur avria di me pietà.	would have pity for me.

The two verses are similar in several ways: both juxtapose the horror ("orror" / "orrore") of what one has done with the sympathy one might inspire in others; both passages mark the turning point with the same word, "pur"; both employ the verb "vedere" in the conditional to express the same thought ("if you could see into my heart"). In addition, Vitellia's lines seem to recall an earlier plea of Sesto's in both sentiment and sound. Compare Sesto's plea to her in the earlier trio with Vitellia's final couplet:

Sesto (No. 14)	
Mercede al mio dolore	Let your pity at least
Sia almen la tua pietà.	be a reward for my sorrow.
Vitellia (No. 23)	
Chi vedesse il mio dolore,	But he who could see my sorrow
Pur avria di me pietà.	would have pity for me.

The repetition here is instructive. Vitellia did not give Sesto the "pietà" for which he asked in the earlier trio because she could not—she had not yet discovered the sorrow of which he spoke, nor experienced the deep remorse that caused it. In making her own plea in her aria, she repeats his words and perhaps in some way reflects on his sorrow, now able to understand his experience by recognizing it as her own. In her contrition, Vitellia shows and herself experiences the true repentance ("il vero pentimento") Tito speaks of in the opera's final sextet with chorus, without which clemency would be meaningless:

Il vero pentimento,	The true repentance
Di cui tu sei capace,	of which you are capable,
Val più d'una verace	is worth more than a truly
Costante fedeltà.	constant faithfulness.

The exploration of compassion and clemency in the opera takes many forms, from Sesto's pleading with Vitellia in the opera's first number to Tito's demonstration of understanding and forgiveness at the very end. In the private sphere, mercy and forgiveness are shown to be essential aspects of human understanding. In the political sphere, they are shown to be essential to benevolent rule. The plot requires a dramatization of the higher truth toward which the opera's events and scenes of new awareness have been pointing. In a novel or a poem, the truth toward which the work is pointing may well be represented exclusively in terms of individual and private moments, but in operatic theater of this period such moments tend to find fulfillment in public scenes that dramatize the significance of recognition for all. The opera's scenes of private recognition, self-discovery, and reconciliation for Sesto, Vitellia, and Tito are essential to the public celebration of clemency with which the opera concludes.

The Politics of Tyranny

Vitellia is the one character in this opera who does not revere Rome's benevolent Emperor—perhaps because Tito's father had taken the throne from her father (the Emperor Vitellius), or because in pursuing Berenice Tito thwarts her ambitions to become empress, or because she has feelings for Tito and is enraged by his apparent indifference. Whatever her motives, themes of political rebellion are prominent in her speeches. When Sesto describes Tito as a most generous, most merciful hero ("Eroe più generoso, e più clemente"), for example, she replies (emphasis mine):

Dunque a vantarmi in faccia	Have you then come to praise my enemy
Venisti il mio nemico? e più non pensi	to my face? And do you not think
Che questo *Eroe clemente* un soglio usurpa	that this *merciful hero* occupies a usurped throne
Dal suo tolto al mio padre?	taken from my father by his father?

Although Tito is distanced from this question to some extent by the fact that the usurper was his father rather than himself, Vitellia does raise a real question about whether he has a right to occupy a usurped throne. If the legitimacy of his reign is based on birthright, then Vitellia, too, has some claim to the throne. Since the line of inheritance is complicated in this way, it allows for the possibility that both Tito and Vitellia have some—though perhaps not equal—right to the empire. Moreover, it invites us to bring standards other than—or at least in addition to—lineage to bear on the status of birthright as the cornerstone of monarchy. This is a question that would have had considerably more political currency in 1791 than in 1734, or in any of the intervening years when approximately forty settings of Metastasio's libretto were brought to the stage.[11] In the two years since the outbreak of the French Revolution, the notion that a throne could be secured by birthright alone had already proven vulnerable, and the threat to existing monarchies must have seemed very real indeed. Even though the opera never allows Vitellia's question to be developed in a serious way, in its obfuscation of the issues it reflects a contemporaneous and somewhat conflicted view of monarchy in which, although it depends by definition on birthright, a monarch must also demonstrate that he deserves to rule in other ways. In keeping with the Enlightenment view that a man, even a monarch, should be measured by his actions, Tito is shown to be a deserving ruler on the basis of his humane and generous policies. To the extent that his right to the throne is complicated by the circumstances of his ascension, the opera's complex view of birthright

11. These include settings by Hasse (1735), Wagenseil (1746), Gluck (1752), Anfossi (1769), and Sarti (1771).

adapts the idea of monarchy for an enlightened age. The characterization of Vitellia, the one who raises the issue of birthright, seems designed to discredit the rebellion she inspires. The fact that she is driven not by a sense of what is right but by jealousy and resentment undermines any moral claim to the throne she might have. The message delivered on the day of Leopold's coronation could hardly have been more clear, or seemed more appropriate. The opera indirectly assured his subjects that he did not assume the role of emperor on the basis of birthright alone, and suggested that he, like the emperor on the stage, could be judged by his actions and policies.

In mocking Tito's clemency with her question—how can a "merciful hero" occupy a usurped throne?—Vitellia shows how little she understands the complexity of the issue she raises. Her claim to the throne is not superior, though her father was emperor first, and Tito is not to be judged by his father's actions, but by his own. In the very next scene it becomes clear that her purported political outrage is in part jealousy, for when she learns from Annio that Tito has sent Berenice away, she betrays her real desire with the words "Oh speranze!" She would much prefer marriage to revolt, and now defers her orders to Sesto to take her revenge. Later in the first act, Vitellia, on discovering that Tito has asked Servilia to be his bride, refers to him as "barbaro Tito." Enraged, she chastises Sesto severely for not having already undertaken the coup she herself suspended at their previous meeting. When Sesto asks her to give him a reason to carry out her wishes, she responds:

Una ragione!	A reason!
Mille n'avrai, qualunque sia l'affetto	You will have a thousand reasons, whatever the feelings by which
Da cui prenda il tuo cor regola, e moto.	your heart is ruled, and moved.
E' la gloria il tuo voto? Io ti propongo	Do you not wish for glory? I invite you to set
La patria a liberar. Sei d'un illustre	the country at liberty. Are you capable
Ambizion capace? eccoti aperta	of high ambition? Here is an open
Una strada all'impero.	path to empire.
Renderti fortunato	Would my hand
Può la mia mano? Corri,	make you fortunate? Go,
Mi vendica, e son tua.	avenge me, and I am yours.

Here Vitellia adopts the language of revolution. In seizing the empire, she argues, Sesto would be setting the country free and achieving "glory" for himself. With the verb "vendicare," she suggests again that Tito occupies his throne wrongfully. The implication is that Tito is a tyrant who deserves to be overthrown.

But of course it is Vitellia, not Tito, who is the tyrant; it is Vitellia who blatantly abuses her power, concerned only for her own advancement and pride and willing

to sacrifice anything necessary to achieve her goal. Like the Queen of the Night, she appears to be driven by a combination of ambition and spite. She manipulates Sesto, as the Queen does Tamino, telling him various untruths. Her real incentive to rebellion, though cloaked in the rhetoric of liberty and glory, is her obsession with the throne. If she cannot marry Tito, she will have him murdered and marry his usurper. She counts as nothing Sesto's feelings, a revolution in Rome, the burning of the capitol, and even Tito's life. Indeed, when she is alone, she acknowledges what she is doing, comforting herself with these words after Sesto's aria "Parto, ma tu ben mio" (No. 9):

Vedrai, Tito, vedrai, che alfin sì vile	You will see, Tito, you will see, that this face is not
Questo volto non è. Basta a sedurti	so vile after all. Good enough at least
Gli amici almen, se ad invaghirti è poco.	to seduce your friends, even if it little appeals to you.
Ti pentirai—	You will regret—

Near the beginning of act 2, just before the trio (No. 14), Sesto recognizes Vitellia for what she really is, addressing her with the words "Al fin, tiranna" (At last, tyrant). In identifying her as *his* ruler, Sesto makes explicit for the first time a comparison the libretto has already begun to develop. Vitellia and Tito both have political ambitions, but show themselves to be radically different sorts of rulers. While Tito rules with reason, generosity, and selflessness, she rules with vindictiveness, deception, and caprice. She expects to be obeyed with a blind loyalty of which she herself is incapable. Take, for example, the haughty rhetoric of her first aria.[12] Having abruptly changed her own mind about the rebellion, she berates Sesto for questioning her:

Deh se piacer mi vuoi,	Ah, if you wish to please me,
Lascia i sospetti tuoi:	set aside your suspicions:
Non mi stancar con questo	do not tire me with these
Molesto dubitar.	annoying doubts.
Chi ciecamente crede,	He who blindly believes,
Impegna a serbar fede;	obliges one to keep faith;
Chi sempre inganni aspetta	he who always expects betrayal
Alletta ad ingannar.	invites one to betray him.

The "fede" Vitellia demands is an unthinking loyalty antithetical to Enlightenment thought. Her assertions about faith and betrayal stand in direct contrast to Tito's principles, which remain constant in spite of the betrayal he sees. It is she who, in expecting betrayal, brings it upon herself. When Tito finally chooses her as his bride,

12. See Rushton, "Mozart's Art of Rhetoric."

in act 2, it is her precipitous actions that prevent her from realizing her ambitions as Tito's wife and Rome's empress. The political allegory of the opera is brought into sharp focus at the moments when Sesto addresses Tito as "clementissimo Prence" and Vitellia as "tiranna." As the subject of two rulers, Sesto is torn between enlightened benevolence and tyranny.

Vitellia's Transformation

In this drama of recognition and redemption, the central challenge for both Vitellia and Sesto is to prove themselves worthy of Tito's clemency. The moment of recognition for Vitellia comes in her act 2 *accompagnato* and *rondò,* in which she acknowledges her own tyrannical behavior and undergoes a remarkable self-transformation. This aria is one of the most compelling moments of self-discovery in all of Mozart's operas. For most of the first act Vitellia is unable to think of anything save her own thwarted ambition. But after her plans are set in motion she learns that Tito has decided to make her his bride and empress. She now realizes that she has become the victim of her own scheme; the rebellion she has incited is destined to bring about the very opposite of what she wants. This peripeteia has an extraordinary effect upon her, one that is developed in the trio "Vengo . . . aspettate . . . Sesto!" (No. 10). Here she reflects for the first time on the horror of what she has done:

Oh sdegno mio funesto!	Oh my fatal indignation!
Oh insano mio furor!	Oh my insane fury!
Che angustia! che tormento!	What anguish! what torment!
Io gelo oh Dio! d'orror.	I freeze, oh God! with horror.

The words "funesto" and "insano" reveal her new understanding of her behavior, and her earlier "sdegno" and "furor" reveal a painful foreknowledge of the impending disaster that she is now powerless to stop. The setting of these lines juts out of the ensemble unexpectedly and turns abruptly from G major to E-flat, flat VI. The horror of discovery is vividly depicted in the music with sudden fortes in the orchestra and Vitellia's exposed leaps up to high G. Her anguish is partly that her plans have gone awry, but her textual and musical agitation suggests something more: that she is forced for the first time to think about her actions. She is not yet reformed, but without this first step, the understanding she comes to near the end of act 2 could never be achieved. The process toward recognition and reversal has begun.

From this point forward, Vitellia's lines are colored by a combination of horror and remorse that prepares the way for repentance. In the act-ending quintet, "Deh conservate, oh Dei" (No. 12), she exclaims in an exposed aside, "In odio a me son' io / Ed' ho di me terror" (I hate myself and am in terror of myself). The musical setting expresses her frenzied state. While the other characters have been singing in square quarter notes and dotted quarter-note rhythms, Vitellia repeatedly puts the

eighth note on the first beat, which gives her musical line the anxious quality of *agitato.* Soon the offstage cries of the chorus are heard, and she begins, along with the others, to realize that violence and treachery are underway in the capitol. Vitellia, Servilia, Annio, and Publio at this point are given a joint text:

Le grida ahimè ch'io sento	Alas, the cries I hear
Mi fan gelar d'orror.	make me freeze with horror.

The sentiment is a common one, but in his setting Mozart distinguishes Vitellia's line. The other three sing in dotted quarter notes, arriving on a root-position G-minor chord at measure 81, while Vitellia sings an exposed run of eighth notes, arriving on a diminished seventh chord at measure 82 (see example 8.1). Servilia, Annio, and Publio express their shock and horror at what is transpiring, but Vitellia's rendering of the shared text vividly suggests the guilt that makes her freeze with a far greater "orror."

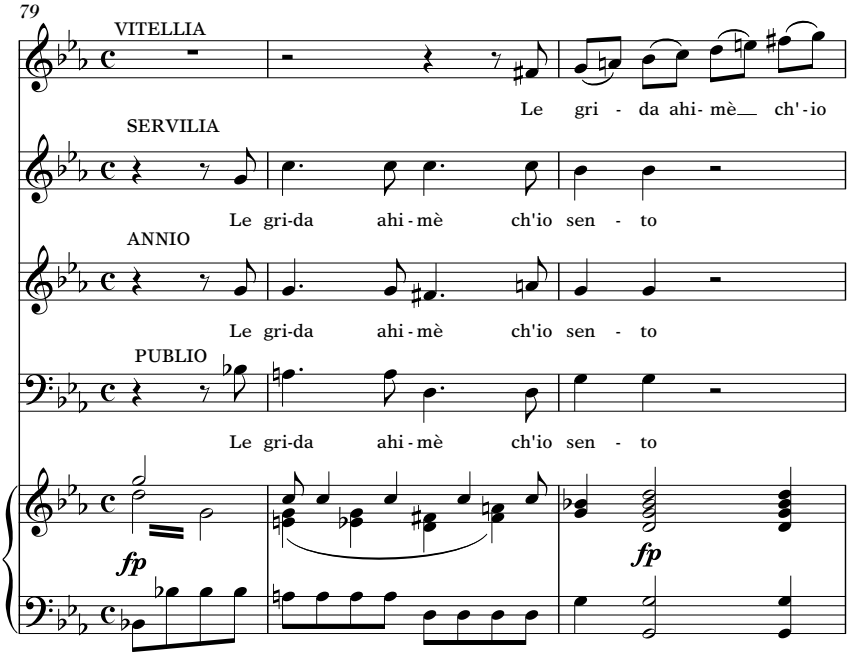
Near the beginning of act 2 Vitellia seems to have progressed from her initial shock and the beginnings of remorse toward genuine repentance and the self-knowledge it will bring. In the trio "Se al volto mai ti senti" (No. 14), she expresses feelings of remorse, horror, and fear that anticipate the words of her solo *scena* to come.

