

8 · CONSTRUCTING *LE NOZZE*
DI FIGARO

Lorenzo Da Ponte is our main witness as to how he and Mozart put together their three operas. Yet his memoirs, first published in 1823, mystify the topic more than they illuminate it. Some additional light is shed by an earlier publication entitled *An Extract from the Life of Lorenzo Da Ponte, with the history of several dramas written by him, and among others, Il Figaro, Il Don Giovanni & La Scuola degli Amanti set to music by Mozart* (New York, 1819).¹ Whoever translated this from Da Ponte's original Italian worked from a text different in many details from what was published four years later as the *Memorie*.² The well-known passage about how the poet must rack his brains in order to invent situations for the buffo finales reads as follows in the *Extract*:

This Finale in Italian comic operas, though strictly connected with the other parts of the drama, is a kind of little comedy by itself: it requires a distinct plot, and should be particularly interesting: in this part are chiefly displayed the genius of a musical composer, and the power of the singers; and for this is reserved the most striking effect of the drama.

Recitativo is entirely excluded from this division of the piece. The whole of it is sung, and it must contain every species of melody. The adagio, the allegro, the andante, the cantabile, the armonioso, the strepitoso, the arcistrepitoso, with which last every act commonly ends. It is a theatrical rule, that in the course of the Finale, all the singers, however numerous they may be, must make their appearance in solos,

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1. I am indebted to John Stone of London for calling my attention to this early form of a part of the memoirs, which remains unknown to the specialist literature on Mozart. His annotated edition of the *Extract* is eagerly awaited.

2. Da Ponte's memoirs have undergone many modern editions and translations. To be preferred is the annotated critical edition of the *Memorie* by G. Gambarin and F. Nicolini (Bari, 1918), in the series *Scrittori d'Italia*.

duets, trios, quartets etc. etc. And this rule the poet is under the absolute necessity of observing, whatever difficulties and absurdities it may occasion; and though all the critics, with Aristotle at their head exclaim against it, I must observe here that the real Aristotles of a dramatic poet* are in general, not only the composer of the music, but also the first buffo, the prima donna and not very seldom the 2d 3d and 4th buffoon of the company.

(pp. 5-6)

Da Ponte changed this passage in his memoirs by adding more about the "chiusa" or "stretta" that closes the finale, by exaggerating the procession of singers that had to appear—"tutti i cantanti, se fosser trecento, a uno, a due, a tre, a sei, a sessanta, per cantarvi de' soli, de' duetti, de' terzetti, de' sestetti, de' sessantetti"—and, what is more instructive still, by deleting the last clause (beginning "I must observe"). The asterisk on "dramatic poet" sent the reader to a footnote, which read: "I have described the fate of the poor dramatic poet in a letter to Casti, the perusal of which, I flatter myself will afford some entertainment to my Italian reader, it will be found at the end of this pamphlet."³ Da Ponte probably deleted the final clause because it came too close to a famous passage in the memoirs of Goldoni, describing his first encounter with the "rules" of libretto writing, delivered in the form of this admonition from a friend: "The Damma per musica, which is in itself an imperfect composition, has been subjected to the use of rules, contrary, it is true, to those of Aristotle, of Horace, and of all those who have written about poetics, but necessary in order to serve music, actors, and composers."⁴

Da Ponte was willing to credit Goldoni in the *Extract* for some "very pretty" comic librettos. He had a kind word also for the genial author of *Le bourru bienfaisant*: "I made use accordingly of the excellent play of Goldoni entitled *Il Burburo di buon core*." But he removed these references to his illustrious Venetian predecessor in the memoirs. It is possible that the unfavorable comparisons of Da Ponte's memoirs with the more stylish memoirs of Goldoni were at work already in the early 1820s,⁵ souring Da Ponte to the point of being unwilling to give Goldoni any credit at all. He was unhappy as well about sharing any of his renown with singers; the "first buffo," named ahead even of the prima donna, can mean in this Viennese context none other than Benucci.

Francesco Benucci was the greatest basso buffo of his generation. He was the mainstay of the Italian troupe in the Burgtheater from their arrival in 1783 throughout the decade that followed. Besides the role of Figaro, he created the first Viennese Leporello (1788) and the first Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* (1790). He was a particular favorite of Emperor Joseph II, as well as of the Viennese public, both

3. For the Epistle to Casti, with translation, see pp. 99-101.

4. "Il Damma per musica, ch'è per se stesso un componimento imperfetto, è stato suggerato dall'uso delle regole, contrarie, egli è vero, a quelle di Aristotile, di Orazio e di tutti quelli che hanno scritto della Poetica, ma necessarie per servire alla Musica, agli Attori e ai Compositori"; Goldoni, *Tutte le opere* 1: 688. In the *Mémoires* (*Tutte le opere* 1: 258) Goldoni adds to his list: "Il faut consulter le peintre-décorateur" ("It is necessary to consult the painter-decorator").

5. Sheila Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte: The Life and Times of Mozart's Librettist* (London, 1985), p. 201.

for his acting and for his singing. If a single resource had to be named as the strength that emboldened Mozart to conceive of writing an opera on the scandalous Figaro play, we suggest that it was Benucci. His name was not deemed worthy of mention in Da Ponte's memoirs, as we have seen, yet it occurs very often in the correspondence between the emperor and his theater director, Count Rosenberg. Just a few months after the premiere of *Figaro* on 1 May 1786, when it was a question of rehiring Nancy Storace, the first Susanna, Joseph wrote to Rosenberg: "As to La Storace, if we can keep her, which I would hope, it would be necessary to engage her securely for the year 1788 . . . but never to the detriment of Benucci, because this man is worth more than two Storaces."⁶ Da Ponte's name does not occur in this particular correspondence, from which it might be inferred that he too stood on a lower rung than Benucci, as viewed by the powers that ran the Burgtheater.

Joseph II framed his objections to the Figaro play in a letter to Count Pergen of 31 January 1785, taking care to point out that the censor, if he did not ban the play outright, would have to see that it was cleaned up.

I understand that the well-known comedy *Le mariage de Figaro* has been proposed in a German translation for the Kärntnerthor Theater. Since this play contains much that is offensive as I understand it, the censor will either reject it altogether or have such changes made in it that will allow him to take responsibility for its performance and the impression it makes on the public.⁷

Da Ponte echoes the banning in his memoirs, but not the emperor's suggestion of redeeming the play through revisions: "The emperor had shortly before forbidden the company of the German theater to perform this comedy, which he said was written too liberally for a proper audience."⁸ In the *Extract* he writes:

There was an obstacle which first appeared insurmountable—the emperor had a few days before forbidden its performance in Vienna. I resolved nevertheless, to write the drama secretly, and wait for a good opportunity to have it performed in Vienna, or in some other city. In the course of two months the opera was completed in all its parts; and as fortune would have it, the person we feared [Salieri], a great rival of Mozart, and who had the chief direction of the theatre, was then absent from the

6. "Quant à la Storace, si on ne peut la conserver, ce que je desirerois, il faudra au moins l'engager bien sûrement pour l'année 1788 . . . mais jamais au detriment de Benucci, puisque cet homme vaut plus que deux Storaces"; Payer von Thurn, *Joseph II als Theaterdirektor*, p. 70; letter of 29 September 1786.

7. "Ich vernehme, dass die bekannte Komödie *le Mariage de Figaro* in einer deutschen Übersetzung für das Kärntnerthortheater angetragen seyn solle; da nun dieses Stück viel Anstössiges enthält; so verstehe ich mich, dass der Censor solches entweder ganz verwerfen, oder doch solche Veränderungen darinn veranlassen werde, dass er für die Vorstellung dieser Piece und den Eindruck, den sie machen dürfte, haften werde könnten"; *ibid.*, p. 60.

