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Adriana Ferrarese's Susanna

at the Met and sing them she did; Jonathan Miller was not pleased. As rations of little-known repertory, wanted to sing these replacement arias "Deh vieni, non tardar" in Act IV. Bartoli, who is famous for her exploarias, arias intended to replace "Venite, inginocchiatevi" in Act II and Mozart accommodated the new Susanna by writing for her two new the premiere and around the time he was composing Così fan tutte, of the opera. For a Viennese revival of Figuro in 1789, three years after Cecilia Bartoli, had taken it into her mind to alter the "traditional" text to a backstage scandal much reported at the time. The 1998 Susanna, ment because of a "set-to" during the original production. This referred revival of the production. He had, he said, been "fired" by the manageconfided that he has not been invited back to supervise the past season's politan, mostly to critical acclaim; but in the Opera News interview he directed Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Le nozze di Figaro at the Metroraked through the coals of an old controversy. In 1998 Miller had Jonathan Miller gave an interview that, doubtless to the delight of many he put it in the *Opera News* interview: In the June 2002 issue of Opera News, the British opera producer

I think I behaved fairly reasonably. I expressed my unease about using showy arias that are infinitely less interesting and appropriate

to the drama. These [new arias] are twice as long, and their words have nothing to do with the action. During the first aria, Renée Fleming as the Countess was left dressing Cherubino while Bartoli was down on the front beguiling the audience. . . . I was told by [general manager Joseph] Volpe that I had agreed [to the substitutions], and I said yes, I'd agreed rather in the way that France had agreed in 1939.²

In an interview nearer the time, Miller had been more outspoken still:

To be absolutely honest, I hadn't the faintest idea what to do with these pieces. [The second of them] left poor old Bryn [Bryn Terfel, playing Figaro and thus obliged to be visible on stage, spying on Susanna as she sings her fourth-act aria] kicking the wall. . . . If you don't sing "Deh vieni" in the fourth act of Figuro, it's like coitus interruptus. With his genius Mozart wrote the right music for Figuro and then, under pressure from a diva, wrote alternative arias.³

Miller's language here was not designed to calm the situation. Bartoli's decision to sing two arias Mozart wrote for Le nozze di Figaro in 1786, is rather than two arias Mozart wrote for Le nozze di Figaro in 1786, is likened—in the first quote—to invasion by Panzer tanks; in the second he suggests that her determination not to sing "Deh vieni" in Act IV threatened to deprive sad operagoing battalions of the release they had (presumably) paid money to experience. Clearly Miller thought he had right on his side: he lined himself up, after all, with none other than W. A. Mozart, both he and the composer suffering "pressure from a diva." Many in the daily press agreed, some with piercing cries against the abuses of singers. Old battles were newly joined; this was, after all, Mozart in need of defense.⁴

How can one counter such certainties? To recast these offending arias as prose on the page might seem a poor substitute for Bartoli's experiment, but try we must. We can start by looking at the first and certainly less substantial of them, the one that substituted for "Venite, inginocchiatevi" in Act II. In one of the opera's many actings out of gender ambiguity, the countess and Susanna are dressing already cross-dressed

Cherubino as a woman. The substitute aria is called "Un moto di gioia," and its two-stanza text is disarmingly simple:

Il fato ed amor. Non sempre è tiranno Speriam che in contento Che annunzia diletto Mi sento nel petto, E quando si crede Ognor non si pasce, Di pianti di pene Finisca l'affanno, In mezzo il timor; Un moto di gioia La calma maggior. Brillare si vede Più grave il periglio. Il ben dal dolor: Talvolta poi nasce

[A stirring of joy / I feel in my breast, / That foretells pleasure / In the midst of fear; / Let us hope that in happiness / Worry will end, / Fortune and love / Are not always tyrannous. / Not everyone lives by / Tears and sorrow, / Sometimes good / Is born from sorrow: / And when one thinks / The danger at its worst, / One sees shining forth / The greatest calm.]

The identity of the librettist is not certain, but it was probably Lorenzo Da Ponte, who of course wrote the libretti for both *Figuro* and *Così fan tutte*. The text is clearly intended for a strophic setting and is at best loosely related to the immediate plot situation. The aria it replaces, "Venite, inginocchiatevi," is on the other hand an "action" number, with specific references to the dramatic situation. In "Un moto di gioia" the approach is somewhat antique; the text takes a slightly distant, moralizing tone, commenting on the general situation, standing somewhat apart from the plot. No value judgments should be assumed in this distinction between the two arias: there are wonderfully effective "action"

numbers in Mozart, of course; but there are also wonderfully effective "contemplative/moralizing" numbers; few of us would want to be without either.