(Per me vien tratto a morte:	(Because of me he is being taken to his death:
Ah dove mai m'ascondo!	Ah, wherever can I hide?
Fra poco noto al mondo	Very soon the whole world
Il fallo mio sarà.)	will know my crime.)
* * *	* * *
(*a Sesto*)	(*To Sesto*)
Senti . . . mi perdo, oh Dio!	Listen . . . I am lost, oh God!
(*a Publio*)	(*To Publio*)
Che crudeltà!	What cruelty!
* * *	* * *
(Mi laceran il core	(They tear my heart—
Rimorso, orror, spavento.	remorse, horror, fear!
Quel che nell'alma io sento	What I feel in my soul
Di duol morir mi fa.)	will make me die of grief.)

Her recognition in "Non più di fiori" to come must be understood as having grown out of these earlier moments of partial awareness.

Because Vitellia's blinding, self-centered ambition poses the greatest challenge to Tito's clemency, it is her recognition and reversal that are most required by the plot. The mercy Tito practices would be rendered meaningless if it did not find its counterpart in the repentance of Vitellia (and Sesto). And the recognition confirmed by

Example 8.1. *Tito,* "Deh conservate, oh Dei" (No. 12), mm. 79–86.

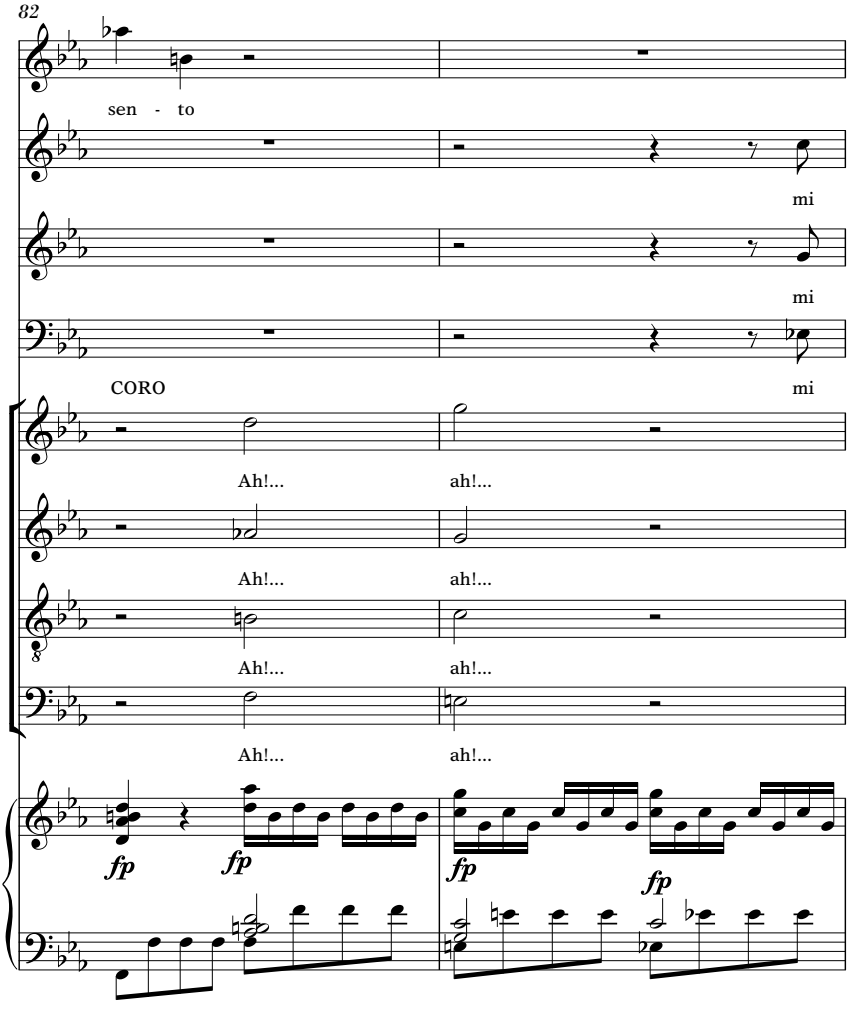


Tito's speech at the end of the opera would seem to be only an expression of platitudes if it were not the natural unfolding of the knowledge toward which the opera's individual recognition scenes have been pointing. For all these reasons, Vitellia's recognition, which the operatic plot has so carefully prepared, is the most remarkable transformation of this opera.

In her *accompagnato* Vitellia reflects on the impasse she has reached, realizing she must now choose between pleading for Sesto's life and keeping her own involvement a secret, thereby preserving her chance of marriage and empire. (The text for the accompanied recitative and aria appears with translation in figure 8.1.) Can she—knowing the truth and remembering Sesto's devotion to her, even in the face of death—remain silent and marry Tito? The crucial turning point, punctuated by a diminished seventh chord, comes at the midpoint of the recitative on the words "Ah mi vedrei / Sempre Sesto d'intorno" (Ah, I would always see Sesto near me). Vitellia is filled with new resolution; she must go to the Emperor to confess and to plead for Sesto. The aria begins with this thought, but as it progresses, this recognition unfolds into a moment of self-discovery, and ultimately self-transformation. It is not so much in the decision (achieved in the recitative) to face her own guilt, but in the act of doing so that new understanding is found.

The aria takes the form of a two-tempo *rondò,* which features a striking thematic return in the Allegro. A thematic return of this kind is certainly not without prece-

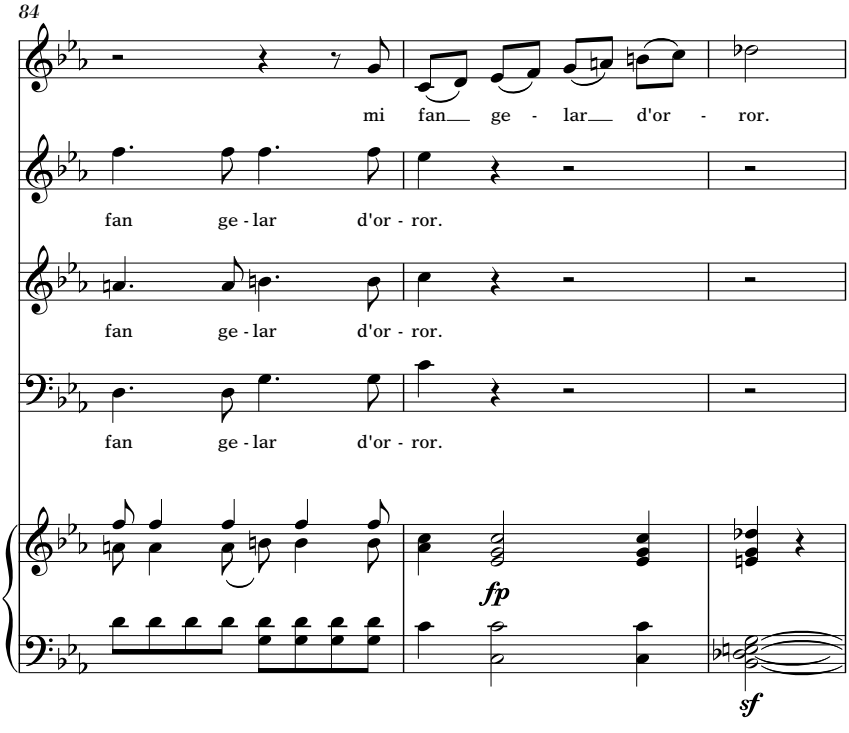
Example 8.1. *Continued*



(*continued*)

dent, but the structure and effect Mozart achieves here are highly unusual and crucial to the dramatization of Vitellia's process of self-discovery. Initially, however, the aria seems formally quite straightforward. The Larghetto sets the first eight lines of *quinari,* and the Allegro the remaining four of *ottonari.* The drama turns on Mozart's deployment of musical material to set four distinct textual ideas: resignation (lines 1–4), death (lines 5–8), horror (lines 9–10), and hope (lines 11–12) (labeled A, B, C, and D, respectively, in figure 8.1). The Larghetto takes the standard ABA form, where the reprise of A is musically varied. Here Vitellia imagines the consequences

Example 8.1. *Continued*



of the action she is about to take: there will be no marriage; she may even face death. The poetry suggests the nature of the exchange with parallel imagery, for the second image is a horrible transformation of the first. In the first stanza Vitellia imagines what is lost: fair chains of flowers and a visit from Hymen. In the second she imagines herself bound in chains of iron awaiting death. The connectedness of the images is borne out in the relation of the two themes A and B. The text of the Allegro may be read as two complete and different thoughts: Vitellia recognizes the horror of what she has done and expresses her belief that she may yet be deserving of pity. Accordingly, the musical material reflects the contrast. The C material is characterized by F minor, wide leaps, and exclamatory declamation punctuated by outbursts in the strings. The D material is set in F major, and features a smooth, slurred, melodic line with no leaps at all in the initial setting of lines 11 and 12.

The most interesting musical feature of the Larghetto is perhaps the dialogue between solo basset horn and voice that characterizes the entire aria. The A melody appears first in the basset horn in the instrumental prelude, and then in the voice at measure 9. It is the basset horn that seems to lead from A to B at measure 16 and that begins the Allegro, playing the melodic line under Vitellia's impassioned interjections. Later in the Allegro (at mm. 57, 68, and 143) the basset horn again intro-

Figure 8.1. Vitellia's recitative and aria (Nos. 22 and 23).

Ecco il punto; o Vitellia,
D'esaminar la tua costanza: Avrai
Valor che basti a rimirar esangue
Il tuo Sesto fedel? Sesto, che t'ama

Più della vita sua? Che per tua colpa
Divenne reo? Che t'ubbidì crudele?
Che ingiusta t'adorò? Che in faccia a morte
Si gran fede ti serba, e tu frattanto

Non ignota a te stessa, andrai tranquilla
Al talamo d'Augusto? Ah mi vedrei
Sempre Sesto d'intorno; e l'aure, e i sassi
Temerei che loquaci
Mi scoprissero a Tito. A' piedi suoi
Vadasi il tutto a palesar. Si scemi
Il delitto di Sesto,
Se scusar non si può, col fallo mio.
D'imperi, e d'imenei speranze addio.

Now is the moment, O Vitellia,
to examine your constancy. Will you
have strength enough to look upon
your faithful Sesto lifeless? Sesto,
who loves you
more than his life; who became a criminal
because of you; who obeyed you, cruel one;
who adored you, unjust as you are; who in the
face of death remains faithful to you.
And you, meanwhile, not ignorant
of what you are, will go calmly to
Caesar's bridal bed? Ah, I would always see
Sesto near me, and I would be afraid that
the breezes and the stones would speak
and betray me to Tito. Let me go
confess all at his feet.
Let Sesto's crime, if it cannot
be excused, be diminished by my guilt.
Hopes of empire and marriage, farewell.

		(quinario)		
A	1	Non più di fiori	a	No longer fair chains
	2	Vaghe catene	b	of flowers
	3	Discenda Imene	b	does Hymen
	4	Ad intrecciar.	**c**	descend to weave.
B	5	Stretta fra barbare	d	Tied by harsh,
	6	Aspre ritorte	e	cruel chains,
	7	Veggo la morte	e	I see death
	8	Ver me avanzar.	**c**	coming toward me.
		(ottonario)		
C	9	Infelice! qual orrore!	f	How wretched! How horrible!
	10	Ah di me che si dirà.	**g**	What will be said of me?
D	11	Chi vedesse il mio dolore,	f	[But] he who could see my distress,
	12	Pur avria di me pietà.	**g**	would have pity for me.

duces important musical themes or ideas that are to be taken up by the voice. This kind of alternation between wind instrument and voice is not uncommon in arias for seria characters in operas of this period.[13] What is striking about this kind of writing is how much it seems, as it does in this case, to function as dialogue. The basset horn suggests musical ideas and even whole phrases to Vitellia; it presents material to which she reacts strongly; it punctuates, interrupts, and at times completes her thoughts. To the extent that recognition can be brought about as a result of dialogue—as was the case with Tamino's colloquy with the priest or Pamina's conversation with the three boys—Vitellia's recognition may be understood as having been brought about at least in part by means of her exchange with the basset horn,

13. See Cone's idea of the vocal "persona" in *Composer's Voice,* especially 26–29. See also Webster, "Analysis of Mozart's Arias," 124–26 and 160–62.

which dramatizes her internal dialogue and in which the basset horn may be thought to represent her conscience.