8. "Vietato aveva pochi di prima l'Imperadore alla compagnia del teatro tedesco di rappresentare quella comedia, che scritta era, diceva egli, troppo liberamente per un costumato uditorio"; Da Ponte, *Memorie*, p. 110.

city. I seized the opportunity to offer Figaro to the sovereign in person; informing his majesty that Mozart had composed the music.

(pp. 13-14)

Taken literally, Da Ponte's "few days" after the emperor's ban would mean that work began on the opera as early as February 1785. The two months in question (shortened to six weeks in the memoirs) are unlikely to have come before the summer of 1785 even so, or at least no earlier than the departure from Vienna in April of Leopold Mozart, who was in ignorance of the project until early autumn. As to Salieri's absence from the city, Da Ponte has confused 1785 with 1786; Salieri was in Vienna throughout 1785 and left for Paris in the spring of 1786.⁹

By October 1785 at the latest the opera was accepted for production in the Burgtheater. In a letter of 11 November 1785 to his daughter, Leopold Mozart says that he had a letter from Wolfgang dated 2 November describing how he was overwhelmed with work on *Le nozze di Figaro*. With a long acquaintance with his son's working habits, and the trials over *Idomeneo* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* still fresh in his memory, Leopold worries most about the text and the time-consuming negotiations that would have to take place before it suited the composer exactly:

He begs forgiveness because he is up to his ears since he must finish the opera *Le nozze di Figaro*. . . . I know the play; it is a very intricate work, and the translation from the French will surely require much revision in order to become an opera, if it is to have the effect an opera should have. God grant that the action comes off; about the music I have no doubt. That will cost him much running back and forth, and arguing, until he gets the libretto so arranged as he wishes for his purpose. And then he will always put things off and lose valuable time, according to his lovely habit; now he must go at it seriously because he is being driven by Count Rosenberg.¹⁰

Da Ponte painted Count Rosenberg as an enemy who tried to stop the opera, not as the theater manager of exemplary loyalty to the emperor who drove Mozart to finish his score. Contradictions accumulate, and it finally becomes difficult to accept Da Ponte's main claim, that he won the day for the new opera in a personal interview with the emperor. The *Extract* parallels the memoirs at this point: "You know very well, said the Emperor, that Mozart, who is certainly great in instrumental music, has never composed more than one drama, and that not good for

9. Ignaz von Mosel, *Ueber das Leben und die Werke des Anton Salieri, k. k. Hofkapellmeisters* (Vienna, 1827), p. 93.

10. "Er bittet um Verzeihung, weil er über Hals und Kopf die opera, *le Nozze di Figaro*, fertig machen muss. . . . — ich kenne die piece, es ist ein sehr mühsames Stück, und die Übersetzung aus dem franz: hat sicher zu einer opera frey müssen umgeändert werden, wenns für eine opera wirkung thun soll. Gott gebe, dass es in der action ausfällt; an der Musik zweifle ich nicht. das wird ihm eben vieles Lauffen und disputieren kosten, bis er das Buch so eingerichtet bekommt, wie ers zu seiner Absicht zu haben wünschet: — und er wird immer daran geschoben, und sich hipsch Zeit gelassen haben, nach seiner schönen Gewohnheit, nun muss er auf einmahl mit Ernst daran, weil er vom Gr: Rosenberg getrieben wird"; letter of 11 November 1785.

much. And had it not been for your majesty's protection, replied I, I should never have written more than one drama in Vienna" (p. 14). Da Ponte, newly arrived in the Habsburg dominions, might have been aware only of *Die Entführung* among Mozart's earlier operas, but it is not possible to believe that Joseph's knowledge was so limited; his words about Mozart having written only one opera were put in his mouth so as to set up Da Ponte's clever response above.

But that Marriage of Figaro, returned he, I have forbidden to be performed in the national theatre: you ought to have known that. Sir, answered I, as I had to write an opera, and not a comedy, I have been able to omit certain scenes, and shorten others, and I have carefully expunged whatever might offend the decency of a theatre over which your majesty presides. If that is the case, replied he, I rely on your opinion for the goodness of the music, and on your prudence for the choice of the characters: you may immediately give the parts to the copyist.

(ibid.)

(The translator has done poorly here in rendering "della vostra prudenza quanto al costume"—meaning theatrical propriety, as in Da Ponte's phrase quoted above, "per un costumato uditorio.")

If we believe Da Ponte, the emperor capitulated with the speed of a *commedia dell'arte* clown. Rare will be the reader so credulous as this. By suggesting in the first place that the play be revised to make it more respectable, Joseph had from the beginning shown more interest in it than Da Ponte let on. And although the planned production in the Kärntnerthor Theater was abandoned, Joseph allowed the German translation of the play to be printed as it stood, uncut, something unthinkable even a few years earlier, when Maria Theresa was alive. What Da Ponte, many years later, claimed credit for initiating—the revision, cutting, and cleaning up of the play—is similar to what Joseph told Perger would have to be done in January 1785. We suggest that, contrary to Da Ponte's version, the emperor was in on the "secret" from the beginning.

At this point in his tale Da Ponte brings in Mozart. In the *Extract*, the composer is made to seem an eavesdropper waiting in the shadows for his cue:

I instantly brought Mozart into the imperial presence, to perform some pieces of his music; and the emperor was most agreeably surprised. I need not add, that this proceeding was by no means gratifying to the other composers, nor to the manager, Count Rosenberg [*sic*] who hated both Mozart and myself. We had to make head against a host of intriguers, both before and after the representation of the piece.

(pp. 14–15)

This account must have struck Da Ponte as somewhat brisk, or lacking in plausibility, because he padded it with several further details between 1819 and 1823. In the memoirs he runs to Mozart to give him the good news, only to find an imperial courier already at hand with a note bidding the composer to bring his score to the

palace instantly. Mozart obeys the royal command and plays diverse pieces, "which pleased the emperor marvellously and, without any exaggeration, astounded him." There follows a digression on the emperor's exquisite musical taste—all this material is added to the version found in the *Extract*.

The new opera was being talked about openly by late 1785, and not only in Vienna. In far-distant Paris, the German composer Joseph Martin Kraus knew what was going on; in a letter to his sister dated 26 December 1785 he wrote about Mozart: "He is working on his Figaro, an opera in 4 acts, about which I rejoice."¹¹ The pressure on Mozart by Count Rosenberg to finish the score in November points to an original plan to stage the opera after Christmas, during the Carnival season. But the premiere was deferred until after Easter in the event. One reason for the delay may have been the absence of Luisa Laschi, who created the role of the countess; she had been given leave to sing at Naples during Carnival.¹² Martín y Soler's successful setting of Da Ponte's *Il burbuco di buon core* occupied Storace, Benucci, and the other singers of the Italian troupe during January and February 1786; and Benucci, Mandini, and Storace also had to learn Salieri's *Prima la musica, e poi le parole* for the special entertainment in the Orangerie of Schönbrunn Palace on 7 February 1786, to which Mozart contributed music for still other singers in the play *Der Schauspieldirektor*. In addition, there was the performance during Lent of *Idomeneo* on 13 March in the palace theater of Prince Auersperg, for which Mozart had to make adjustments in the score and write two new pieces.