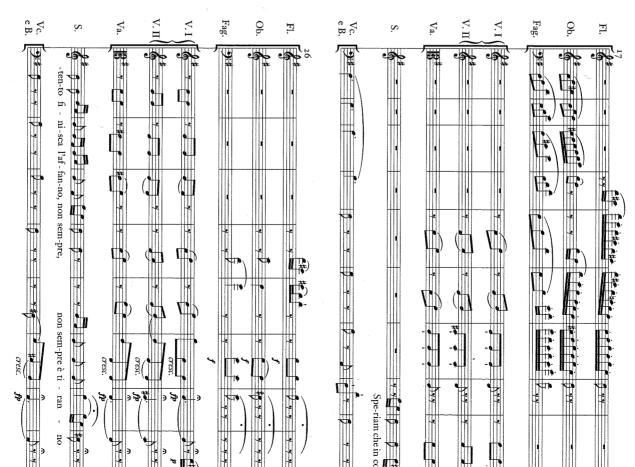
itant, mimetic of bodily movement, yet with an inner potential for the di gioia / Mi sento nel petto" (A stirring of joy / I feel in my breast); hescombination of staccato and legato is surely tied to the words: "Un moto the lower strings are legato against the upper strings' staccato. This ness of the resulting orchestral sonority is emphasized by the fact that own melodic identity, forming a counterpoint with the voice. The rich-"sento" (I feel), they gain emphasis with a bow change and find their doubling the voice at the sixth, but at m. 11, coinciding with the word violins double the voice and are marked to be played staccato; but the music (the string quintets in particular). The cellos and violas start by wind doublings in the orchestral introduction. Over a pedal bass, the ing as it does after the rudimentary (or perhaps "rustic"?) three-octave opening vocal phrase, starting on the upbeat of m. 9, particularly comeffect than was the homegrown type, a fact that had sometimes got him contours. But within the strophic exterior there lies challenging detail song-like gesture is matched by uncomplicated rhythms and melodic aria): the two strophes of poetry are set to identical music, and this folk lins, giving a kind of "halo" effect much used in late Mozartian chamber first violins are an octave higher than both the voice and the second viointo trouble. Let's pause for a moment over the accompaniment to the opera had always been more crammed with orchestral and harmonic ity of the setting (example 7 reports the first thirty-three measures of the This is of course not at all surprising: Mozart's Teutonic brand of Italian The simplicity of the words is in some ways reflected in the simplic-

The most surprising aspect of the aria, though, is to come. In a piece as direct as this, we would expect the opening eight vocal bars (mm. 9–16) to be "answered" by a further eight-bar period. And so they are, at mm. 17–24; but the answer—which in tonal/rhetorical terms is clearly an "on the other hand," or a "yes, but" reply to mm. 9–16—comes not from the

EXAMPLE 7. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Le nozze di Figuro*, "Un moto di gioia" (mm. 1–33).



EXAMPLE 7 (continued)

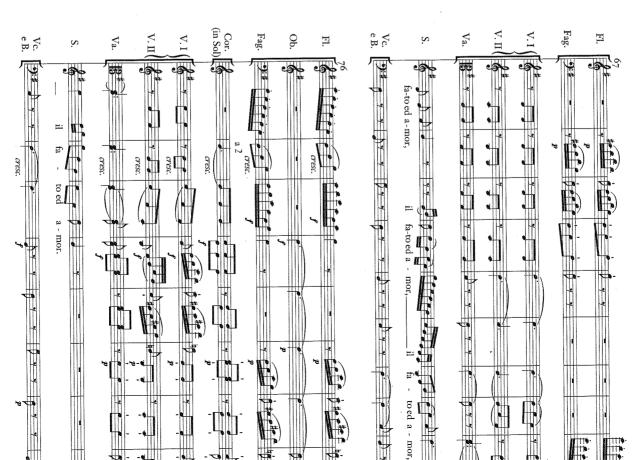


vocalist but from a choir of wind instruments, led off by the oboe and bassoon, joined by the flute. As so often in Mozart's later comic operas, this orchestral interlude gives the singer the opportunity (almost the obligation) to indulge in some stage business, to move the visible action along; but it also sets up a sense of dialogue between the voice and the wind instruments, one that then continues in fragments throughout the aria. A first example of this dialogue comes at mm. 28–31, in which one limb of the descending sequence on "non sempre" is taken up, with a impudent added appoggiatura, by the wind instruments.