With its representation of different textual ideas by means of distinct musical lines, its two-tempo form, and its emphasis on the exchange between voice and basset horn, this *rondò,* though of considerable musical interest, does not differ greatly from others. But it does not sustain the division of text and material we ordinarily associate with the *rondò.* The Allegro is remarkable for several reasons, not least of which is that it brings back the text and musical material of the entire Larghetto, recomposed in the new meter and tempo. Indeed, the single most distinctive feature of the Allegro is its recomposition and development of material, a process that makes manifest in musical terms the psychological process Vitellia undergoes in the course of self-discovery. As can be seen in figure 8.2, after the initial presentation of C and D material in the second tempo, the music and text of the first tempo return at measure 79, recomposed in common time, presented in the subdominant (B-flat), and extended slightly, as death advances stepwise, in a passage that seems to merge some of the dramatic effectiveness of a reinterpreted return with the process of development (see example 8.2).[14]

Although Mozart had once before composed a *rondò*-like aria with a second tempo that repeats text and music from the first tempo (Constanze's "Martern aller Arten" [No. 11] in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), and although, as John Rice has shown, this practice was known among his contemporaries, the return of the Larghetto music in the Allegro on this particular occasion is highly unusual. Not only does the second tempo include a return of the first-tempo material, it also recalls a 3/8 melody in a 4/4 Allegro.[15] The effect of the repetition is therefore not one of return, but one of recollection and transformation.

At measure 98 Vitellia moves from the repetition of line 8 directly into lines 9 and 10. The C material is once again followed by D material (this time in flat III, A-flat) at measure 106, but now something strange and wonderful happens. The reprise of D material in F major after the fermata at measure 126 gives way to an F-major rendition of "Infelice! qual orrore!" accompanied by D material in the basset horn (see example 8.3). The text for lines 1–4 and 5–8 repeats, but A and B are no longer recognizable; they have been transformed by aspects of the D material into something completely different. What follows is an extension of D (marked D″), in which the D material enters into counterpoint with a new idea (marked "z")—introduced by the basset horn (see example 8.4).

This closing passage brings the aria's transformation of musical material to a point of culmination and seems to gain exuberance as Vitellia repeats her hopeful assurance: "Chi vedesse il mio dolore, / Pur avria di me pietà." What has been drama-

14. For a different reading of this aria, see Parakilas, "Mozart's Mad Scene."

15. Rice offers a possible precedent for this return: a *rondò* from Martín y Soler's *L'arbore di Diana,* "Teco porta, o mia speranza." See his *W. A. Mozart: "La clemenza di Tito,"* 99.

tized is a shift from ignorance to knowledge, in this case a move from despair to hope. Moreover, the culmination of Vitellia's quest for self-discovery has come as part of an operatic process. Distinct melodic lines, the return to F major, and the return and eventual recomposition of musical material all serve the workings of a textual and musical plot in which Vitellia does not merely give lip service to remorse, but proves herself capable of growth and change. The resignation, vision of death, and horror of all that has passed are transformed into a musical expression of hope and redemption. This aria is arguably the most important turning point in the opera's central drama of repentance and mercy.

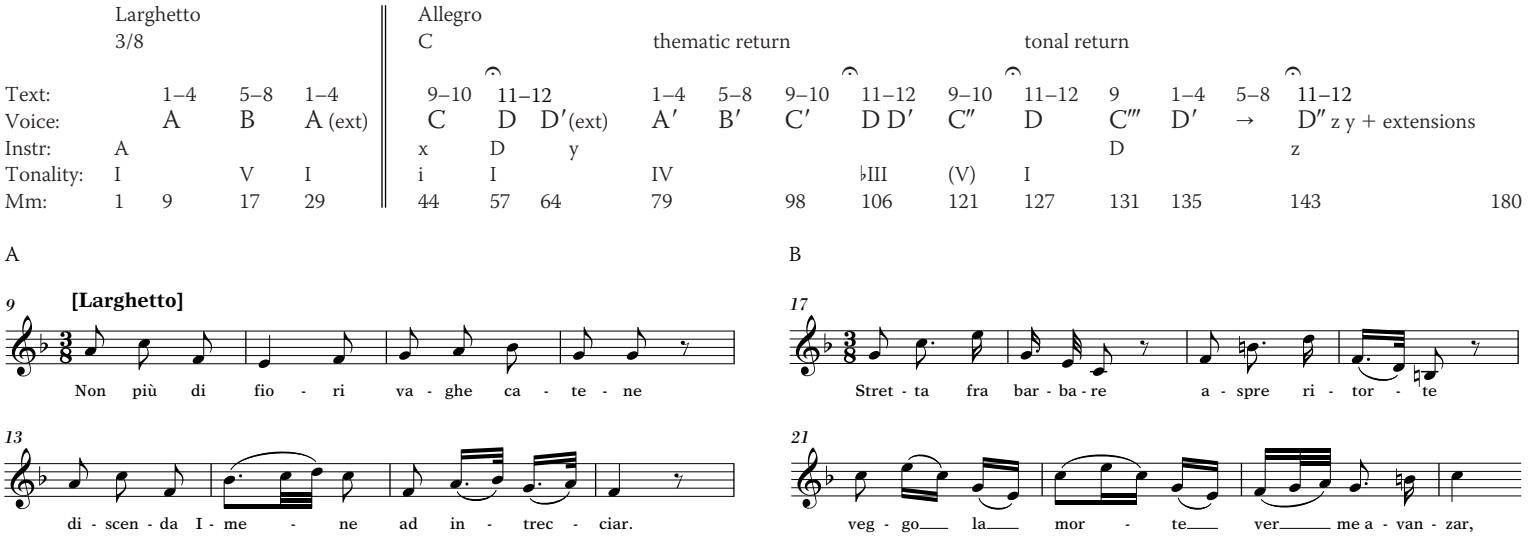
Sesto's Conflict

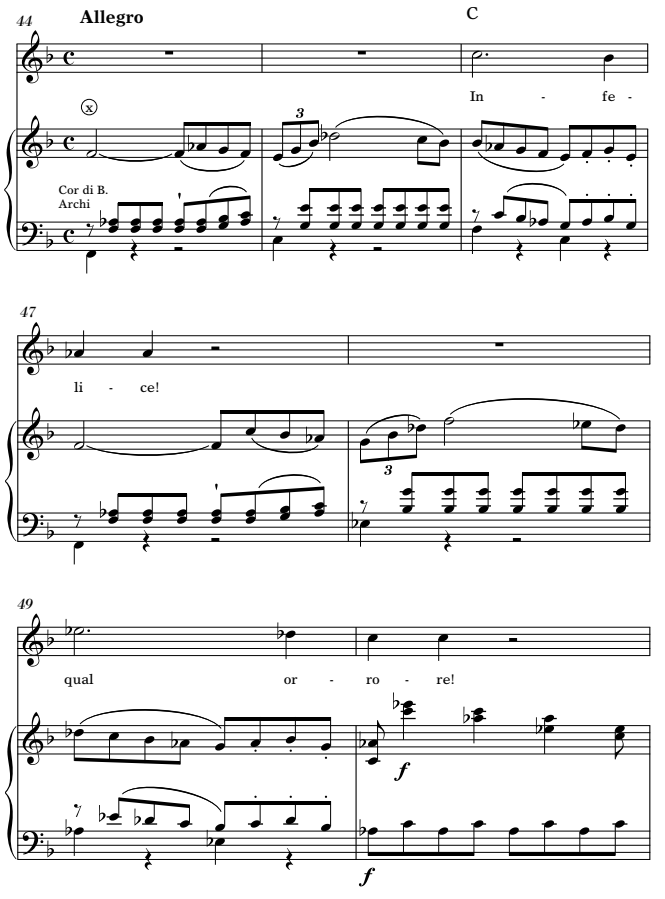
Aware that Sesto is a reluctant conspirator, Vitellia opens the opera with her view of his hesitation:

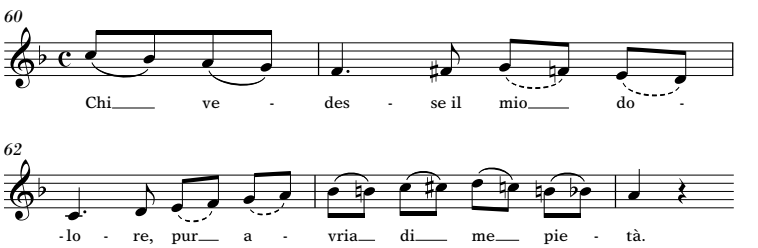
Ma che? sempre l'istesso,	But what? will you always tell
Sesto, a dir mi verrai? Sò, che sedotto	me the same thing, Sesto? I know that
Fù Lentulo da te: che i suoi seguaci	you have won over Lentulo, that his followers
Son pronti già: che il Campidoglio acceso	are ready, that setting the Capitol on fire
Darà moto a un tumulto. Io tutto questo	will set the rebellion in motion. I have heard
Già mille volte udii; la mia vendetta	all this already a thousand times; but I never
Mai non veggo però.	see my revenge.

Sesto has promised to carry out Vitellia's "vendetta," but he delays because he is trapped in a perpetual state of psychological strife, struggling throughout act 1 with the question of whether or not to take action. His dilemma may be understood in terms of the conflict between love and duty that frequently characterizes the affliction of the opera seria hero. But it may also be understood as a particularly complex and sharply drawn example of that conflict. His love for Vitellia causes him not merely to neglect his duty but to take arms against the very sovereign it is his duty (and wish) to defend. Once he has taken action and his guilt is certain, his distress takes a new turn. He now straddles two categories among Aristotle's modes of acting. To the extent that he knew that his actions would be wrong but was unable to avoid committing them, he is guilty of knowing and acting—that is, he finds himself in the position of one who achieved knowledge in time to not act, but acted anyway. To the extent, however, that his actions failed to accomplish their goal (for the coup was immediately suppressed and Tito was not harmed), he is able later in act 2

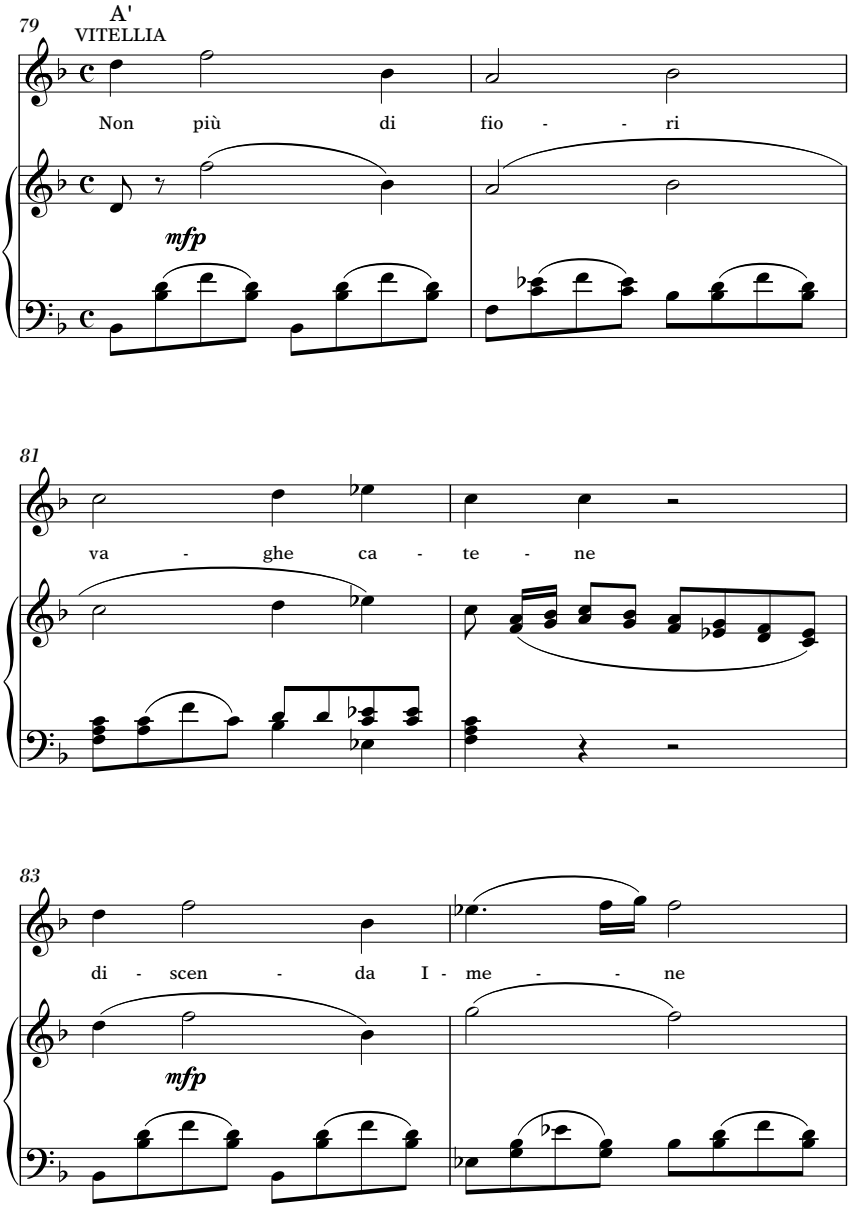
Figure 8.2. Diagram of “Non più di fiori vaghe catene” (No. 23).