A long-standing project of the emperor came to fulfillment with the staging of Paisiello's *La serva padrona* in the Burgtheater late in March. Joseph had received the score from Count Cobenzl, his ambassador to the court of St. Petersburg, three years earlier, at which time he put in a standing order for the scores of Paisiello's operas as they appeared—but he specified only the comic, not the serious. The performance is known of only through an entry in Zinzendorf's diary, dated 26 March 1786: "à l'opéra La serva padrona, musique nouvelle de Paisiello au lieu de l'ancienne de Pergolese. Benucci et Storace jouèrent."¹³ It was not until 1 May 1786, then, that *Le nozze di Figaro* was ready to be exposed to the public, after several weeks of rehearsals. The emperor attended the dress rehearsal on 29 April; Zinzendorf confirms Da Ponte's memoirs on this point.

11. "Er arbeitet nun an seinem Figaro, eine Operette in 4 Aufzügen, worauf ich mich herzlich freue"; Irmgard Leux-Henschen, *Joseph Martin Kraus in seinen Briefen* (Stockholm, 1978), p. 310; the letter is written to Kraus's sister Marianna in Frankfurt am Main.

12. Roger Fiske in his article on Nancy Storace in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music* (London, 1980), 18:182, says that the part of the countess was intended originally for Storace, on the basis of what evidence we know not. Since Storace was more experienced than Laschi, and more highly paid, it seems reasonable to believe that she had her pick of either role.

13. "To the opera *La serva padrona*, new music by Paisiello instead of the old setting by Pergolesi. Benucci and Storace played in it"; *Joseph II und Graf Ludwig Cobenzl: Ihr Briefwechsel*, ed. A. Beer and J. von Fiedler (Vienna, 1901), 1:370; cited in H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works* (Bloomington, Ind., 1976–80), 2:413n.

Salieri provides a detailed description of how a composer approached setting a comic opera to music in those days (see the Appendix to this chapter). His teacher Florian Leopold Gassmann, imperial court composer, was called to Italy to write an opera seria (Metastasio's *Ezio*) for the Roman Carnival of 1770. In his absence, young Salieri (born in 1750) was asked by Giovan Gastone Boccherini, brother of the composer and a dancer in imperial service, to set a libretto he had written with the help of Raniero de Calzabigi. The result was *Le donne letterate* (adapted from Molière's *Les femmes savantes*), given in the Burgtheater in January 1770. Salieri says they first decided on the distribution of the roles, taking into account the abilities of the singers then in the company (and, it goes without saying, subject to the approval of the theater director). He read the libretto through, then read it again, and read the lyric verses a third time. Only then did he begin to think of the music: "Following the practice of my teacher, I decided first on the key appropriate to the character of each lyric number." After further reading of the text he began to think of some passages in terms of melody for the first time. When he returned to his task after lunch he was seized with a desire to compose the music for the *introduzione*. He sought to imagine the character and situation of the actors as if they were alive before his eyes, and suddenly he found an orchestral motion that seemed to carry and bind together the sung texts of different sections: "I transported myself to the parterre of the theater and imagined hearing my ideas performed: they seemed characteristic; I wrote them down, tried them over, and as I was satisfied, I continued further." In half an hour a sketch for the *introduzione* stood on the music desk. The same evening, working until midnight, he attacked the first finale, reading it over twice before making a tonal and rhythmic plan of the whole, "which took three hours, without a single note being written down." In four weeks' time the score was more than two-thirds complete.

Several useful points emerge from Salieri's candid observations. The finales required special attention from composers no less than from librettists (and the same applies to the finale procedure moved to the beginning of the act, i.e., the *introduzione*). Not only the finale's sequence of keys, but also their sequence of time changes required advance planning. Salieri's many successes as a theater composer surely had a lot to do with visualizing how his music would work in projecting the dramatic action across the footlights. His notion of orchestral textures and rhythms tying together separate sung passages, one of his earliest musical thoughts, represents a valuable testimony to the beginnings of this indispensable finale technique. His first musical thoughts of all, it should be emphasized, were how to stretch the available tonalities over the whole framework so as to match key and textual affect (while achieving both unity and variety, he might have added). In this vital respect, he says, he merely copied the practice of his teacher, Gassmann.

Mozart fell heir to the Viennese opera buffa tradition of Gassmann and Salieri, and there is no reason to believe he operated very differently when approaching a libretto (except that he seems to have taken more pains than any other composer

with the shape of the libretto in the first place). In 1785 for him, as in 1770 for Salieri, a great French comedy provided the initial impetus. At this time the art of the finale was raised to its highest peak of poetic and dramatic perfection in the two crowning glories of the species that end acts 2 and 4 of *Le nozze di Figaro*. Choosing the key of the second finale meant choosing the keynote of the opera. There were not many possible choices, to be sure, for only three keys commonly accommodated trumpets and drums in the 1780s: C, D, and E-flat. Mozart chose D major. Since he wanted a noisy end with trumpets and drums to the opera's medial finale as well (to ensure applause, as he said in so many words about the finale to act 1 of *Die Entführung*), his choice was narrowed down to C or E-flat—the keynote would not do, for obvious reasons. He finally chose E-flat to end act 2 and, perhaps as an inspired afterthought, also to begin it. This still left C major to close acts 1 and 3 in a blaze of trumpets and timpani, while providing the needed tonal contrast with acts 2 and 4. With the distribution of his three universal keys, the scaffolding of the edifice was in place. Every subsequent choice of key had to be calculated on textual affect (and traditional musical affect too), from the one side, and relationship to the three act-ending keys from the other.

Eighteenth-century sensibilities allowed that a key could take on a quite specific personality, or, depending on how it was used, it could remain neutral. This, at least, is one way we might read Schubart's enigmatic statement on the subject: "Every key is either colored, or not colored."¹⁴ Take the case of Mozart's use of the key E-flat in *Figaro*. It was broad enough to embrace the *strepitosissimo* racket that ends the finale of act 2; but when used to project a tender mood and colored by delicate shadings from the clarinets and other winds, it assumed the "plaintive softness" claimed for it by the historian Hawkins (1776), and also the "noble and pathetic" character attributed to it by the composer Grétry (1797).¹⁵ By a stroke of genius (surely Mozart's idea), this potentially loaded weapon of affect-laden E-flat as amorous plaint was planted at the beginning of act 2 in a solo scene for the countess, marking her first appearance—"Porgi, amor, qualche ristoro," capitalizing in text and music on a long tradition adherent to the *aria d'affetto*.

More was at stake for Mozart and Da Ponte than just a tradition of love songs in E-flat, though. They were putting themselves in competition with a solo scene for young Rosina, before she married Count Almaviva, in the opera by which more than any other *Figaro* would be measured: *Il barbiere di Siviglia* by Petrosellini and Paisiello. Exactly halfway through *Il barbiere*, at the end of act 1, part 2, Rosina, alone onstage for the only time in the opera, pours out her secret emotions; amorously attracted to Lindoro (the count in disguise), she sends her sighs up to Heaven, asking it, in its justice and in knowledge of her honest heart, to grant her

14. "Jeder Ton ist entweder gefärbt, oder nicht gefärbt"; Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, p. 377.

15. Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1983), pp. 70, 107.

soul the peace it does not have. The poet says this very economically in a cavatina of four short, mellifluous lines:

Giusto ciel, che conoscete
Quanto il cor onesto sia,
Deh voi date all'alma mia
Quella pace che non ha.