call the "chest" voice. Incidentally, the aria, which Dr. Miller thought soprano territory (g" to d'); but at mm. 71-73 a descending scale takes gestures toward the world of serious opera, broadening the aria's frame added improvisatory roulade of the part of the singer)—all this playfully seven seconds.6 I have to hand of "Venite, inginocchiatevi" lasts two minutes and forty toli and there lasts three minutes and eighteen seconds. The recording "twice as long" as the one it dislodges, has been recorded by Cecilia Barthe voice down suddenly into mezzo range, to low b and what we now (example 8). Up to then the melody has remained in comfortable intertextual. The second moment comes at the very end of the aria of reference by including what we might now describe as something first is the treatment of the word "tiranno" (tyrant), which occurs at mm (in fact the highest vocal note of the aria, and perhaps inviting some 32-33. The crescendo, the fp dynamic, the fermata over the high note Two further small moments in the aria are worth highlighting. The

There is one further point about "Un moto di gioia" that, for the moment, needs to be flagged and then put to one side. In several ways, this is music not entirely typical of Susanna in Figaro. The elaborate wind dialogue, the gestures to opera seria practice, perhaps especially that precipitate dive into the chest register at the end: all these aspects gently suggest another Mozart, above all the one we know from Così fun tutte. But more of that anon.

EXAMPLE 8. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Le nozze di Figuro, "Un moto di gioia" (mm. 67-end).



to us neatly packaged? in forms that can be accommodated within our tle it up, reserve it only for those situations in which it can now descend attitude perfectly: "With his genius Mozart wrote the right music for the world of Tageskritik can sometimes be depressingly thought-free, matic hole where 'Venite, inginocchiatevi' is supposed to be." 7 Such easy of abuse. The critic John W. Freeman, for example, again writing in seriousness, the aria was relatively little known until Bartoli took it up may be worth listening to and also worth thinking about: that it is, in present musical institutions? unto the day. But was Mozart's genius really so well behaved? Did he botwe know, our reified version of the opera, is and always will be sufficient Figure." It's a comforting thought, above all because it tells us that what concept in our culture. In his Opera News interview, Miller articulated the they are, I think, a glum reflection of the restrictive power of the workcondemnations were repeated endlessly. Beside testifying to the fact that Opera News, called it an "ersatz ditty . . . a bit of fluff that leaves a dra-What is more, her performances brought down, on it and on her, a stream composer's slightest juvenilia can be performed in contexts of bizarre The fact is, though, that even during a period such as ours, in which the short, worthy of the attention Mozart's mature music habitually receives At this point, I hope merely to have suggested that "Un moto di gioia"

The composer's evident penchant for writing substitute arias is in some ways the most apt argument against any complacency we might harbor over "our" text. The Neue Mozart Ausgabe has four volumes (more than 700 pages' worth) of such pieces, most of them rarely performed.⁸ Just from the period under discussion, the second half of 1789, he wrote (in addition to the two new Figure arias, instrumental trifles such as the Clarinet Quintet and, of course, Così fun tutte) three outstanding operatic arias for soprano and orchestra. Each of them flamboyantly violates the notion of the operatic work-concept, the idea that a late eighteenth-century composer might create "the right music" for an opera, music that must then be repeated at all subsequent revivals, no

a very different composer Mozart was becoming in the last two or three accompaniment in the strings. The singer mediates between these two is an insert aria Mozart wrote for a revival of Cimarosa's opera buffa l matter what the changes in performance conditions. The first, K. profligate? How could he squander such music on such an ephemeral years of his life. But, to repeat the earlier question, how could he be so almost constant juxtaposition of quarter notes in the winds and triplet of wind instruments, in this case with the richness enhanced by an ment, a kind of pastoral minuet, that resembles little else in Mozart. It cuore. The second, K. 583, "Vado, ma dove? Oh Dei!," has a slow moveopera then on the boards in Vienna, Martín y Soler's Il burbero di buon the period). The other two, K. 582 and K. 583, were inserts for another Cimarosa-like, one might add, but an evident Mozartian enthusiasm of tone and its experimentation with contrapuntal effects (distinctly undue baroni di Rocca Azzurra in Vienna and is remarkable both for its high rhythmic worlds. To listen to this aria is to understand in a new way what is yet another of those elaborate dialogues between voice and a chorus

There are of course many answers to such questions. The obvious historical one is that, for Mozart, *all* operatic contexts were ephemeral; he had no certainty that his music would survive any longer than that of Cimarosa or Martín y Soler, both of whom were at the time more widely popular than he was. As discussed in chapter 1, the very idea of an "operatic repertory" had as yet little purchase. However, and partly for this reason, the late eighteenth century was conspicuously more generous than we are today in accommodating such occasional inspirations. We now feel ourselves at a great historical distance from the time when "works of genius" could be thrown off with such abandon, when some amalgam of personal and cultural faith assured everyone that more would arrive, if not tomorrow, then next season; that such works were not worth loving so jealously. We are now invaded by cultural pessimism about music and opera, perhaps about all art: a mood that makes us miserly and grasping,

because we doubt that what is to come will ever be as good fearful of loss. We attach fanatical reverence to the works precisely