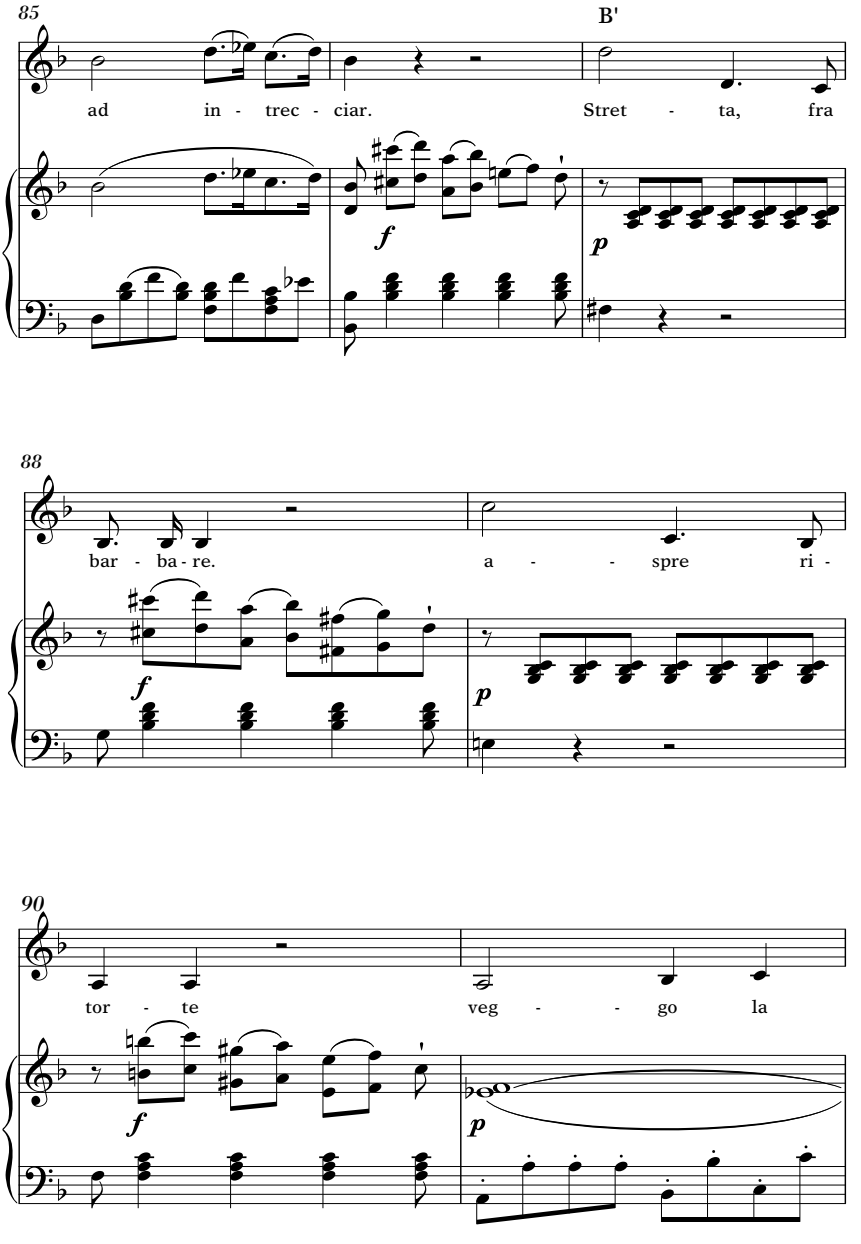

44
Allegro
C
In - fe -
Cor di B.
Archi
47
li - ce!
49
qual or - ro - re!
f
f


60
Chi ve - des - se il mio do -
62
-lo - re, pur a - vria di me pie - tà.

Example 8.2. *Tito,* "Non più di fiori" (No. 23), mm. 79–94.



Example 8.2. *Continued*



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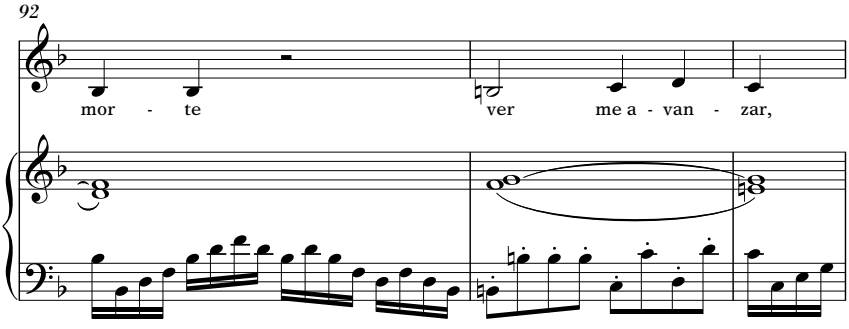
Example 8.2. *Continued*

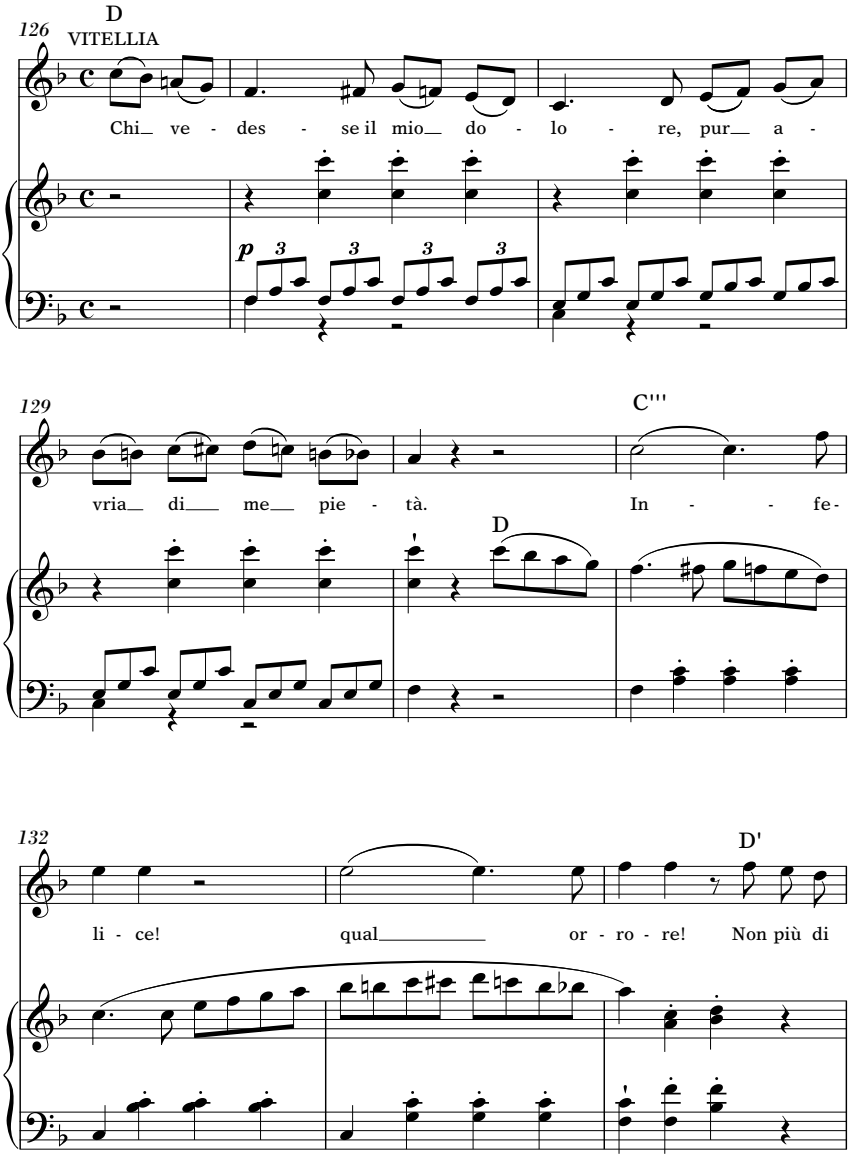


to experience the feelings of one who has known and not acted—that is, even though he has taken action, because he failed to achieve Tito's death he finds himself in the position of one who has not acted. Sesto's moments of recognition are therefore of a confused and complex kind, for he has known all along the significance of his actions. In a sense, his repentance, which is later to redeem him in the course of act 2, has begun even before he attempts the treacherous act.

Nowhere is this conflict more apparent or affecting than in his turbulent *accompagnato* (No. 11) just before the act-ending quintet in act 1. (The entire text is given with translation in figure 8.3.) The moment of rebellion has come, but he is still plagued by doubts. His recitative plays out the desperate conflict that consumes him in the form of a dialogue with the orchestra. Rethinking his actions, he now realizes he cannot commit treason. Recognition, when it arrives, is a moment of clarity but also of crisis: "Morrei prima del colpo in faccia a lui" (I would die before dealing him this blow). But a fire has already broken out in the capitol. Sesto turns away from this discovery, powerless (or so he imagines) to stop the violence he has already set in motion. In a moment of false prophecy, he cries out, "Ahi! tardo è il pentimento" (Alas! repentance is too late).

As figure 8.3 shows, the insistent orchestral figure (marked "x") with which the *accompagnato* begins reappears often in the strings and bassoons, and in slightly varied forms. The figure, which may be understood as an expression of Sesto's "smania," becomes an almost obsessive reminder, a recollection and reinforcement of the "tumulto" that makes him quiver and tremble. This orchestral figure punctuates and interrupts the text at crucial moments, though it is significantly absent from the Andante passage in which Sesto describes Tito (lines 10–15), returning with the Tempo primo after the line "Ei t'innalzò per farti / Il carnefice suo" (He raised you up to make you his killer). The figure also appears in both the major and the minor modes. Near the end of the passage, its appearance directly following his realization that he cannot take this action ("Morrei prima del colpo in faccia a lui") is especially affecting. This is Sesto's great moment of recognition, the climax of his inner struggle. It

Example 8.3. *Tito,* "Non più di fiori" (No. 23), mm. 126–38.



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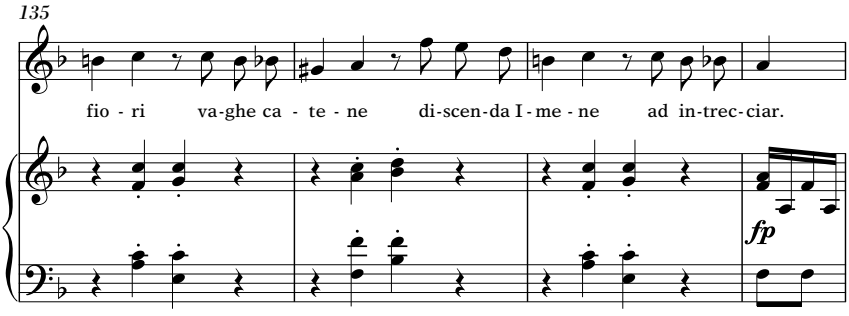
Example 8.3. *Continued*



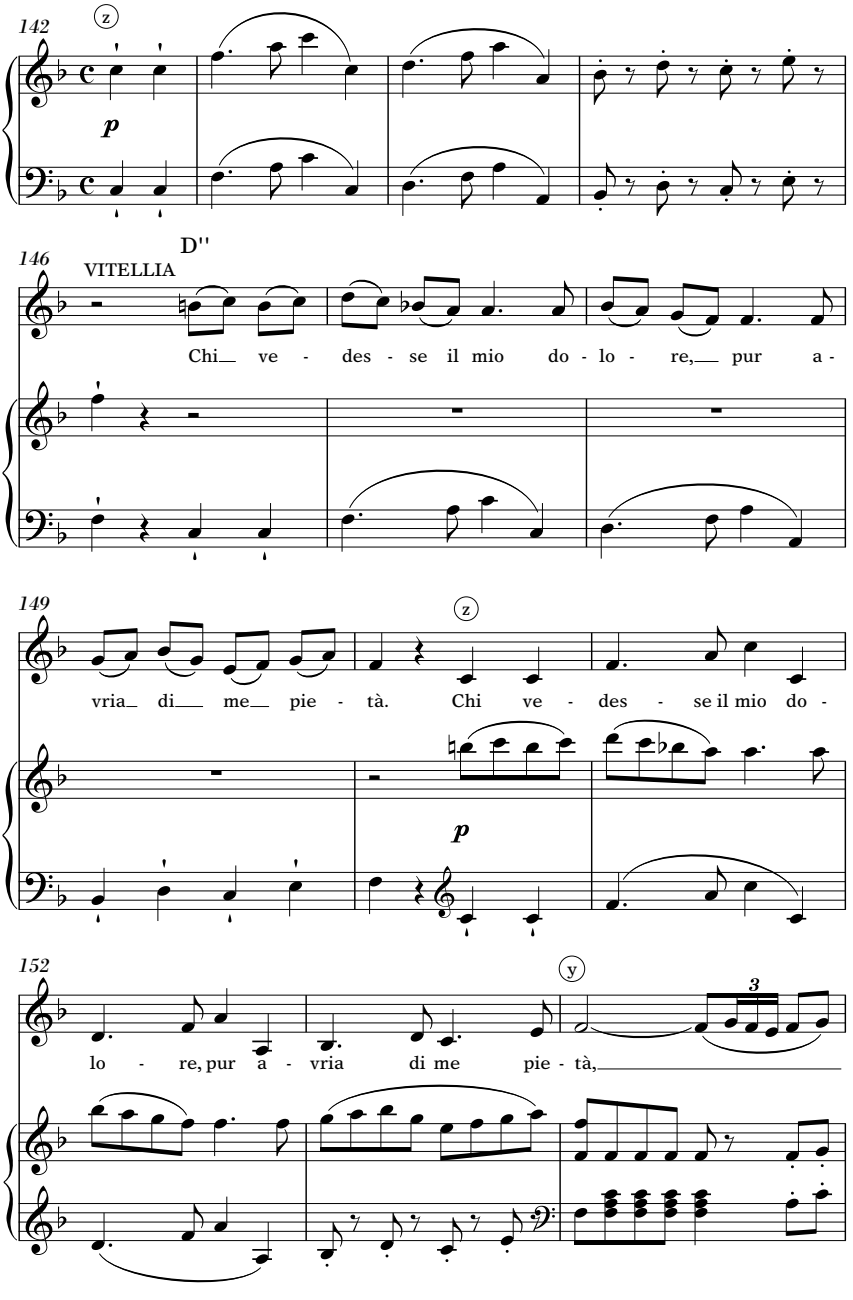
does not bring about the reversal in the plot that recognition so often does, however, because the course of action his new awareness would now prevent is already underway. The music reflects his predicament with a brief, hopeful expansion of the recurring figure in F major (at m. 68) as the fire breaks out in the distance. But F major is almost immediately undermined by chromatically inflected pitches as he turns away from his resolution and toward despair, crying "Ahi! tardo è il pentimento" (Alas! repentance is too late). The shock and ambiguity of the harmony, especially the poignant diminished seventh chord on the word "tardo," seem to refuse recognition. The juxtaposition of knowledge and despair here resembles moments of recognition in *Zauberflöte,* particularly Tamino's similarly placed *accompagnato* with the priest. But while recognition often marks the turn away from despair (as is the case for both Tamino and Pamina), here it only serves to sharpen and intensify Sesto's wretchedness. The fact that his recognition has come "too late" to prevent the actions he now regrets only deepens his distress.