Paisiello set this plea as a Larghetto in 2/4 and in E-flat, with lots of wind color and delicate chromatic shadings, particularly from the pair of clarinets that answer a pair of bassoons in little fluttering motions. A fourteen-bar orchestral introduction exposing the main theme precedes the vocal entry. Mozart does the same in fifteen bars, preceded by a two-bar "curtain" (because he is opening an act). Paisiello's melody sinks gracefully from the high third to the upper tonic, then pauses for a *messa di voce* on B-flat before a syncopated flurry carries the voice upward by leaps, then down to the lower tonic (Ex. 8.1). His harmonies move slowly, by the bar; his choice of a modal degree (the supertonic) for the second chord is one of his favorites, as is the very tender progression of subdominant six-four chord to tonic at the second "Quanto il cor." A more dramatic tone intrudes when, in the middle of the piece, there is a forte outburst in the orchestra on an augmented-sixth chord and Rosina responds with a "giusto ciel," carrying her voice up to high G-flat (see Ex. 8.2). The Rosina who sang this with great success in the first Viennese production of *Il barbiere* was Nancy Storace. It was in all likelihood this piece that won Storace the emperor's praise for her cantabile.

Countess Almaviva sings a more desperate plea for relief from the torments of love. Once again she takes us, the audience, into her confidence, but no one else. Only a few years older, she is a lot wiser and sadder. The young count not only neglects her but has become a philanderer as well. Her plea finishes with an ultimatum—give me back my love or let me die:

Porgi, amor, qualche ristoro
Al mio duolo, a' miei sospir:
O mi rendi il mio tesoro,
O mi lascia, almen morir!

Mozart adopts an emotional temperature closer to "Giusto ciel" than this text might suggest. The same key, meter, tempo, and rhythmic motions recur, and the similarities do not stop there. Mozart uses a *messa di voce* on B-flat, but in the more traditional position of introducing the voice part. His instrumentation is surprisingly similar, with paired clarinets responding to paired bassoons. Their whispered sighs include many of the same chromatic shadings. Does the emphasis on modal degrees (e.g., ii and vi in m. 22) not sound familiar? Also the lingering sweetness of subdominant six-four to tonic? Perhaps the syncopated rise and fall of the melody in mm. 11–13 testifies most minutely to his fascination with Paisiello's

EXAMPLE 8.1. Paisiello, *Il barbiere*
di Siviglia, No. II

Larghetto
14 ROSINA

Giu - sto ciel che co - no - sce - te quan - to il cor o - ne - sto si - a

19
quan - to il cor o - ne - - - - sto si - a

EXAMPLE 8.2. Paisiello, *Il barbiere*
di Siviglia, No. II

42 ROSINA

f Giu - sto ciel, giu - sto ciel

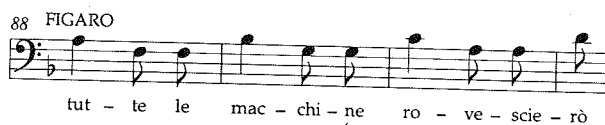
cavatina. To project the last word, *morir*, Mozart takes the voice up to a prolonged A-flat—a moment of greater intensity, and appropriately so, than Paisiello's momentary high G-flat. Mozart's minor-ninth appoggiatura on G-flat in the first bassoon (m. 38) is a personal touch that will recur in several of his late works. Every musical gesture counts to the full in Mozart's terse construction, and nothing could be altered or omitted. By comparison, Paisiello's cavatina is somewhat loose-jointed and discursive, though not inferior in sensuous appeal.

Mozart seems to have planted a few musical links between the characters in *Il barbiere* and their reappearance in *Le nozze di Figaro*. It would not take the most astute listener to catch a resemblance between what Figaro sings in the duetto (No. 6) of *Il barbiere*, when telling the count that his shop is only four steps away (Ex. 8.3), with the vigorous dactyls he sings at the end of "Se vuol ballare," now in defiance of the same count (Ex. 8.4). The melody is also made to introduce him in act 2, scene 1, when he sings it to "la la la la la la la la," lending it the force of a "signature tune" with a life of its own. In the text of *Il barbiere*, Figaro is described from the outset by the count as "grottesco e comico" and "grosso e grasso," whereas Figaro recognizes the count under his disguise by "quel aria nobile." Paisiello conveys Figaro's earthy and rather doltish qualities from the very first words he sings, a song he is making up (none too expertly) in praise of wine; it begins with a thud on the downbeat and uses the combination of 6/8 time and G major in a singsong way that will characterize Mozart's peasants (see Ex. 8.5). It is Figaro, of course, who leads on the peasants in act 1 of *Le nozze* so that they can sing their little chorus of praise to the count for abolishing the *jus primae noctis* (Ex. 8.6). Both airs project the same simple-minded rusticity, aided by the same flat-footed beginning without upbeat and the stepwise movement of the tunes from the tonic up to

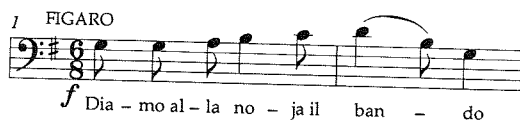
EXAMPLE 8.3. Paisiello, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, No. 6



EXAMPLE 8.4. *Figaro*, No. 3



EXAMPLE 8.5. Paisiello, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, No. 2



EXAMPLE 8.6. *Figaro*, No. 8



EXAMPLE 8.7. *Figaro*, No. 15



the fifth, as in many folksongs. G major conveys an equally rustic, down-to-earth quality when Figaro breaks into the finale of act 2 in *Le nozze*, which had just reached a big cadence on B-flat, and without any transition we hear the pipers who have come to start the nuptial festivities (Ex. 8.7). That tune could have been placed in Figaro's mouth in the previous opera by Paisiello without seeming out of place, but it comes from elsewhere, being an old vaudeville tune from Paris that had been known in Vienna for at least thirty years, ever since Gluck arranged it in *Le Chinois poli en France* (Ex. 8.8).¹⁶

Did Mozart know he was quoting a vaudeville of many years earlier? What appears most likely is that this simple but catchy little air had entered the reper-

16. Bruce Alan Brown, "Christoph Willibald Gluck and Opéra-Comique in Vienna, 1754-1764," Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1986, pp. 345-46.

EXAMPLE 8.8. Gluck, *Le Chinois*
poli en France, Vaudeville

Rit.: 1

2 Vins. *f*

Basso

D'u - ne vai - ne crain - te mon

ame est at - tein - te, u - ne vai - ne crain - te vous tient en sus - pens; so -

yés plus pru - den - te et ce - dés au tems, comme il se pré - sen - te pour

moi je le prends, comme il se pré - sen - te pour moi je le prends.

tory of dances played by Viennese tavern fiddlers and the like—in other words, had survived the intervening decades between 1756 and 1786 as a popular tune. If this theory is correct, Mozart not only knew that he was quoting but also made a most canny musical choice by which to convey to his audience the arrival of the rustic pipers.

The most comic role in Paisiello's *Barbiere* belonged not to Figaro but to old Doctor Bartolo, played in Vienna by Benucci. Some of the sardonic wit of the duped Bartolo in the earlier opera seems to have passed into Benucci's part as Figaro, who himself comes to believe he has been duped in the last act of *Le nozze*. The final aria for Figaro/Benucci accordingly became a bitter recitation of women's failings. Here Da Ponte faced a case of major surgery. Beaumarchais had made Figaro's great monologue in act 5 the high point of the play. Recounting the picaresque details of his life, Figaro takes the opportunity to denounce aristocratic

privilege in no uncertain terms, along with rulers, prisons, censors, and a few other choice targets (accounting in large part for what Joseph II found "offensive" in the play). His denunciation of women is only the framing prelude and coda of this famous tirade, which begins: "O femme! femme! femme! créature faible et décevante!" and ends with another threefold invocation: "Suzon, Suzon, Suzon! que tu me donnes de tourments!" Da Ponte used the latter as the climax of the recitative leading into the aria "Oh Susanna, Susanna, quanto pena mi costi!"