"Vado, ma dove?" was written for a singer called Luise Villeneuve, who even been suggested that Mozart wrote the aria as a way of testing ou was a little later to create the role of Dorabella in Così fun tutte; it has Not coincidentally, then, the piece bears unusual similarities to Dorathe right music for Così fan tutte." Imagine the outcry. "With his genius [we would be told] Mozart wrote suited to Coxi's musical world. But who would dare do such a thing? atrical context that almost Brahmsian pastoral minuet, in some ways so tional range of Dorabella in Coxì, and giving us a chance to hear in a theous soprano could substitute one for the other, thus extending the emobeleaguered heroine; with tiny adjustments to the words, an adventur-Eb, both feature prominent modal mixtures for pathos, both involve a bella's first-act aria in Così, "Smanie implacabili." Both are in the key of Villeneuve's vocal skills prior to constructing her operatic character.9 In this mood of tenacious, unthinking conservation, we miss much

tioned at the start, both were written because the Vienna 1789 revival of arias for Figure, the ones that so rattled Jonathan Miller's cage. As menand unusual flexibility (large leaps and trills were particular specialties) the most successful singers of comic opera at the Burgtheater, in spite of had arrived in Vienna during 1788 and had established herself as one of Figuro boasted a notable new Susanna. This was Adriana Ferrarese, who Mozart would, famously, exploit these qualities when he created accounts a voice of impressive extension, with a powerful low register having been more famous previously in opera seria. 10 She had by all (Ferrarese's sister both in real life and in Così fan tutte), he first tested the Fiordiligi for her in Così fun tutte; but, as he did with Luise Villeneuve sometimes also hinted at in the musicological literature but has neverthey were written "under pressure from a diva"; a degree of coercion is for the Vienna Figuro. Miller (to quote him one last time) tells us that boundaries, tried her vocality on for size. The result was this pair of arias Talk of singers, though, can lead us back to those two replacement

> motto se non è vero, è ben trovato). 11 haps, of an attitude to historical evidence best summed up by the Italian so far as I know-been convincingly documented (another case, per-

in §, which in general shape and tone suits the style of Susanna's music sings in the original version, is a character piece—a simple serenade see her and so does not know she is in disguise). "Deh vieni," the aria she Susanna sing in eager anticipation of an amorous encounter (he cannot and lurks in the obscurity. His suspicions seem confirmed when he hears suit of Susanna. Susanna is left alone in the garden. Figaro is suspicious countess have exchanged clothes in order to expose the count in his pursituation in Figarro's last act, then at its most complex. Susanna and the on the very shape and tone of the music. We should recall the dramatic vieni" in Act IV, that her vocal presence seems to press more obviously second replacement aria, the one that substitutes for Susanna's "Deh spectacular dive below the stave reported in example 8. But it is in the elsewhere in the opera. vocal character in "Un moto di gioia," particularly in that unexpected Pressure or not, we can probably see hints of Ferrarese's distinctive

night is highly poetic for a buffo character, even bordering on the vated style, in particular in its text, where the invocation of the sultry Metastasian Curiously, though, the aria also makes gestures toward a more ele-

Finché l'aria è ancor bruna, e il mondo tace Qui mormora il ruscel, qui scherza l'aura Finché non splende in ciel notturna face,

is still dark, and the world silent. / Here murmurs the brook, here [While the torch of night does not shine in the sky, / While the air

musical teatures more likely to accompany highborn characters). 12 Why Susanna's musical and poetic style should here bear traces of her cosing an opening ritornello and relatively independent wind parts (both What is more, Mozart clearly responded to this shift in tone by supply-

shall return to; but for now it is enough merely to register the oddness. What is in no doubt is that the aria that substituted for "Deh vieni" underlines the confusion insistently from a musical point of view: it is a classic example of the two-movement *rondô*, the grandest (and longest and most aristocratic) aria type then in vogue. As is clear from the words, the sentiments—though physical and intense—are of the most general and elevated imaginable:

Al desio di chi t'adora,
Vieni, vola, oh mia speranza!
Morirò, se indarno ancora
Tu mi lasci sospirar.
Le promesse, i giuramenti,
Deh! rammenta, oh mio tesoro!
E i momenti di ristoro,
Che mi fece Amor sperar!
Ah ch'omai più non resisto
All'ardor che in sen m'accende.
Chi d'amor gli affetti intende
Compatisca il mio penar.

[To the desire of she who adores you, / Come, fly, oh my hope! / I shall die if, still in vain, / You leave me sighing. / Your promises, your oaths, / Oh, remember, my treasure! / And the moments of pleasure, / That Love made me hope for! / Ah, I can no longer resist / The ardor that enflames my breast. / Those who know the effects of love / Understand my pain.]