The recognition of Sesto's soliloquy unfolds into the act-ending quintet No. 12, which encompasses the action of the revolt and its immediate aftermath. Sesto's opening solo dramatizes a moment of recognition of a very different sort, though one equally affecting and perhaps more characteristic of him. It begins with a strong triadic ascent in E-flat major, as Sesto prays to the gods to protect Rome from the assault he himself has set in motion:

Deh conservate, o Dei,	Pray preserve, O gods,
A Roma il suo splendor,	the glory of Rome,
O almeno i giorni miei	or at least if her days are over
Co' suoi troncate ancor.	cut short mine also.

Although the sincerity of such a prayer when uttered by the very person who has placed Rome in jeopardy might well be considered suspect, the music to which these lines are set could not be more unlike the music associated with revenge and rebellion elsewhere in the opera. It shows no signs of chromatic or minor inflection; it

Example 8.4. *Tito,* "Non più di fiori" (No. 23), mm. 142–58.



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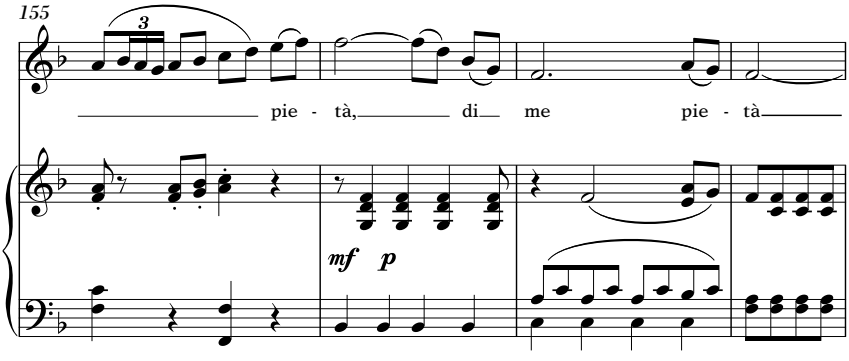
Example 8.4. *Continued*



comes to points of emphasis on strong beats, with particular emphasis and a fermata on the final word of the first line, "Dei" (see example 8.5). The confusion and despair of the previous *accompagnato* have all but vanished, save for a brief hint of syncopation in measure 7. Sesto's conviction now seems not to be in question, and he exits with a brief, cryptic explanation of what he is about to do: "Io vado—lo saprai / Oh Dio! per mio rossor" (I go—you will know the truth, oh God! by my blushing). When he reappears sixty-one measures later, he is in a wild frenzy of distress and guilt. He speaks of being swallowed by the earth with vivid word painting that depicts his imagined descent ("Apriti, o terra, inghiottimi"), and he tells Vitellia that the daylight terrifies him ("Mi fa terror il giorno").

When Servilia, Annio, and Publio together ask who could have committed such an act, Sesto attempts to reveal himself, but Vitellia interrupts him and prevents recognition:

Sesto	
Fù l'uom più scellerato,	It was a man most wicked,
L'orror della natura,	the horror of nature,
Fù—	it was—
Vitellia	
Taci forsennato,	Be quiet, lunatic,
Deh non ti palesar.	Ah, do not give yourself away.

The attempted recognition here takes a fairly conventional form (Sesto is about to name himself as the murderer) and is prepared musically, as one might expect, with a striking divergence in texture, style, and mood, as Sesto moves from the homorhythmic chorale texture of the Andante into recitative. That Sesto's mode of attempting to declare himself is so simple and direct makes Vitellia's interference all the more striking, for it is completely exposed. As the quintet resumes with its quiet

Figure 8.3. Diagram of Sesto's dramatic recitative (No. 11).

Allegro assai

[x]Oh Dei, che smania è questa
Che tumulto ho nel cor! [x]palpito,
agghiaccio,
M'incammino, m'arresto; ogn'aura,
ogn'ombra
Mi fa tremare. [x]Io non credea, che fosse

Sì difficile impresa esser malvagio.
[x]Ma compirla convien. [x]Almen si vada
Con valor a perir. Valore! e come
Può averne un traditor? [x]Sesto infelice!
Tu traditor! Che orribil nome! Eppure
T'affretti a meritarlo. E chi tradisci?

Oh gods, what frenzy is this,
what torment I feel in my heart. I
quiver, I freeze,
I start, I stop; every breeze,
every shadow
makes me tremble. I never believed that
it would be
so difficult to commit villainy.
But I must do it. At least let me meet
death with courage. Courage? And how
can a traitor have that? Unhappy Sesto!
You a traitor! How horrible a name! Yet
you hurry to earn it. And whom do you betray?

Andante

Il più grande, il più giusto, il più clemente

Principe della terra, a cui tu devi
Quanto puoi, quanto sei. Bella mercede
Gli rendi in vero. Ei t'innalzò per farti
Il carnefice suo.

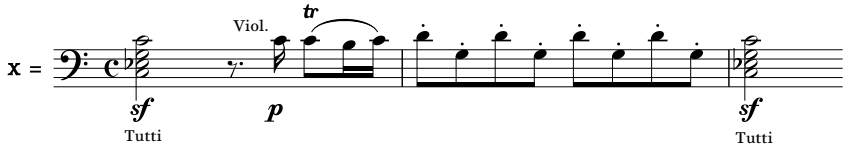
The most grand, the most just, the most
merciful
prince on the earth, to whom you owe
all that you possess, all that you are.
Good return you pay him, in truth. He
raised you up to make you his killer.

Tempo primo

[x]M'inghiotta il suolo
Prima ch'io tal divenga. [x]Ah non ho core,

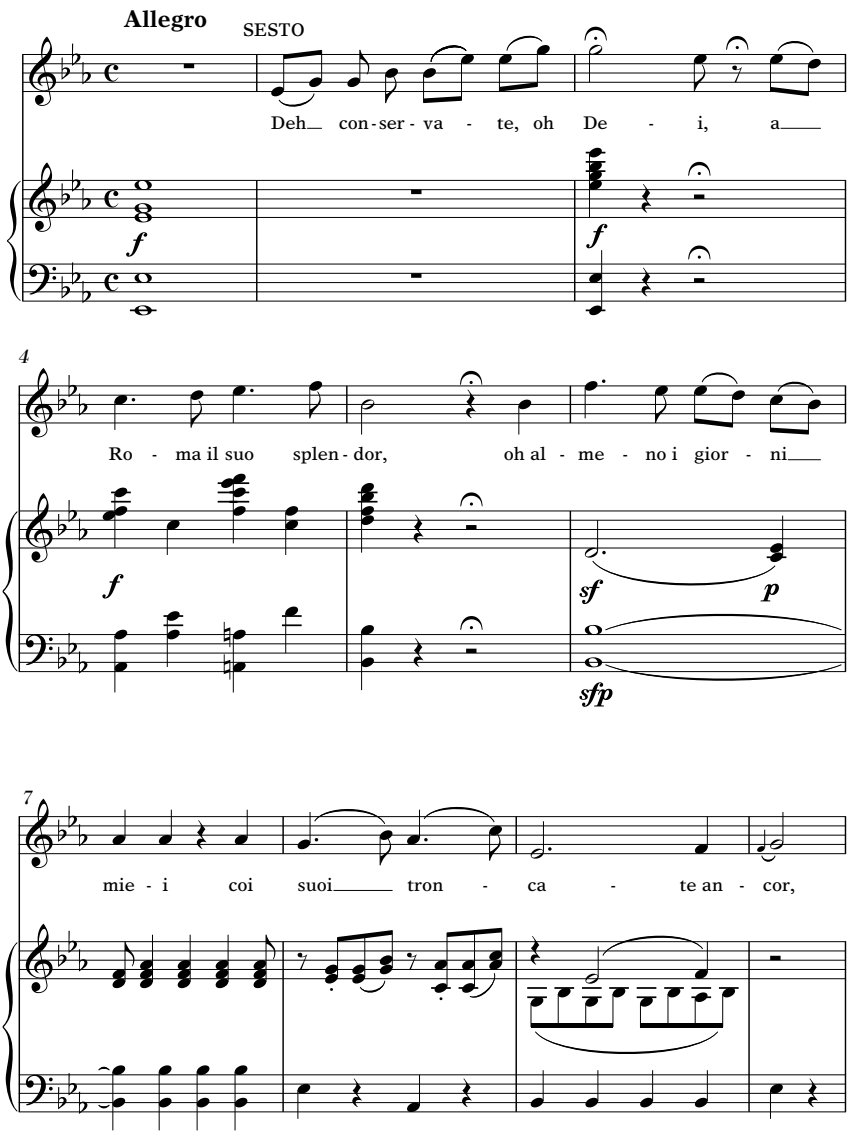
Vitellia, a secondar gli sdegni tuoi.
Morrei prima del colpo in faccia a lui.
[x](ext.) *(Si desta nel Campidoglio un incendio
che a poco a poco va crescendo.)*
[S'impedisca . . . ma come,]
Arde già il Campidoglio.
Un gran tumulto io sento
D'armi, e d'armati: Ahi! tardo
è il pentimento.

May the ground
swallow me before I become that. Ah, I
have not the heart,
Vitellia, to carry out your wrath.
I would die before dealing him this blow.
*(A fire breaks out in the capitol
and grows little by little.)*
It must be stopped . . . but how?
The capitol is already burning.
I hear a great tumult
of arms and soldiers; alas!
repentance is too late.



Andante tribute to the "late" Emperor, the dramatic tension of a recognition drama interrupted and suspended hovers over the calm surface of the music. In two powerful moments at the end of the first act Sesto comes to the brink of recognition, once in private before his attempt on Tito's life, and once in public after. In both instances, however, he turns away: in the accompanied recitative because he gives in to despair, and in the quintet because he will not betray Vitellia. Twice he denies the

Example 8.5. *Tito,* "Deh conservate, oh Dei" (No. 12), mm. 1–10.



knowledge of recognition (and the action it implies), failing to have the courage of his own convictions.

What is most interesting about Mozart and Mazzolà's Sesto is that his text and music often belie his actions. He agrees to do Vitellia's bidding and proves capable of attempted murder and treason, but his acquiescence is obviously less an expression of support for the vengeance she wants than a surrender to his passion for her.

If one looks at his actions and thoughts only as they are represented in the libretto, without considering their musical dramatization, one might be inclined to judge him harshly.[16] The weakness of his resolve and the violence of his actions, however, are at odds with the conviction of his music, which is characterized for the most part by an extraordinary supplication and pathos. At crucial moments in the plot—in both of his arias, in the act 2 trio No. 14, and elsewhere—Sesto responds to a moment of great conflict with an impassioned plea for understanding.[17] Confronted with his actions, he turns away from the present situation to develop a long moment in music in which he pleads with someone he loves for a sign of affection. In each case, as he is about to go, he pauses. His companion (whether Vitellia or Tito) questions him: why don't you go? Sesto replies with a fervent musical entreaty (in two cases with an entire aria) that represents a shift in mood and style. The passions of the moment overwhelm the immediate context.

The first of these moments occurs in the opera's opening duet, "Come ti piace imponi." The number is conceived in two parts: an Andante in which Sesto and Vitellia sing in dialogue and move toward a common understanding, and an Allegro in which they sing *a due* in harmonious thirds. Just before the Allegro begins, there is a brief transition setting the following exchange:

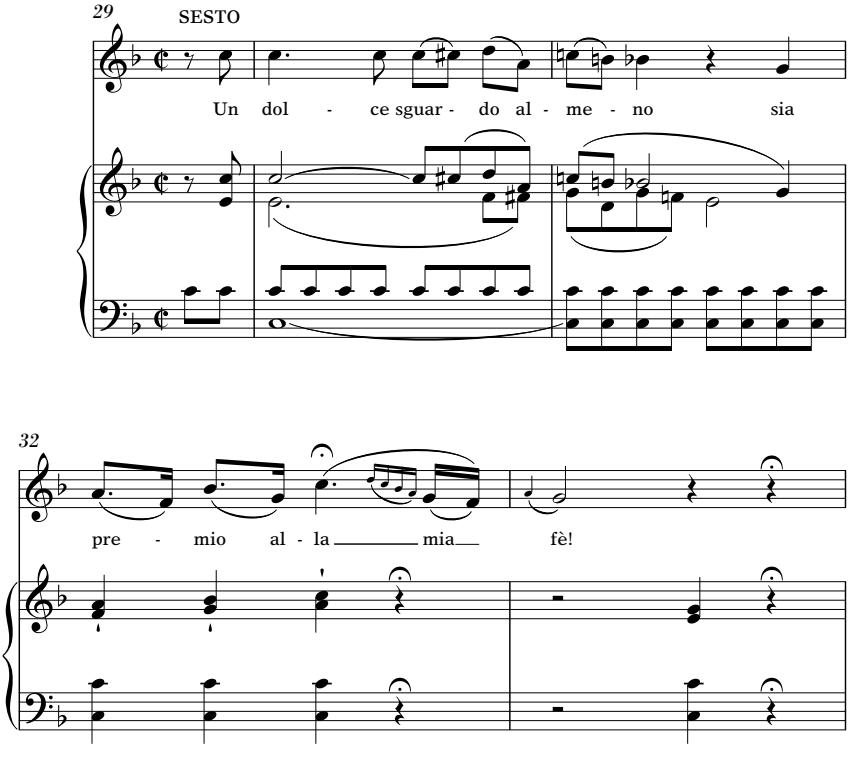
Sesto	
Già il tuo furor m'accende.	Already your furor incites me.
Vitellia	
Ebben, che più s'attende?	Very well, what are you waiting for?
Sesto	
Un dolce sguardo almeno	Let one sweet look at least
Sia premio alla mia fè.	be the reward for my devotion.