For his catalog of invectives he relied more on older Italian models. Mozart, we suggest, profited from Benucci's acting and singing of Bartolo's scornful aria in E-flat, in which he taunts Rosina (Ex. 8.9). It debases all the amorous-noble-pathetic content of E-flat, replacing it with their opposites. The rhythmic pattern Paisiello uses is one of his preferred ones for an eight-syllable line, the accent patterns of the words permitting. To set Figaro's hard words, Mozart chooses the same key, meter, and tempo: E-flat in common time, moderato. Moreover, he confines Figaro at first to rocking thirds, back and forth, then the same a step higher (after an intervening line), which comes quite close to what Benucci had sung as the irate Bartolo (Ex. 8.10). Bartolo goes on to mock Rosina, quoting her fib about sending some sweets to Figaro's daughter (when she was, of course, sending a message to the count), a grim moment which Paisiello captures by repeating the same short motif over and over, driving home his point (Ex. 8.11). Mozart does something with similar effect when he makes Figaro intone his monotonous litany of feminine wiles (Ex. 8.12). Buffo patter like this brings Figaro right down to the level of Bartolo. He is indeed his father's son in this, his lowest moment, and there is a delicious irony in the family resemblance.

Benucci's famous "Non più andrai" to end act 1 of *Figaro* betrays, in its turn, a few hints of inspiration from the previous Figaro opera. The rhythmic pattern with which it begins has just been described as one of Paisiello's favorites for lines accented on the third and penultimate syllables (cf. Ex. 8.9). Mozart does not wait until the end of act 1 to press this rhythm on us; it is present from the opening of the first number, the duettino in G, and it is associated with Figaro. The orchestra sounds it as he measures off a space for his nuptial bed with Susanna in the ante-room between the bedchambers of the count and countess. It has the same upbeat in dotted rhythm as Ex. 8.9 and "Non più andrai," giving it strong forward motion and a marchlike vigor. Figaro joins the treble line on the strongest accent, the penultimate quarter note, his vocal leaps sounding gruff and coarse in comparison with the smooth secondary idea sung by Susanna, as she tries to get Figaro to look at her and admire her hat. The reason is partly that Susanna's line is conjunct and nicely ornamented with melodic turns and a little closing sigh. More subtly, it is that Mozart has made a metric displacement, starting the line on the third beat, in the manner of a gavotte.¹⁷ When the third and first beats vie for the metric accent,

17. Our reading of the duettino No. 1 parallels to some extent that of Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: "Le nozze di Figaro" and "Don Giovanni"* (Chicago, 1983), pp. 75–77, but does not stem from it.

EXAMPLE 8.9. Paisiello, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, No. 9

Moderato
BARTOLO 1

Ve-ra-men-te ho tor-to, è ve-ro: ve-ra-men-te ho tor-to, è ve-ro:

EXAMPLE 8.10. *Figaro*, No. 26

Moderato
1 FIGARO

A-pri-te un po' quegl' oc-chi uo-mi-ni in-cau-tie scio-chi, guar-
da-te que-ste fem-mi-ne, guar-da-te co-sa son

EXAMPLE 8.11. Paisiello, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, No. 9

30 BARTOLO

ch'al-la fi-glia del Bar-bie-re un car-toc-cio pien di dol-ci in quest'og-gi si man-dò

EXAMPLE 8.12. *Figaro*, No. 26

34 FIGARO

son ro-se spi-no-se, son vol-pi vez-zo-se, son or-se be-ni-gne, co-lom-be ma-li-gne...

the result is an ambiguity and delicacy that are also projected as dramatic qualities defining Susanna.

Susanna completes the phrase with another and more melodically expansive passage in gavotte rhythm, covering the territory from the high tonic to the low as she repeats the words "sembra fatto in ver per me." (Here Mozart is quoting himself, whether he knows it or not. The very same cadential phrase occurs in the *Ouverture* [mm. 68–70 and 72–74] to his ballet *Les petits riens*, composed in Paris during the summer of 1778.) Susanna becomes a little more *mondaine* with that confidently tossed off cadential phrase, which seems to say that she is in control here. And indeed she is. Every reader will know how the duettino comes out in the end: Susanna makes Figaro sing her tune to her rhythm while complimenting her on her hat. With this little drama in music, which almost needs no text, Mozart has succeeded in foreshadowing the entire opera in the first number. By the end of act 4 Figaro will have been taught a lesson by Susanna, and learned to sing her tune for good, we hope, with regard to matters of mutual trust and respect.

The conflict of march and gavotte, of military masculinity contrasted with the feminine grace of one of the most *galant* court dances, can be seen further in connection with "Non più andrai." Figaro's grand lesson to Cherubino on military life represented as bold a solution to ending act 1 as "Porgi, amor" did to beginning act 2. Beaumarchais had allowed his first act to wind down with a proverbial and off-color joke, as we saw at the end of Chapter 7. The architects of *Le nozze* aimed much higher. "Non più andrai" arrives with a sense of inevitability not simply because Mozart planted its rhythm in the opening number but, more importantly, because it has been set up as a tonal goal, both in short-range terms, being preceded by the twice-sung peasants' chorus in G (which serves as dominant preparation), and in long-range terms that reach back to the initial duettino in G. Da Ponte was particularly proud of "Non più andrai," and justifiably so. He quoted it in both the *Extract* and the *Memorie* as an example of how far his verses went beyond a few seminal ideas from the play to make for some of the most important numbers in the opera. It diminishes none of his accomplishment to call attention to a long tradition of such arias painting the sights and sounds of war in Italian librettos.¹⁸ Nor does it take away any of his luster to note that once again the idea must have come from Mozart, whose scheme of things made an aria like this in C major a musical necessity. The composer's requirements determined such large-scale decisions as how to begin and end the big segments of the opera.

Cherubino as amorous butterfly, flitting from one lady to another, disturbing their repose, is a charming image that Da Ponte embroidered on a single line addressed by Figaro to the young man: "Dame! tu ne rôderas plus tout le jour au quartier des femmes." Mozart sets it to the rhythm noted above, which he makes even more pointed by additional dotted figures to accommodate the ten-syllable lines. After the cadence at "Adoncino d'amor" ("little Adonis of love"), the strings sound a new figure on the dominant, with trilled turns that bring a coquettish flutter to the melody. Figaro continues, describing the beautiful plumes adorning the page's light and elegant coiffure. At this modish image, Mozart switches to gavotte rhythm, just as he did for the finery of Susanna's headgear. The violins insist on the melodic turns the second time around by repeating them ever so daintily, and with a little chromatic inflection that increases the *galant* affect. What a portrait of adolescent foppery! What a showpiece for the great Benucci! The account of the opera by Michael Kelly, who created the roles of Basilio and Don Curzio, singles out Benucci's performance of this aria as winning Mozart's praises:

I remember at the first rehearsal of the full band, Mozart was on stage . . . giving the time of the music to the orchestra. Figaro's song, "Non più andrai, farfalone amoroso" Benucci gave out with the greatest animation and power of voice. I was standing close to Mozart, who, sotto voce, was repeating, Bravo! Bravo! Benucci; and when Benucci came to the fine passage, "Cherubino alla vittoria, alla gloria militar,"

18. For a Venetian example of 1749, see Hertz, "Vis comica," p. 37.

which he gave out with Stentorian lungs, the effect was electricity itself, for the whole of the performers on stage, and those in the orchestra, as if actuated by one feeling of delight, vociferated Bravo! Bravo! Maestro. Viva, viva, grand Mozart.¹⁹

Perhaps the time has come, after two hundred years, when we can give a little credit to Mozart's singers for inspiring such a triumph of the operatic art. A little credit for the triumphant effect of "Non più andrai" belongs to Paisiello as well.