"Al desio" is too long to describe in great detail (lasting around six minutes, it is indeed nearly twice the length of "Deh vieni"). It follows the general pattern of rondòs of the period: split into two movements, the first slow, the second fast, both of them involving large-scale thematic repetition (hence the term *rondò*), it features elaborate vocal coloratura and, in dialogue with this, equally elaborate contributions from an unusual group of wind instruments, in this case two basset horns, two bassoons, and two French horns. Merely from the opening measures

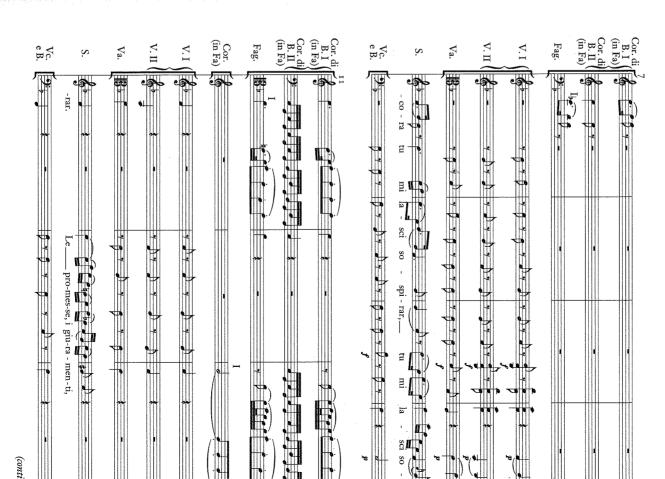
tive tone takes over; and the change has its effect on the voice, which pleading role, in an insistent counterpoint. A more serious, more seducstated by the wind band in a rather stilted, banal manner: first basset but the violins are muted, softening much of their gestural effect and outburst of "moriro" (m. 5), the strings appear with a rhetorical gesture; upper part moving from first horn to first basset horn, the bass shifting "band"; but the disposition of parts within the winds' generally dark on the middle syllable of "desio," is accompanied only by the wind dinary. The singer's opening triadic statement, with its expressive lean ing instruments. fades momentarily into the background, perhaps sensible of the plead-With daring virtuosity, the second basset horn and first horn take on the in the bass. 13 But then, at m. 18, a remarkable transformation begins. horn and bassoon in parallel thirds, second basset horn chugging away launched at m. 11. Those "promesse" and "giuramenti" are initially instead becoming an indistinct haze of sound. The second quatrain is from second basset horn to bassoon and back. Then, on the opera seria sonority is constantly shifting (with the character's vagrant desire?), the (example 9), we can see that the levels of expressive variety are extraor-

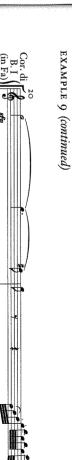
Even this much description may suggest that the aria has layers of meaning and complexity that could certainly be related to the dramatic situation for which it was intended; Mozart was certainly capable of writing routinely, even at this stage of his career, but did not do so here. It is sad to report, though, that among Mozartians, a group not famous for coolness of aesthetic judgment when their hero's music is involved, "Al desio" has had a startlingly poor press. Hardly any commentator has a good word for it. For Hermann Abert, "the piece remains an entity foreign to the opera, a concession Mozart made to a singer to whom he was not close on the artistic level." For Stefan Kunze it is "sentimentalizing, in spite of its ambitious musical conception. It demonstrates that in the choice of cast [for the Vienna Figuro] there had been an error, and that Mozart, following the trend of the time, had to make the best of a bad job." In the process of an impressively detailed analysis of Mozart's

EXAMPLE 9. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Le nozze di Figaro, "Al desio" (mm. 1-23).



EXAMPLE 9 (continued)