In response to Vitellia's question, Sesto makes his plea with a new musical line, filling in the melody with half-steps and adding affecting appoggiaturas, with a poignant *Eingang* on the last words of his text: "alla mia fè" (see example 8.6). The moment is a conspicuous, if curious, turning point. It brings about the move from the slow to the fast tempo, but it juts out of the musical texture as a moment of sentiment in what purports—textually, at least—to be a vengeance duet. Of course, we know even at this point that Sesto is an unwilling champion. He has not uttered a word in agreement with Vitellia's cause; he has only confirmed that she may com-

16. Many have indeed done so; see, among others, Abert, *W. A. Mozart,* 2:562–68; and Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 540–42.

17. This expansion of an emotional moment is of course typical of Metastasian drama, just as it is the hallmark of the "Parto" aria type. These moments are significant collectively and to a particular end with respect to Sesto's character. For a different reading of Sesto's arias, see Parakilas, "Mozart's *Tito* and the Music of Rhetorical Strategy," 380–97.

Example 8.6. *Tito,* "Come ti piace imponi" (No. 1), mm. 29–33.



mand him as she will: "Il mio destin tu sei: / Tutto farò per te" (You are my destiny: I will do anything for you). In his plea, Sesto has turned away from the subject of the duet, forgotten it perhaps, to focus on the only subject that consumes him: Vitellia. Several characteristics of the musical line, the chromatic passing tones, the lilting pairs of eighth notes, and the use of appoggiatura will be employed again in Sesto's music of supplication.

This situation plays itself out at greater length, and more to Sesto's satisfaction, in the act 1 aria, "Parto, ma tu ben mio." After a long dialogue in recitative, Vitellia questions his remaining with her, as she did before in the first scene, asking impatiently, "Dunque corri; che fai? Perchè non parti?" (Then hurry; what are you doing? Why do you not go?). He responds not with a line of recitative, and not by leaving, but with a whole aria, in which he pleads for affection:

Parto, ma tu ben mio,	I go, but make peace
Meco ritorna in pace:	with me my dearest.
Sarò qual più ti piace	I will be whatever pleases you,
Quel che vorrai farò.	I will do whatever you would like.

Guardami, e tutto oblio,	Look at me, and I will forget everything
E a vendicarti io volo:	and fly to avenge you:
A questo sguardo solo	of that look alone
Da me si penserà.	will I think.
(Ah qual poter oh Dei!	(Ah, what power, oh gods!
Donaste alla beltà.)	have you given beauty.)

In the first verse he explains why he will not go; in the second he pleads for a look, once again lost in the passion of the moment; and in the final couplet he reacts to Vitellia's glance with an effusive exclamation that attempts to capture her beauty (and its effect on him). The musical setting develops this text of supplication into a brief drama in which Sesto pleads his case, makes his request, and finally receives his reward.

Figure 8.4 shows the musical division of the text, including shifts in tempo and style, as well as other important events. The very succession of tempos, from Adagio to Allegro to Allegro assai, suggests a progression of action, which is then developed by the succession of musical lines, the instrumentation (especially the use of the clarinet), and, most important, the crucial moment near the end of the Allegro at which, after repeated requests, Sesto receives the answer to his entreaty. The musical line that sets the first quatrain develops more of the melodiousness and character we associate with Sesto as it proceeds. Having begun his aria with quarter notes and a melody comprised of skips and leaps, Sesto demonstrates the malleability he claims in his text by adding eighth notes, dotted eighths, and sixteenths, filling in the skips, extending and elaborating the musical ideas, and including poignant leading-tone appoggiaturas. The solo clarinet enters into a dialogue with Sesto's lines, answering the vocal phrases with elaborate versions of his melodies and with long instrumental melismas at the ends of lines.

The Allegro is introduced by the clarinet. Sesto enters on a new melody, one more determined and commanding than that of his Adagio supplication. With its broad, noble style and sure-footed triadic gestures, this melody rivals that of the second tempo from Vitellia's earlier aria and much of Tito's music. Having expressed his desire for reconciliation in the first tempo, he now begins to demand it: "Guardami." His request is made with conviction and clarity, followed by a repetition of the first verse in the new tempo and context. Now comes the climax. Pausing at the end of the line "Quel che vorrai faro," Sesto turns to Vitellia again: "Guardami." She is silent. He repeats his request: "Guardami." Silence again. The clarinet now picks up again from the middle of the verse (line 7), followed by Sesto's varied repetition of the earlier setting of these words (see example 8.7). With this series of fermatas and the repetition of "Guardami," Mozart creates a marvelous dramatic moment of supplication and reconciliation. The aria moves toward an action, but comes to a halt

Figure 8.4. Diagram of "Parto, ma tu ben mio" (No. 9).

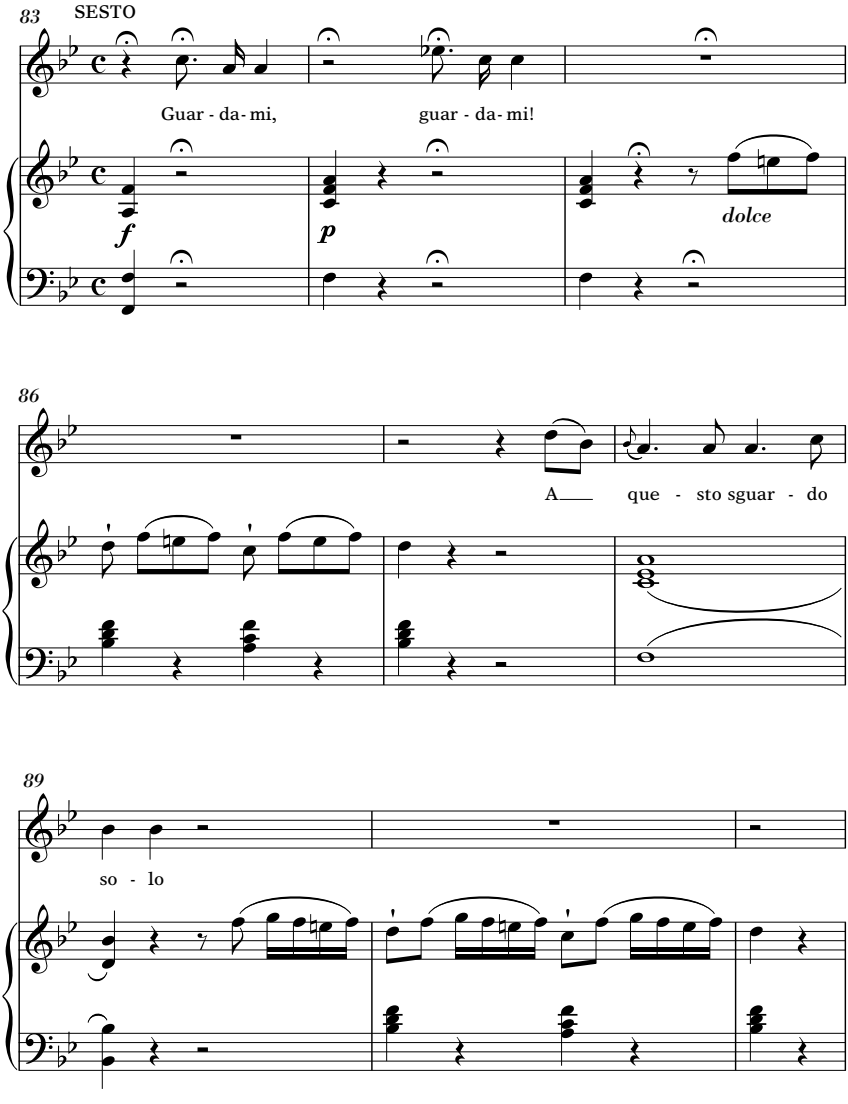
	I.		II.					III.	
	Parto, ma tu ben mio,		Guardami, e tutto oblio,					(Ah qual poter oh Dei!	
	Meco ritorna in pace:		E a vendicarti io volo:					Donaste alla beltà.)	
	Sarò qual più ti piace		A questo sguardo solo						
	Quel che vorrai farò.		Da me si penserà.						
	Adagio		**Allegro**					**Allegro assai**	
	3/4		C						
Text:	1–4	1–4	5–8	1–4				7–8 → 5–6 9–10 ext. 9–10	
						"guardami"			
Tonality:	I	V	I	IV →	V^7/V	V→	(I)	→I	
Mm:	1	22	44	70	82	83–85	86	96	152

when the action is withheld. The look for which Sesto yearns is a necessary part of this little musical drama, without which Sesto's aria can neither continue nor end. Music, text, and action are suspended over a fermata at measure 85, awaiting Vitellia's glance. When it comes in the clarinet part in measure 86, the pattern is broken, and Sesto exclaims with entirely new meaning, "A questo sguardo solo."[18] While the text only suggests what Vitellia's glance would mean to him, the music shows us. The Allegro assai at measure 96 unfolds this moment of pleasure into an expanded musical portrait of Sesto's relief and happiness. He sings the last couplet of text to new music, which is characterized by long expansive musical lines, and in which voice and clarinet exchange exuberant melismas in triplets.

When considered in the larger context of the surrounding scenes and the whole action, the affecting drama of this aria seems rather out of place. Sesto has, after all, just agreed to murder Tito and set Rome on fire. The preceding dialogue in recitative anticipates a brutal and bloody reality, but Vitellia's wrath finds no representation in the ensuing aria, not even at the moment when Sesto says that he wants to fly to avenge her (line 6). Instead, this aria dramatizes a powerful recognition drama in miniature, one that makes manifest in the music a reconciliation barely implicit in the libretto. In this way the musical setting points to the larger drama of Sesto's plight, developing his character in the opposite direction from the mainspring of the action (the events of the rebellion) toward the heart of the drama (the reconciliation at the end). Recognition is a conflicted process for Sesto. He commits a crime with full knowledge of its horror and against his conscience, but he expresses his desire for love and reconciliation with greater poignancy than either Vitellia or Tito. At these moments he makes his case with such plaintive beauty that we cannot regard him

18. In this moment, where there is no explicit stage direction to tell us when Vitellia looks at Sesto, but where the music so clearly suggests the moment it must occur, one is reminded of Lewin's argument about the implicit stage directions in *Figaro*'s act 1 trio No. 7; see his "Musical Analysis as Stage Direction."

Example 8.7. *Tito,* "Parto, ma tu ben mio" (No. 9), mm. 83–91.



as a traitor. Nor can we dismiss him merely as Vitellia's dupe.[19] Even as the events of the opera propel him toward a violent crime, the musical drama is already preparing his forgiveness and redemption.

One senses in Sesto's desire for reconciliation the total capitulation to feeling that is the source of both his fall and his redemption. He repeatedly chooses the mo-

19. Abert, for example, dismisses him as "simply the passive, sentimental lover" (*W. A. Mozart,* 2:605).

ment and its passions over reason and reality. Indeed, he shows how well he knows himself near the beginning of act 2 when he explains his guilt to the incredulous Annio: "M'ha perduto un istante" (I was undone in a moment). The power of "un istante" points to a central feature of Sesto's character—his susceptibility to the immediacy of feeling—and is developed most poignantly in Sesto's act 2 *rondò,* "Deh per questo istante solo." In the preceding recitative, Sesto has angered Tito by refusing to offer any explanation for his treasonous behavior. When Tito calls the guards to remove Sesto from his presence, Sesto responds by begging for one last kiss: "Ah, sia questo, Signor, l'ultimo dono" (Ah, my Lord, let this be your last favor). Without waiting for an answer, he launches into his moving *rondò.* He does not seek forgiveness; in fact, he says that he is unable to forgive himself. He seeks a reconciliation with Tito on the basis of the love they shared before any of this happened:

Deh per questo istante solo	Ah, for this one moment
Ti ricorda il primo amor.	remember our former love.
Che morir mi fa di duolo	Your disdain, your severity
Il tuo sdegno il tuo rigor.	make me die of grief.

Much as he earlier begged Vitellia for "pietà" as a reward ("premio") for his devotion, Sesto here seeks emotional reconciliation without concern for a resolution of the central conflict. In the face of death, he holds reconciliation at a greater value than his own life. Although he is clearly a hero of the type common to the *opere serie* of Metastasio and his contemporaries, torn between love and duty (perhaps even to the point of madness), his capitulation to feeling, whatever its vicissitudes, could not have been more in tune with the contemporary culture of sensibility if it had been invented especially for the coronation in 1791.

Tito's Clemency

In the very first scene of the opera, where Vitellia asks Sesto when she is to see him take her revenge, he replies with an eloquent tribute to the Emperor:

Pensaci meglio, o cara	Think it over, my dear,
Pensaci meglio. Ah non togliamo in Tito	think it over. Ah, let us not in taking Tito
La sua delizia al mondo, il Padre a Roma,	take from the world its delight, from Rome its father,
L'amico a noi. Fra le memorie antiche	from us a friend. Find his equal in
Trova l'egual, se puoi. Fingiti in mente	the ancient histories, if you can. Imagine
Eroe più generoso, e più clemente.	a hero more generous, and more merciful.
Parlagli di premiar; poveri a lui	Talk to him about a reward; to him

Sembran gli Erarj sui.	the treasury is too little.
Parlagli di punir; scuse al delitto	Talk to him about punishment; he finds
Cerca in ognun; chi all'inesperta ei dona,	an excuse in each case for the crime; he treats the inexperienced
Chi alla canuta età. Risparmia in uno	the same as the gray-haired. In one case, he will spare
L'onor del sangue illustre: il basso stato	the honor of noble blood, in another, he will have compassion
Compatisce nell'altro. Inutil chiama,	for those of lower class. He calls useless,
Perduto il giorno ei dice,	wasted, the day in which
In cui fatto non ha qualcun felice.	he didn't make anybody happy.