Act 1, part 1, of *Il barbiere* (equivalent to act 1 of *Figaro*) is constructed with a clever use of dominant-to-tonic patterning within and between the numbers (Table 7). The strophic serenade in B-flat stops the cycle, and sets up the refreshing arrival of the climactic duet in G for Figaro and the count.²⁰ The count's serenade, "Saper bramate, il mio nome," is generally agreed to have been the model for Cherubino's serenade "Voi che sapete," which is also in B-flat.²¹ Unlike "Voi che sapete," "Saper bramate" never modulates, and since it is in slow tempo (*Lento amoroso*) it makes for a long static block of B-flat harmony, providing maximum contrast with the following number, a sparkling *Allegro presto* in G.

The *Allegro presto* begins without instrumental introduction. There is an element of surprise in this, as in the choice of key. The count starts impetuously, assuring Figaro that he will bring enough gold with which to batter the fortress where Rosina is imprisoned (see Ex. 8.13). G major seems so right, so welcome, partly because it was the first tonal resolution following the *introduzione*. There is thus the sense of completing the tonal span proposed by the beginning of the act, following the intervening stops along the circle of fifths.

If we grant Paisiello the success of his tonal strategy, we must admit that Mozart did something similar in relating his outer numbers. "Non più andrai" comes as both a local and a long-distance resolution, which helps explain why it is at once so satisfying and so electrifying. It begins without a proper ritornello too, and with the same universal melody type chosen by Paisiello: 5-3, 4-2; 4-2, 3-1. Mozart does nothing to disguise his admiration for Paisiello's applause-inducing duet, and even includes the same vocal cadence as in Ex. 8.13 to end his second section in the dominant (Ex. 8.14).

Mozart's admiration for Paisiello's popular opera may have extended even to the playing off of a flat key against a sharp key—specifically, B-flat against G—as

19. Kelly, *Reminiscences* 1: 255–56.

20. Sabine Henze-Döhring analyzes the music and dramatic action of act 1, part 1, in *Opera seria, Opera buffa und Mozarts "Don Giovanni": Zur Gattungsconvergenz in der italienischen Oper des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Laaber, 1986), pp. 104–10. She shows that Paisiello matches music with stage action here in a manner that before this time had been found only in finales.

21. Dent, *Mozart's Operas*, pp. 108–9. Speaking of Paisiello, Dent says: "The influence of his music on *Figaro* is apparent mainly in *Voi che sapete*, which was very probably intended as an improvement on the serenade of Count Almaviva at the beginning of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*." Dent argued (p. 112) that "the supreme moment of the opera is the sextet in act III." It is odd that he did not note its technique of passing short motifs from voice to voice in a rising sequence adumbrated in the quintet No. 14 of *Il barbiere*. One scholar who has pursued links between Paisiello and Mozart further is Frits Noske, in *The Signifier and the Signified: Studies in the Operas of Mozart and Verdi* (The Hague, 1977), p. 26. Noske also effectively contradicts Abert by showing that the second finale of *Figaro* ranks equally with the first (pp. 16–17).

TABLE 7.
Key Scheme of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Act 1, Part 1

Overture	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Intro.	Scena e Duetto	Aria	Duetto	Cavatina	Duetto
C	D	G D A D g [G]	C	F	B ^b	G

shown by the pairing of these two keys in successive numbers and within the two finales of *Le nozze di Figaro* (Table 8). The pairings occur in every act. At the end of act 1, the terzetto (No. 7) and the repeated peasants' chorus (No. 8) mirror the G-B-flat tonalities of the opening with B-flat-G. This might be considered a mere happenstance if Mozart did not develop a very similar plan for act 4. In act 2, following "Porgi, amor" in E-flat, come "Voi che sapete" in B-flat and then Susanna's dressing aria in G (which was replaced by an aria less difficult to act out onstage in the 1789 Viennese revival, but retaining the key of G). We have already seen how G arrives as a surprise in the finale of act 2. Note that the B-flat-G pairs occur after E-flat not only in this finale but also in the sequences of Nos. 6-8, Nos. 10-12, and one last time in the finale of act 4—another indication of how schematic Mozart was in laying out the whole opera in regard to tonalities. Act 3 ends in C, with considerable flavor of a minor for the Spanish dancing, thus helping to tie the act together because of the a minor with which the duet between Susanna and the count begins (No. 16). The parallel with act 1 pertains not only to C as ending key but also to how it is arrived at via the chorus of peasant girls in G, and before that to the letter duet in B-flat. Act 4 may have originally begun with the arias in G and B-flat for Marcellina and Basilio, if, as has been surmised, the little cavatina for

EXAMPLE 8.13. Paisiello, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, No. 6

Allegro presto
CONTE

Non du-bi-tar, o Fi-ga-ro, non du-bi-tar, o Fi-ga-ro, dell' o-ro io por-te-rò, dell' o-ro io por-te-rò.

EXAMPLE 8.14. *Figaro*, No. 9

FIGARO

quel ver-mi-glio don-ne-sco co-lor.

TABLE 8.
Key Scheme of *Le nozze di Figaro*

Overture	Act 1								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
D	G B\flat		F	D	A	E \flat	B\flat G		\nearrow C
Act 2									
	10	11	12	13	14	15 (Finale)			
E \flat		B\flat G		\nearrow C	G	E \flat	B\flat G	\nearrow C	\nearrow F \nearrow B \flat \nearrow E \flat
Act 3									
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
a/A		\nearrow D	F	C	B\flat G		\nearrow C a C		
Act 4									
	23	24	25	26	27	28 (Finale)			
f		G B\flat		\nearrow E \flat	F	D	\nearrow G	E \flat	B\flat G D

Barbarina was an afterthought.²² One last surprise arrival of G directly after B-flat is reserved for the second finale, as the count bursts in with his men ("Gente, gente, all'armi!"), surprising Figaro embracing the countess—or so he thinks. From the peaceful music of forgiveness that follows, the opera can back into the final tonic D like a plagal cadence, a long-breathed "amen," as it were. Comparisons would not be out of place with the subdominant emphasis Mozart liked to give "Dona nobis pacem" in some of his masses. It probably pleased his sense of long-term symmetry that the "folle journée" ended with the scampering motions of the overture ("Corriam tutti"), mirroring the relationship of the overture to Nos. 1 and 2.

Le nozze di Figaro was twice as long as *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, which made for problems. Yet it could scarcely be otherwise, for *Le mariage de Figaro* was more than twice the length of *Le barbier de Séville*, far more complicated by plots and subplots, and had three times the number of characters. The biggest problem occurs in the last act of the opera, where "it is obvious that the arias for Basilio and Marcellina in Act IV are very much in the way and contribute nothing to the drama; and they come far too late to illustrate the characters of the singers—we were left in no doubt about those in Act I."²³ The relationship of the two following

22. Alan Tyson, "Le Nozze di Figaro: Lessons from the Autograph Score," *Musical Times* 122 (1981): 459; reprinted in *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), p. 120.

23. Dent, *Mozart's Operas*, p. 110. For the best argument that can be made against Dent, see Allanbrook, "Pro Marcellina."