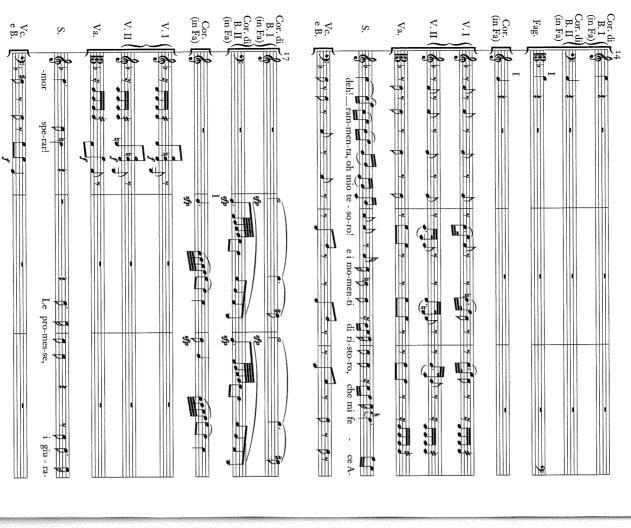


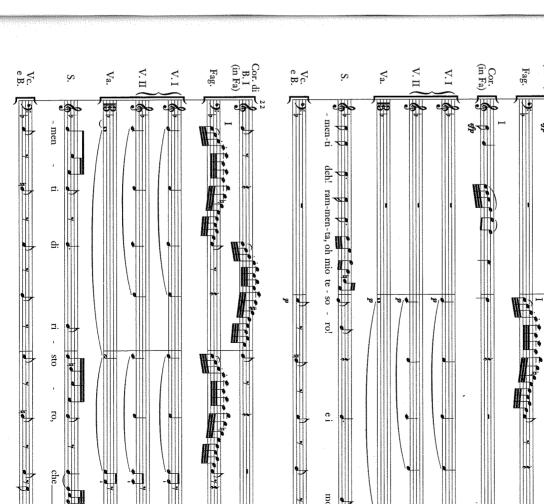


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aria's forms, James Webster pronounces "Deh vieni" a key to Susanna's character and gets rather agitated about certain details of the aria; perhaps small wonder, then, that in a severe footnote he mentions "Al desio" only to remark on "the falseness of tone which all modern commentators find in [it]." Many of the journalists at those Met performances in 1998, some of them perhaps emboldened by this overwhelmingly negative "expert" reception, were even less guarded. Anthony Tommasini, in a New York Times article remarkable for its intemperance of language, stated:

The original, "Deh vieni non tardar," is utterly moving, a miracle of an aria, while "Al desio," the rondo that replaces it, is an unabashed display piece. It begins reflectively, with a simple melody, but soon evolves into a frilly, trilly, filigreed thing, like Rossini at his most bumptious.¹⁷

remarks about her in his letters adds further welcome ammunition diva Ferrarese. The fact that the composer made two disparaging ately solicits a narrative explanation; there needs, and that urgently, to mature Mozart—is so extraordinary, so against nature, that it immediistic, the very existence of what they pronounce poor music-by the singing is yet further proof: never trust a trilling soprano (and thi stages of "Al desio" involve, as do all rondòs, a great deal of floric artless manner, which I very much doubt." The fact that the latter Ferrarese, ought, I think, to please, if she is capable of singing it in ar "Un moto di gioia": "The arietta, which I've composed for Madame plain, a stock operatic figure stands ready at hand, in the person of the be a villain in the tale. And of course, as Abert and Kunze both made than this, and to tie a pink ribbon around the stereotype, there's the rou rarese and journalistic treatments of Bartoli is gloomily obvious). More whether she steps out of history or interrupts the Met at their Mozart Quoted almost invariably is a comment to his wife, Constanze, about ian prayer—the similarity between musicological treatments of Fer-For most of these commentators, whether musicological or journal-

tinely repeated assertion that Ferrarese was at the time Lorenzo Da Ponte's mistress (he boasts of it in his memoirs, as he does of the fact that, some years after their falling out, he managed to damage her career by making negative remarks about her in high places).¹⁹

a "work" needs protection. Let me list a few of the more obvious: that we think about the ending of Mozart's opera. opera, what new contexts might emerge from its inclusion. This is a pity, want to keep "Al desio" out of Figure that (to my knowledge) no one has perhaps especially when the purveyor of such heady delights is female; when performers are suspected of having influence over composers, it is tic" reasons (as if one can ever neatly distinguish between the two); that as it is by such an orchestra of easy assumptions, of attitudes that would because such contexts can, I think, potentially be important for the way felt obliged to look at it with a view to what it might create within the movement. And so on and on. Indeed, writers have been so sure they less "dramatic" than those that feature dialogue and/or plenty of stage that long arias in which the stage action is frozen are less "operatic" or duress; that elaborate vocal virtuosity is to be regarded with suspicion, likely to be unwelcome and can be assumed to have taken place under known to have been stimulated by practical necessity rather than "artisfirst versions are likely to be better than revisions when the latter are hardly be tolerated if stated baldly, but that are none the less handy when This mighty chorus of disapproval is unlikely to be stilled, supported