Admittedly, this description of Tito as a "hero" so generous and merciful that he is without precedent in the ancient histories would appear to paint a portrait of a ruler so idealized that he is more a paragon of virtue than a man. But this portrait is borne out by the events of the drama about to unfold. Almost as soon as he appears on stage, Tito begins to speak of the difficulties of reconciling the responsibilities of governance with his own desire to find happiness. He has given up his beloved Berenice because his subjects would prefer him to marry a Roman citizen; he then chooses Servilia as his bride, but gives her up also on learning of her betrothal to Annio. He refuses the offer of a great statue to be built in his honor, preferring to give the money to the victims of Vesuvius. In act 2, once the plot against him has been discovered, he first refuses to believe that Sesto could be guilty of betraying him, then seeks an excuse for that betrayal, and finally, persuaded of his friend's guilt, pardons Vitellia, Sesto, and all the conspirators in the final scene.[20]

While Tito's actions reveal his selfless nature, his act 1 arias reveal the internal conflict these actions intensify. Both are sung in response to the feelings others arouse in him, which are presented as the sole source of pleasure to be found amidst the hardships of governance. Here are the first verses of these two arias:

(No. 6)	
Del più sublime soglio	Of the most splendid throne,
L'unico frutto è questo:	this is the only fruit:
Tutto è tormento il resto;	all the rest is torment;
E tutto è servitù.	all the rest is servitude.
(No. 8)	
Ah, se fosse intorno al trono	Ah, if every heart near to
Ogni cor così sincero,	the throne were as sincere,

20. For a different view, see Neville, "Cartesian Principles in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*."

Non tormento un vasto impero,	a vast empire would not be torment,
Ma saria felicità.	it would be bliss.

In "Del pìn sublime soglio," he rejoices at the thought that his marriage to Servilia, Sesto's sister, will give him an opportunity to elevate Sesto to a position nearer his own. In "Ah, se fosse intorno al trono," he expresses his delight in the selfless virtue of his subjects: Annio, who, in concealing his love of Servilia, demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice his own happiness to that of his Emperor's; Servilia, who, in confessing her love of Annio, showed a willingness to give up a throne for love. In each aria, Tito cherishes the occasion to celebrate the goodness and happiness of others, a moment of pleasure in a life he sees as otherwise devoid of emotional fulfillment.

This division between emperor and man manifests itself in several of Tito's speeches, although it often takes the form of controlling rather than giving rein to his feelings. In Tito's first scene, where we learn that he has parted with Berenice for good, he explains his actions to Sesto with another military metaphor:

Ah, Sesto amico,	Ah, Sesto my friend,
Che terribil momento! Io non credei . . .	what a terrible moment! I did not believe . . .
Basta; hò vinto: partì.	enough; I have conquered: she is gone.

His turning to Sesto for understanding in this matter makes a telling comparison. Though Tito is unaware of it, Sesto faces a similar choice but decides to betray his country rather than give up Vitellia. Tito's ability to suppress his feelings furthers the cause of reason and enlightened governance; Sesto's inability to suppress his, that of chaos and anarchy.

Although Tito is the model of a selfless ruler, he is not the "mere puppet" or "lifeless statue" he has sometimes been called.[21] In act 2, after the central conflict of the opera has come to a head, he will again be put in the position of having to conquer his feelings, but this time those of anger. His struggle begins in his long *accompagnato* following Annio's aria "Tu fosti tradito" (No. 17):

Che orror! che tradimento!	What horror! what betrayal!
Che nera infedeltà! fingersi amico,	What black disloyalty! To pretend to be my friend,
Essermi sempre al fianco: ogni momento	to be always at my side; at every moment
Esiger dal mio core	exacting from my heart
Qualche prova d'amore, e starmi intanto	some proof of love; and all the while
Preparando la morte! ed io sospendo	plotting my death! And still I delay

21. See Einstein, *Mozart,* 409; and Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Vienna,* 391.

Ancor la pena? e la sentenza ancora	the punishment? and still I do not sign
Non segno?—	the sentence?—

Tito's shock, anger, and desire for vengeance are portrayed not in his usual four-square musical lines with their confident triadic outlines, but in a modulating frenzy of exclamations punctuated by the orchestra. The recitative begins on a diminished seventh chord, modulating almost breathlessly and without pause up to the first fermata (m. 13). Here the orchestra, *piano,* comes to a halt. It reenters suddenly, *forte,* on D-flat as Tito exclaims, "Ah, sì lo scellerato mora. / Mora!" (Ah yes, let the scoundrel die. He shall die!). Tito grapples with the bitter feelings his friend's betrayal provokes, attempts to find solace in the decision of the Senate, but finally delays signing the death warrant in the hope that his friend may yet be found innocent: "E s'egli avesse / Qualche arcano a svelarmi?" (But suppose he had some mystery to reveal to me?). As Sesto had earlier predicted, Tito would prefer to find an excuse for this crime ("Parlagli di punir; seuse al delitto / Cerca in ognun" [Talk to him about punishment; he finds an excuse in each case for the crime]).

The sense of conflict Tito felt in act 1 between his obligations as a ruler and his feelings as a man is now magnified by the discoveries of act 2. He must act swiftly and firmly in response to the rebellion, but his affection for Sesto clouds his judgment. In preparation for his audience with Sesto, he struggles with two contradictory impulses: "All'udir che s'appressa / Già mi parla a suo prò l'affetto antico. / Ma nò: trovi il suo Prence, e non l'amico" (As I hear him approach, already the old affection speaks for him. But no: he will find his prince, and not his friend). As a result of this decision, Tito's persona is apparently so transformed that Sesto, on seeing him, immediately exclaims (at the beginning of the trio No. 18) that he hardly knows his Emperor and friend:

(Quello di Tito è il volto!	(This is the face of Tito!
Ah dove oh stelle! è andata	Ah where oh stars! has
La sua dolcezza usata?	his usual gentleness gone?
Or ei mi fà tremar.)	Now he makes me tremble.)

Tito, for his part, expresses surprise at the change in Sesto's face:

(Eterni Dei! di Sesto	(Eternal gods! Is this then
Dunque il sembiante è questo?	the look of Sesto?
Oh come può un delitto	Oh how a crime
Un volto trasformar!)	can transform a face!)

Given the larger subject of this study, this moment in which two friends are so divided by painful feelings that they struggle to recognize each other takes on a special significance. The scene suggests that identity can be so affected by behavior that the familiar can be transformed into the unfamiliar. Knowledge has complicated the recog-

nition process rather than facilitated it. Knowing what they now know, neither Tito nor Sesto can be as he was. The conflict is also internal; feeling what each feels—resentment and remorse, respectively—neither Tito nor Sesto can be (or appear to be) himself.

Immediately following the trio, Tito is moved to "pietà" and drops his imperial air. Acknowledging his conflicted feelings, he asks Sesto, "Se Tito Augusto / Hai potuto obliar, di Tito amico / Come non ti sovvenne?" (If you could forget Tito your Caesar, how could you not remember Tito your friend?). This, of course, is the crux of the matter for Tito, who experiences Sesto's betrayal as a personal crisis: "Di chi fidarmi / In avvenir potrò, se giunse oh Dei! / Anche Sesto a tradirmi?" (Whom will I be able to trust in the future, oh just gods, if even Sesto is willing to betray me?). In response to Sesto's obvious distress, Tito now attempts to divorce himself from his role as emperor:

Odimi, o Sesto:	Hear me, Sesto:
Siam soli: il tuo Sovrano	we are alone: your sovereign
Non è presente. Apri il tuo core a Tito:	is not present. Open your heart to Tito:
Confidati all'amico. Io ti prometto,	confide in a friend. I promise you
Che Augusto nol saprà. Del tuo delitto	that the Caesar will not know. Tell me
Dì la prima cagion. Cerchiamo insieme	the main reason for your crime. Let us seek
Una via di scusarti. Io ne sarei	together a way to explain your actions. [If we could,]
Forse di te più lieto.	I would probably be happier than you.

Despite Tito's plea for an explanation of Sesto's actions, however, Sesto is unwilling to give it, for in explaining one betrayal (of Tito) he would be committing another (of Vitellia). In this curious way, Sesto's unwillingness to confide in him confirms Tito's prior confidence that Sesto would not or could not betray one he loves. Tito was not wrong in his assessment of Sesto's character, nor is he wrong now in supposing that there is an explanation (if not a justification) for his friend's behavior. But since this explanation is withheld, he remains confused and grows increasingly frustrated by Sesto's response, even though, as we have already seen, Sesto attempts to offer proof of his friendship in "Deh per questo istante solo." (One thinks of Tamino's dialogue with the priest and the withholding of narrative there. The challenge is similar: to have faith before knowledge.)

Tito's climactic recognition comes in the recitative immediately following Sesto's aria. Left alone on stage, he once again turns in anger to the paper waiting for his signature, and signs it while singing:

Ove s'intese mai più contumace	Where was more insolent disloyalty
Infedeltà? deggio alla mia negletta	ever heard? I must avenge
Disprezzata clemenza una vendetta.	my neglected, scorned clemency.

Here Tito speaks not with the steady countenance of a ruler but with the passion of a man who has been betrayed. The very formulation of his thoughts betrays their irrationality: clemency, even if rejected or scorned, cannot be avenged. The contradiction is not lost on Tito, whose inner conflict reaches a climax at the realization that he could desire revenge:

Vendetta!—Il cor di Tito	Revenge!—The heart of Tito
Tali sensi produce?—Eh viva—invano	can harbor such feelings?—Well, let him live—
Parlan dunque le leggi?	but do the laws mean nothing?

Torn between vengeance and friendship, he now realizes that he signed the death warrant in opposition to his own feelings ("Ma dunque faccio / Si gran forza al mio cor" [But then I go against my own heart]):

Ah non si lasci	Ah, let me not stray
Il solito cammin.—Viva l'amico!	from my usual path.—Let my friend live!
(lacera il foglio)	*(He tears up the paper.)*
Benchè infedele. E se accusarmi il mondo	though he is a traitor. And if the world
Vuol pur di qualche errore,	wishes to accuse me of some fault,
M'accusi di pietà non di rigore.	let it accuse me of mercy, not severity.
(getta il foglio lacerato)	*(He throws away the torn paper.)*

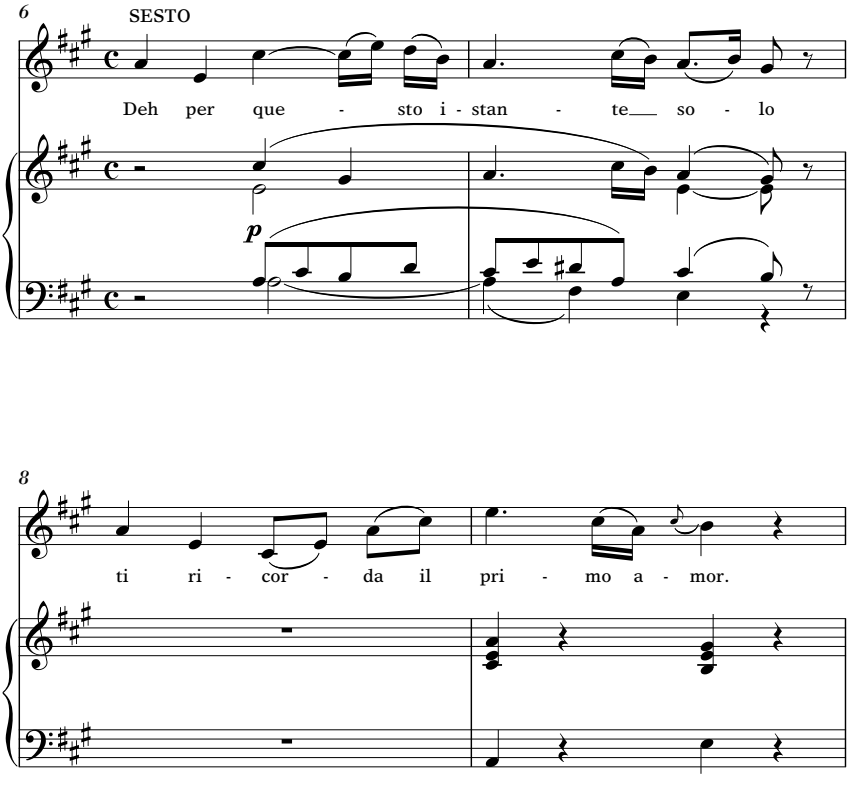
Although these lines are set in simple recitative, they are arguably Tito's most important speech. In revoking his decision, he reconciles the "pietà" of "Tito amico" with the clemency of "Tito Augusto." The moment of recognition comes at the words, "Ah non si lasci / Il solito cammin." In deciding to spare his friend's life, Tito is able to resolve the conflict in himself by subordinating his political obligations to his personal feelings. It is both a rediscovery and a reaffirmation of self. He chooses, as Sarastro might observe, to be man first and emperor second. The proof comes in the lines immediately following, in which he acknowledges his clemency in one breath and rejoices in its accomplishment in the next with the words "Viva l'amico!"

This recognition, achieved in the recitative, now unfolds into a triumphant affirmation in the aria (No. 20):

Se all'impero, amici Dei,	If for the empire, dear gods,
Necessario è un cor severo;	it is necessary to have a severe heart,
O togliete a me l'impero,	either take my empire from me,
O a me date un altro cor.	or give me another heart.