EXAMPLE 8.15. *Figaro*. Sketch

for early version of No. 27



EXAMPLE 8.16. *Figaro*, Sketch

for early version of No. 27



arias for Figaro and Susanna, which are both essential to the drama, gave Mozart trouble. He first sketched the garden aria (No. 27) as a rondo in cut time and in the key of E-flat to a text that began "Non tardar amato bene vieni vola al seno mio" (Ex. 8.15). Evidently he intended to produce a big rondo of the fashionable two-tempo variety, but he broke off his setting in m. 36, just after the theme of the opening slow part made its customary return. Susanna is disguised as the countess, so it is not unreasonable that she should put on airs and sing something such as Rosina herself might. In fact, the declamatory outburst in mm. 12–14 on the words "Giusto ciel! perchè mai tardi?" taking the voice up to G-flat over a dissonant chord with *sforzato*, is close to what the young Rosina did sing in the middle of Paisiello's "Giusto ciel" (Ex. 8.16; cf. Ex. 8.2 above). Storace would have noticed the resemblance, since it was she who had to produce the high G-flat in both pieces. Was it this parallel that made Mozart abandon "Non tardar amato bene"? Or was it general disenchantment with a piece of music that laid on the pathos with such heavy brushstrokes? The choice of E-flat was of course appropriate for pathos, but since it followed Figaro's E-flat aria (or preceded it at one stage, still reflected in the autograph), the result was an anomaly: two successive arias in the same key.

The roles of the countess and of Susanna are treated equally in *Le nozze*; it is inappropriate to speak of either as the prima donna, although the noble rank of the former normally would have conferred the distinction on her.²⁴ Storace had been in Vienna longer than Laschi and had sung more leading roles. From her point of view, it is easier to understand why she wanted a big dramatic rondo to sing when masquerading as the countess. She may in fact have demanded one, believing that parity of the two roles was at stake. Laschi had sung one in the middle of act 3,

24. Stefan Kunze (*Mozarts Opern* [Stuttgart, 1984], p. 245) maintains that Rosina was not noble by birth, that the count's one unconventional deed was to marry a "Bürgermädchen." Beaumarchais intended otherwise; in act 4, scene 8, of *Le barbier de Séville*, the count says of his future wife: "Mademoiselle est noble et belle." The two soprano parts for Rosina and Susanna in *Figaro* were so equal as to be exchangeable in the ensembles, a question explored by Alan Tyson in his article "Some Problems in the Text of *Le nozze di Figaro*: Did Mozart Have a Hand in Them?" *Journal of the Royal Musical Society* 112 (1987): 99–131; reprinted in *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores*, pp. 290–327.

and it was the most serious piece in the whole opera, "Dove sono i bei momenti," a piece with which Mozart took infinite pains, as his melodic sketches show. Originally he inscribed it, twice, with the title "Rondo," and it is just as proud an exemplar of the two-tempo rondo in form and style as Donna Anna's "Non mi dir," Fiordiligi's "Per pietà bell' idol mio," or Vitellia's "Non più di fiori." Mozart scratched out, or someone scratched out, the proper appellation *Rondo* on "Dove sono" in the autograph and replaced it, twice, with *Aria*. When Storace lost her rondo in act 4, it was easier to keep peace in the family if Laschi's rondo were at least not called a rondo. It is just possible that "Non tardar amato bene" was only a feint by Mozart until he brought Storace around to singing what he wanted her to sing all along. This would explain its impossible key of E-flat. To the everlasting credit of Nancy Storace, she settled finally for "Deh vieni non tardar" in F, a marvel of subtle understatement in comparison with "Non tardar," and all the more effective because of it. "Deh vieni" completes Susanna's portrait in the opera so deftly that we barely notice that its theme derives from the cadential phrase of her first vocal utterance. "Sembra fatto in ver per me," indeed!

Nancy Storace was open to musical variety to an extent that belies her Italian training. On English stages she was called on to sing very simple songs as well as arias and for this reason, perhaps, was more inclined to accept the seeming simplicity of "Deh vieni non tardar." With her mother, brother Stephen, and the rest of her entourage, La Storace left Vienna to return to London in early 1787. Four years later the painter Samuel De Wilde captured her playing the part of Euphrosyne in the *Mask of Comus* by Thomas Arne (1738) (see Frontispiece). She is depicted singing the simple syllabic ballad in act 3 that begins:

The wanton God, that pierces Hearts,
Dips in Gall his pointed Darts,
But the Nymph disdains to pine,
Who bath's the Wound in rosy wine.

To enhance the bacchanalian sentiment she raises a glass of rosy wine herself. Her hair and costume are garlanded with flowers (roses?), and the artist surrounds her head with light by opening up the foliage behind her so as to create a kind of halo. Short and plumpish she may have been, as contemporaries claimed, but she exuded charm nonetheless, as this picture shows. Glimpsing it we can almost believe the tales told about how she held in thrall an emperor (Joseph II) and a future monarch (the Prince of Wales).

The problem of the two rondos and parity between Susanna and the countess remained when the opera was revived in 1789. Fiordiligi/La Ferrarese sang Susanna, and since she was not willing to settle for "Deh vieni non tardar," Mozart substituted a huge concertante rondo in two tempi, "Al desio di chi t'adora." But the key stayed the same, F, providing another hint that Mozart never could have intended E-flat as a viable solution. Caterina Cavalieri, who had created the role of Constanze in *Die Entführung*, took over the role of the countess. She reacted to the

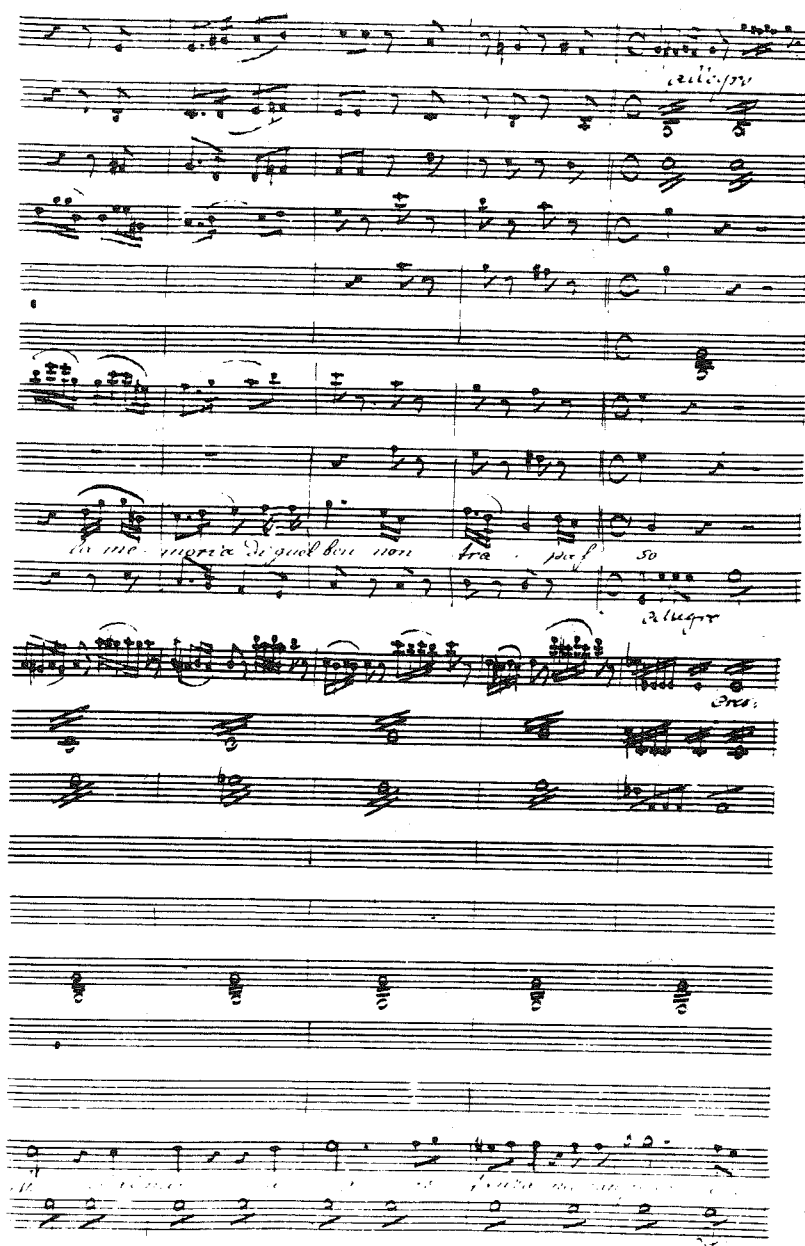


FIGURE 15

Transition passage added to "Dove sono"