Let me start with a point about "Al desio" so obvious that it comes as a surprise to find no mention of it in the Mozart literature: while the aria is clearly very different in proportion, form, and gesture from "Deh vieni," there exist important similarities between them. They are in the same key (a point those arguing for elaborate tonal plans in the opera always remark on with relieved approval), and of course they share the same preceding recitative, "Giunse alfin il momento." More than this, though, they have in many places a distinctly similar melodic stamp, in particular a tendency for simple diatonic language and arpeggiated cadential figures. These similarities might encourage us to think of the

arias as (at least potentially) part of the same dramatic project: they can both, for example, be thought tied to a distinctive nocturnal-pastoral ambience. But it is also true that they articulate that ambience in sharply different ways: as already mentioned, "Deh vieni" evokes the night through its rich, "high-toned" poetic imagery and simple accompaniment; "Al desio," in contrast, makes the nocturnal atmosphere musically manifest in quite other fashion, those basset horns in particular suggesting that here the night is more tenebrous, the moon more veiled.

should be singing in "her own" voice. But not really "her own," as the is eager for a liaison with the count. So, although dressed as another, she the aria as part of a performance—to trick Figaro into thinking that she ously elevated self" during the course of the aria, specifically with those "liquid, undu-James Webster most enthusiastically, that Susanna "reveals her true buffo world proper to her character. Indeed, it has been suggested, by elements that are markedly "elevated" for Susanna. The aria neverthecourse, what she has spent the entire opera avoiding). Some of this sentiments she articulates are feigned (a liaison with the count is, of Susanna is now on her own, overheard but unseen by Figaro; she sings Recall the scene: Susanna and the countess have exchanged clothes which the substitution of "Al desio" has a potentially important effect buffo character; in general Susanna sings with tones that are unambigumore obviously a musical travestimento. There are now mere traces of lating violin motifs" near the end. 20 In this context, "Al desio" is much less remains—as music, and in the voice it commands—broadly in the ambiguity can be heard in "Deh vieni," which has musical and poetic This is important because it involves a famous crux in Figure, one on

I would be the first to agree that "Deh vieni," with its artful simplicity, is an astonishing Mozartian moment; but I would nevertheless question whether its solution is so obviously better, so *permanently* better, than that of "Al desio." The libretto's establishment of a kinship, an emotional equality even, between Susanna and the countess, something made iconic when they exchange clothes in the final act, is after all one

ocation, that a particular vocal identity is necessary for Susanna in her critic who insisted, insisted so rigidly and with so little room for equivess. 23 In all this concatenation of confused identities, it would be a brave disguises her voice, trying to fool Figaro into thinking she is the countimitate others, and, famously, just a little after "Al desio" Susanna indeed up to the task.²² What is more, Storace was well known for her ability to changed his mind about the vocal disposition of his two sopranos, parprobably for practical reasons that emerged during rehearsal, Mozart nocturnal aria, at this moment alone. But when scholars believe that tempo concert aria he wrote for her in 1786, she would have been fully Susanna, Nancy Storace—and to judge by the highly strenuous twofounded. At an early stage, Mozart even sketched a rondo for the first vocal personality: as musical presences, they have already been conwords, these two characters continually weave in and out of each other's of the central issues of the drama. What is more, we also know that, Mozart's original intentions are marching behind them, many become ticularly about who should take the upper part in ensembles.²¹ In other

There is, though, another confusion of voices caused by "Al desio," one that could take us through a long line of rondòs and through some of Mozart's most imposing vocal music, most obviously those for Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, for Fiordiligi in *Così fun tutte*, and for Sesto in *La clemenza di Tito*. If we believe John Rice, we can witness Mozart in this series of pieces engaged in a fascinating emulative tussle with Antonio Salieri. ²⁴ But of course the principal connection in this case is to the part that Adriana Ferrarese would soon create, to Fiordiligi in *Così*, an opera with which—as I mentioned earlier—Mozart was in all likelihood already engaged at the time he was writing "Al desio." Fiordiligi's great rondò in Act II of *Così*, "Per pietà, ben mio, perdona," has much in common with "Al desio," the latter seeming almost like a trial run for the former. Some of these similarities are of course generic, reflecting the formal conventions of the rondò: the two-tempo form, the prominent use of wind instruments, the florid writing in the second section. But

others are more personal, almost certainly inspired by placing the same singer in dramatic situations that have much in common. A glance at the verses of "Per pietà" will make the similarities plain:

Per pietà, ben mio, perdona
All'error d'un'alma amante;
Fra quest'ombre e queste piante
Sempre ascoso, o Dio, sarà.
Svenerà quest'empia voglia
L'ardir mio, la mia costanza,
Perderà la rimembranza
Che vergogna e orror mi fa.
A chi mai mancò di fede
Questo vano ingrato cor!
Si dovea miglior mercede
Caro bene, al tuo candor!

[Have pity, my love, forgive / The fault of a loving soul; / Among these shadowy groves / It will, oh God, always be hidden. / My courage, my passion, / Will empty my veins of this wicked desire, / Will drive out the memory / Which gives me shame and horror. / Whom did it betray, / This worthless, empty heart! / You deserved a better reward / My beloved, for your sincerity!]