"Se all'impero" is similar in certain ways to Tito's two earlier arias, and even surpasses them in melody, vocal display, and overall effect, as other commentators have

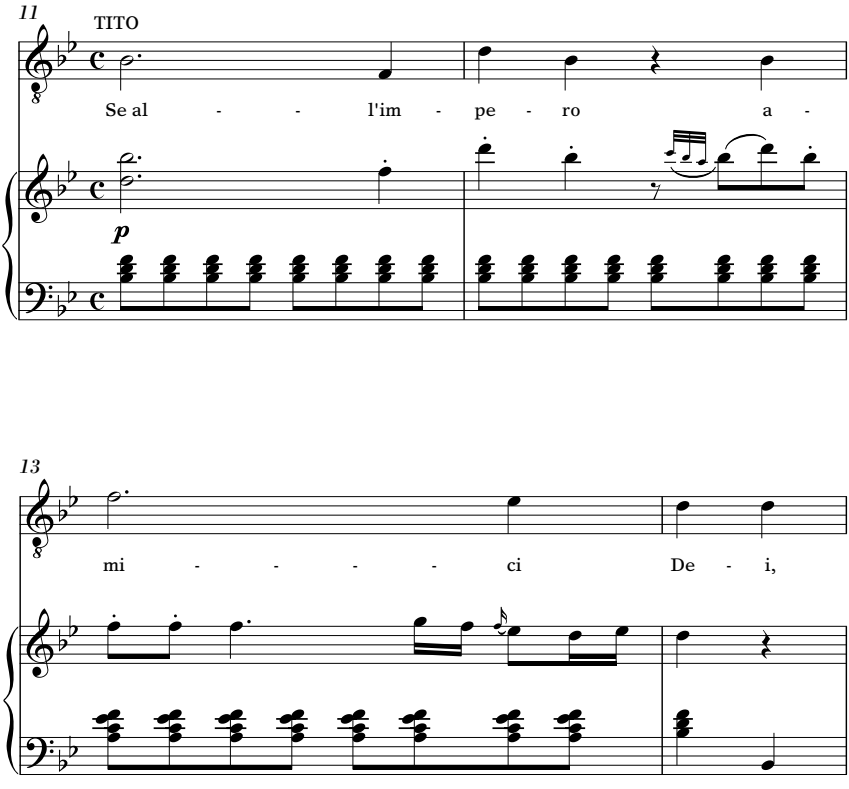
Example 8.8a. *Tito,* "Deh, per questo istante solo" (No. 19), mm. 6–9.



observed.[22] This is only fitting; as his last aria, and given its heightened dramatic significance, it must be strong enough both to convey the power of his convictions and to outshine the two arias he sang in the first act. More important, this aria marks the culmination of Tito's private struggle with the obligations of being a ruler. No longer is he torn between duty and feeling; if the gods do not approve of his enlightened clemency, they may take either his empire or his heart. The proof that heart and head are united in this affirmation of clemency may also be found in the music. The outline of Tito's opening, "Se all'impero," seems to take as its inspiration the opening gesture of Sesto's "Deh per questo istante solo" (see examples 8.8a and 8.8b). The transformation of the gesture into a new tempo, meter, and rhythmic profile prevents Tito's melody from sounding like an echo or a quotation. The significance of the connection between these openings is rather the very different form into which Tito has shaped the same succession of pitches. In the operatic context, greater proof that Tito's resolution has been swayed by Sesto's show of feel-

22. See, among others, Neville, "Cartesian Principles in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito,*" 113; Kunze, *Mozarts Opern,* 536; and Mann, *Operas of Mozart,* 584.

Example 8.8b. *Tito,* "Se all'impero, amici Dei" (No. 20), mm. 11–14.



ing could hardly be imagined than this recomposition of his earlier melody. The presence of impressive, extended melismas in the return of the A section on the word "altro" emphasizes the point that if he were ever to rule differently, it would have to be with a different heart.[23] The second verse (the B section) offers a glimpse of the alternative, which is described as a kind of tyranny: "D'una fede non mi curo, / Che sia frutto del timor" (I care not for a loyalty that is born of fear). In "Se all'impero," text, music, and virtuosity combine to mark the culmination of the process of discovery Tito has undergone.

This moment of private, musical triumph calls for its public counterpart. Tito's resolution to pardon Sesto is as yet unknown to his subjects, including Sesto and Vitellia. The recognition of self, therefore, both anticipates and prepares the final scene of recognition and reconciliation to come, where Tito will publicly pardon the conspirators one and all, reaffirming his dedication to a policy of clemency. Identity,

23. For a discussion of how this aria was written to suit the voice of Antonio Baglioni (who created the roles of both Tito in this opera and Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*), see Rice, *W. A. Mozart:* "*La clemenza di Tito,*" 56–59.

as it is developed here, is not static, nor may it be understood in terms of birthright alone. It is the complex product of the ongoing experience of self-awareness. In this way, the entire process of recognition is vital to the sense of the ending. In his final speech, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, and particularly in his assertion "I am myself," recognition is shown to be crucial to the reaffirmation of his identity:

sia noto a Roma,	Let it be known in Rome,
Ch'io son lo stesso, e ch'io	that I am myself, and that I
Tutto sò, tutti assolvo, e tutto oblio.	know all, forgive everyone, and forget everything.

Afterword

"I Called Him a Papageno"

In an oft-cited letter of early October 1791, Mozart reported the following incident, which had occurred at a performance of *Die Zauberflöte* earlier the same day:

> After lunch I went home at once and composed again until it was time to go to the opera. Leutgeb begged me to take him a second time and I did so. I am taking *Mamma* tomorrow. Hofer has already given her the libretto to read. In her case what will probably happen will be that she will *see* the opera, but not *hear* it. The [name has been crossed out] had a box this evening [and] applauded *everything* most heartily. But he, the know-all [*der allwissende*], showed himself to be such a thorough *Bavarian* that I could not remain or I should have had to call him an ass [*Esel*]. Unfortunately I was there just when the second act began, that is, at the solemn scene. He laughed at everything. At first I was patient enough to draw his attention to a few passages. But he laughed at everything. Well, I could stand it no longer. I called him a Papageno and cleared out. But I don't think the idiot [*der dalk*] understood my remark.[1]

Mozart constructs these events as a narrative in which both he and the "know-all" take part in a little recognition scene that complements the larger recognition drama being enacted on the stage. The "Bavarian" in the box was enthusiastic, but he applauded the opera without seeming to understand it: "He laughed at everything." Mozart, saddened by this show of ignorance, attempted to lead him to knowledge. Just as one of the priests of Sarastro's order might have, Mozart drew his attention to a few passages, but the "know-all" still laughed. Genuinely frustrated, Mozart "could stand it no longer." He called his uncooperative, unreflecting initiate a "Papageno" and left. In the context of the trials in act 2, this mode of leave-taking itself might be understood as an opportunity, a gesture designed to spark new awareness. But the

1. W. A. Mozart, letter of 8–9 October 1791, *Letters,* 969.

"idiot," who failed to understand the "solemn scene," also failed to understand the import of Mozart's remark. The end of this brief narrative is inherent in its beginning, for Mozart's choice of words in calling his companion a "know-all" already indicates the way in which his plot will unfold. For what is a "know-all"? Someone who, by definition, knowing "all" already, believes he has nothing to learn. Mozart's letter reveals his belief that audience members, unlike this gentleman, should be open to knowledge, should come to the theater to be enlightened. Those watching the opera, his narrative suggests, are presented with a choice: to be like Tamino, who embraces knowledge, or like Papageno, who resists enlightenment. (It is worth noting, however, that the rather harsh view of Papageno Mozart expresses in this letter is not borne out in the opera, where Papageno is rewarded despite his shortcomings and where his resistance to enlightenment is mitigated by the fact that it does not seem to be a requirement for his happiness.)

Mozart's intentions as expressed in a letter such as this, of course, even if they could be known, would have no necessary bearing on the reception and interpretation of his artwork. Yet there is great value in this little recognition narrative because, in keeping with eighteenth-century aesthetic theory and practice, it reminds us that he believed that operas are meaningful representations, and that the impression they made on their audiences mattered. In the same letter, Mozart comments that his mother-in-law, whom he plans to take to the opera the next day, "will *see* the opera, but not *hear* it." This remark, too, seems to express some anxiety on the author's part that his artwork, whether literally or figuratively, will fall on deaf ears.[2] He was apparently thinking along these lines the night before, when he wrote to Constanze: "But what always gives me most pleasure is the *silent approval!* You can see how this opera [*Zauberflöte*] is becoming more and more esteemed."[3] Although it is impossible to know exactly what the phrase "*silent approval*" signifies, it seems to connote a sense of awe or wonder on the part of the audience, an experience of new understanding central to the opera's "becoming more and more esteemed." Silence, an indication of approval and appreciation, is taken as a sign that something has been understood. This notion of the value of silent approval is reminiscent of an earlier comment Mozart made about audiences in Vienna in a letter to Leopold of 1781: "I told you about the applause in the theatre, but I must add that what delighted and surprised me most of all was the *amazing silence*" (emphasis mine).[4] Like

2. Solomon suggests that this remark is "a reference to [Frau Weber's] hearing difficulties" (*Mozart: A Life,* 487). When read in the context of the entire letter, however, Mozart's comment seems to invite additional interpretation.

3. W. A. Mozart, letter of 7–8 October 1791, *Letters,* 967.

4. W. A. Mozart, letter of 8 April 1781, *Letters,* 722. In this letter Mozart goes on to say that he was also delighted by "the cries of 'Bravo!' while I was playing." It may seem odd that cries from the audience *while* he was playing ("mitten im spiellen [*sic*]") could be thought to be similar to the remarkable silence Mozart observed. But these signs of audience approval are not as different as they might at first seem. Both are involuntary expressions of amazement, suggesting the success of the performance and the responsiveness of its audience.

"silent approval," the phrase "amazing silence" seems to describe an immediate and involuntary expression of sympathy and understanding. The work of art is valued for its aesthetic qualities (its coherence, its beauty, its power to move us, and so on) as well as for its capacity to construct experience in moral, philosophical, and other ways. Recognition, therefore, is not confined to the characters on the stage; it is a process that engages the audience in the theater.

Beyond Mozart

I would like to conclude with two observations about the workings of recognition in the operatic context, one about works of this period, the other about opera in general. First, in the operas of the late eighteenth century—Mozart's, of course, but also those of his contemporaries—the recognitions of family ties and birthright appear to be far less important than recognitions of self, knowledge, purpose, or feeling. In this respect, Mozart's operas may be taken as representative of the ideals and aspirations of his age. One sees this not only in the numerous works where there are no recognitions of family ties to be found, but also, and more importantly, in works such as *Idomeneo* and *La clemenza di Tito,* where the recognition of blood relation or birthright is superseded in significance by recognitions of enlightened governance and human feeling. This shift in the way recognition is dramatized and valued reflects the view found in much eighteenth-century philosophy, literature, and art that human destiny was no longer controlled by birthright, and that all men—and even some women—could attain equality through education, industry, and individual merit. While such a view may be understood as, at best, only a partial reflection of a far more complex reality, there can be no doubt that it figured prominently in the ideology of the period. The social and individual freedoms represented on the stage in Mozart's operas, whether or not they were pervasive in everyday life, were central tenets of Enlightenment thought (many of them supported by Josephinian reforms). This shift in recognition, then, was fundamental to contemporaneous conceptions of identity. The social and emotional bonds one chooses for oneself—in marriage, for example—are at least as important as those into which one is born. Most important, identity cannot simply be revealed as it was in the *Oedipus* story because it can no longer be understood as predetermined and static. Identity has become the province of the individual, as the rise of the "Pamela" phenomenon suggests, with its celebration of character and feeling as measures of social value and stature. The new freedom to discover and improve the self emerges from an atmosphere of optimism and prosperity that defined the age.

The second observation is that in operas of all types and periods, the recognition scene remains the place where the central themes of the work are most forcefully dramatized. Critical study of recognition therefore can illuminate operas of diverse genres, sensibilities, and historical contexts. In the operas of Mozart's day, recognition is often "marvelous" in the Aristotelian sense, as we have seen, because the

artistic vision is an essentially optimistic one. In many operas of the nineteenth century, however, as in Greek tragedy, in Shakespeare, and in many nineteenth-century novels, recognition uncovers truths that separate lovers, unseat monarchs, and ruin lives. In these contexts, recognition is often to be feared, for knowledge—when it comes—brings tragedy and destruction. In *Rigoletto,* for example, the jester's plot to avenge his daughter, Gilda, by having the Duke murdered is revealed at the end, in a powerful recognition scene, to have brought about the opposite of what he had intended. As he drags the sack containing what he believes is the Duke's body toward the river, he hears the Duke singing "La donna è mobile" in the distance, opens the sack, and discovers that the death he has purchased is that of his own Gilda. At the end of *Otello,* the Moor discovers—too late—that in his jealous rage he has murdered the wife who was never unfaithful to him. In *Carmen,* when Don José, unable to hold on to the willful Carmen, finally recognizes that she would rather die than sacrifice her freedom to be with him, he kills her in a fit of passion. In the *Ring* cycle, recognition uncovers greed, avarice, ambition, adultery, incest, betrayal, murderous plots, and finally leads, at the close of *Götterdämmerung,* to the fiery destruction of Siegfried, Brünnhilde, Wotan, Walhalla, and the entire world of the gods.

In operas of every genre and period, recognition lies at the heart of the drama, marking the intersection of plot and theme and illuminating whatever themes of knowledge the plot seeks to dramatize. The "scandal" of recognition opens a hermeneutical window that makes possible a new way of looking at opera's "problem moments," as well as at the critical controversies they have engendered. I end, therefore, with the suggestion that what recognition has revealed about Mozart's operas is only a beginning. Critical thinking about recognition and recognition scenes has the potential to tell us a great deal about the operas of other periods.

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