enhancement of Susanna's part as might be expected. There are additions to "Dove sono" in a London manuscript, which Alan Tyson assigns to this 1789 revival (Fig. 15).²⁵ They transformed the piece from its perfect original state to a more showy

25. See Tyson, "Some Problems in the Text of *Le nozze di Figaro*," pp. 126–28; reprinted in *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores*, pp. 321–23.

one, with a transition between the slow and fast themes very similar to the transition in Sesto's rondo "Deh per questo istante solo." We have long wondered how the motif from the beginning of the *Figaro* overture wandered into Sesto's rondo, at the beginning of the transition to the fast theme (mm. 38–41; see Ex. 18.1). Now it appears there was an intermediate link two years earlier in the revised and extended "Dove sono" of 1789, for which none other can be responsible than Mozart.

A P P E N D I X

Salieri kept a record of his life and professional career. He turned over these papers to Ignaz von Mosel, who translated them from Italian into German and used them as the basis for his publication Ueber das Leben und die Werke des Anton Salieri, k.k. Hofkapellmeisters (Vienna, 1827). The following account occurs on pp. 30–32.

Mein Meister Gassmann wurde zu jener Zeit nach Rom berufen, um dort eine tragische Oper für den Carneval (1770) zu schreiben. Ich blieb in Wien zurück, um unter dem Vice-Kapellmeister Ferandini die Proben zu Leiten. Gaston Boccherini, ein Tänzer des Wiener Operntheaters, der die Dichtkunst leidenschaftlich liebte, hatte unter Beihülfe des Herrn von Calzabigi . . . eine komische italienische Oper, unter den Titel: *Le donne letterate*, geschrieben, die er dem Kapellmeister Gassmann bestimmte. Calzabigi rieth ihm, sie lieber mir anzuvertrauen, der, ein Anfänger in der Composition, wie er in der Dichtkunst, sich leichter mit ihm einverstehen würde. Boccherini kam daher eines Morgens zu mir, und fragte mich nach der ersten Begrüssung, ohne weitere Einleitung: Wollten Sie wohl ein von mir verfasstes komisches Operngedicht in Musik setzen? Ich antwortete unbefangen: Warum nicht? Und nun erzählte er mir ganz aufrichtig, welche Absicht er damit gehabt, und wie Calzabigi ihm gerathen habe. Aha! dachte ich, man hält dich also schon fähig, Opern zu componieren! Nur Muth! Wir wollen die Gelegenheit nicht ungenutzt vorüber gehen lassen! —Ich bat daher den Dichter mit grosser Ungeduld, mir den Stoff seiner Oper mitzutheilen und das Gedicht selbst vorzulegen. Beides geschah; und nachdem wir die Rollen nach der Fähigkeit der damaligen Sängergesellschaft vertheilt hatten, sagte Boccherini: Ich verlasse Sie nun, machen Sie indessen Ihre Bemerkungen, und wenn Sie hier und da einige Veränderungen in Rücksicht auf die musikalische Wirkung verlangen, wollen wir sie, wenn ich wiederkomme, gemeinschaftlich vornehmen. Als ich allein war, sperrte ich mich ein, und mit entflammten Wangen—wie ich auch späterhin pflegte, so oft ich eine Arbeit mit Lust und Liebe unternahm—durchlas ich das Gedicht von Neuem, fand es für die Musik allerdings günstig, und, nachdem ich die Gesangstücke ein drittes Mal gelesen, bestimmte ich für's Erste, wie ich von meinem Meister gesehen hatte, die dem Character eines jeden Gesangstückes entsprechende Tonart. Das es bald Mittag war, und ich folglich nicht hoffen durfte, noch vor der Mahlzeit die Com-

position anfangen zu können, benützte ich die bis dahin noch übrige Stunde, das Gedicht nochmals durchzublättern. Schon begann ich bei einigen Stellen auf die Melodie zu denken, als Madame Gassmann (denn mein Meister war damals schon verheirathet) mich zur Tafel rufen liess. So lang dieselbe wahrte, kam mir mein Operngedicht nicht aus dem Kopfe, und ich habe mich nachher nie mehr erinnern können, was ich an seinem Mittag gegessen hatte. Nach der Tafel machte ich . . . mein MittagsSchläfchen . . . [then he takes a walk].

So bald ich mich allein sah, befel mich ein unwiderstehliches Verlangen, die Introduction der Oper in Musik zu setzen. Ich suchte mir daher den Character und die Situation der Personen recht lebhaft vor Augen zu stellen, und plötzlich fand ich eine Bewegung des Orchesters, die mir den, dem Texte nach zerstückten Gesang des Tonstückes angemessen zu tragen und zu verbinden schien. Ich versetzte mich nun im Geiste in das Parterre, hörte meine Ideen ausführen; sie schienen mir charakteristisch; ich schrieb sie auf, prüfte sie nochmal, und da ich damit zufrieden war, fuhr ich weiter fort. So stand in einer halben Stunde der Entwurf der Introduction auf dem Notenblatte: Wer war vergnügter als ich! Es war sechs Uhr Abends und dunkel geworden; ich liess mir Licht bringen. Vor zwölf Uhr, beschloss ich, gehst du heute nicht zu Bette; die Phantasie ist entflammt, dieses Feuer soll benützt werden. Ich lese das erste Finale, das, was die Worte betrifft, beinahe eben so anfang, wie die Introduction; ich lese es noch einmal, mache mir einen dem Ganzen angemessenen Plan der Tact- und Ton-Arten wozu ich drei Stunden verwendete, ohne noch eine Note geschrieben zu haben. Ich fühlte mich müde, und die Wangen brannten mir; ich ging daher in meinem Zimmer einige Mal auf und ab, bald zog es mich wieder an das Schreibpult, wo ich den Entwurf begann, und als die Mitternacht kam, schon so weit damit vorgerückt war, dass ich mich hochvergnügt zur Ruhe begab.

Mein Kopf war den ganzen Tag zu voll von Musik und Poesie gewesen, als dass ich nicht auch davon hätte träumen sollen. In der That hörte ich im Traume eine seltsame Harmonie, aber so sehr aus der Ferne, und so verworren, dass ich mehr Qual als Vergnügen empfand und endlich darüber aufwachte. Es war vier Uhr Morgens. . . . Kurz, nachdem ich meine Arbeit mit demselben Eifer fortgesetzt hatte, sah ich binnen vier Wochen zwei gute Drittheile der Oper in Partitur gesetzt und instrumentiert.