Both "Al desio" and "Per pietà" take place in a garden, a place that provides shadows and seclusion and thus allows secret thoughts to emerge, thoughts of illicit desire, of amorous feelings that need to be hidden from the world. In both cases this sense of the thing that must remain hidden is partly evoked by the voice, which makes prominent show of the lower register in quiet contexts. Most obviously, though, it emerges in the shared use of the solo horn, a horn that betrays its usual orchestral nature by duetting with the soloist, by invading the realm of the lyrical. There is probably a gesture here to the old pun, the horn, the corno, signifying the cuckold's horns, as it will so violently in Figaro's jealousy aria "Aprite un po' quegl'occhi," the aria that follows immediately on "Al desio" in the fourth act of Figaro. In these two rondòs for Ferrarese, though, the horns are anything but brazen and mocking.

Their proximity to, their merging with, vocal expression make us aware, with an economy of which music is uniquely capable, of a famous ambiguity at the heart of *Così fun tutte*: of the fact that "illicit" emotions, ones that flourish in the shadows, are not always neatly separated from others, more socially acceptable; that the cuckold's horn can sometimes bring forth sounds of painful beauty.

ple, encourage Susanna to be a little more taken by the count than either embraces "Al desio" will of course depend on performers' choices. But weight. The extent to which the Figuro landscape changes when it glimpse of another Mozartian operatic world, not just in the technical wrong, or subversive, or dramatically illogical object of desire. haunts "Al desio" is the forbidden possibility—of female attraction to the the libretto or her protestations allow: to use Carolyn Abbate's nowthe possibilities are enticing. The presence of the aria might, for examently, where the denouement that sets everything "right" carries less one in which the business of sexual jealousy is approached very differwriting that is typical of Così but rare in Figure, but also, more important, sense (shared by "Un moto di gioia") of introducing a richness of wind the landscape. Inserting "Al desio" into Figuro, in other words, gives us a sies danced into Verdi's La traviata, so a breath of Così fan tutte has strayed famous term, "voice Count" is, after all, disturbingly likeable. What ther Figure, leaving her mark on a Susanna dressed as the countess, changing Ferrarese. Fiordiligi, Mozart's most ambivalent character, is now part of into the last act of Figure, ushered in by the distinctive voice of Adriana What can we gain from pondering these similarities? Just as those gyp-

In this sense, far from dispersing the tension of that moment in the garden, "Al desio" meaningfully darkens *Figuro*. But there is more. Its presence, its difference, its moment of excess, may cause us to reassess the terms of the vocal contracts we have wrapped around this and other Mozart operas. The countess, Susanna, Fiordiligi: we tend to understand these characters, make them "ours," in part by means of a rigid classification of vocal types. Mozart, though, was writing for real voices, for individual women and men. Rhetorically, we often forget this:

Mozart wrote music, not words, not characters, not libretto. The influence of a singular voice and individual is not a matter of reproach, but something positive for the formation of *bis* work (music), a something perhaps more positive than we want to imagine. To put this one last way, Adriana Ferrarese's "Al desio" can usefully confuse us, make us aware that Susanna does not have to remain locked in one particular vocal mold. She can, in this fourth act of *Le nozze di Figaro*, vocally become the countess, assume more forcefully a position we thought could not be hers. And she can, by means of a horn solo and certain low notes, vocally become Fiordiligi, bringing with her an ambiguity that can add further layers of complexity to Mozart's ever-mutable opera.

FOUR

In Search of Verdi

quite recently, I got around to reading closely some of his copious and which has been unbending for about twenty years, hardly changed when come to stand for in the musicological community; and my attitude made. I don't much like Adorno; or, better, I dislike what Adorno has these dark topics have been presented to a mostly bewildered world by waters that surround themes such as modernity and late style, not least as obligation: I find myself constrained to trail a hand in the shark-infestec together with the title and several other matters, has brought with it an My main port of call in this chapter is Verdi's Falstaff, and that choice is also pretty tough on Wagner. But at least he wrote a book to ventilate much, and it's a fairly contemptuous aside about Rossini. 2 True, Adorno erence to the Italian operatic tradition from which Wagner learned so Schoenberg and Berg), has, so far as I've been able to find, just one refsors such as Mozart and Beethoven, and august followers, such as example (which has frequent references to august Wagnerian predecespled by Austro-German composers; his book In Search of Wagner, for Adorno's musical world was almost exclusively and unapologetically peohad always been that my central interests are with Italian music, while dense writings on music. My lame, inadequate excuse for ignoring him Theodor W. Adorno. Before embarkation a confession had better be