

10 | The alternative endings of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

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Of all Mozart's operatic finales none has drawn more criticism than the second-act finale of *Il dissoluto punito o sia il Don Giovanni*. The fault, if such it can be called, occurs in the last "scene" embracing the action following Don Giovanni's descent into hell. Having sorted out their marital and other affairs in a matter-of-fact way as though Don Giovanni's demise is good riddance to bad rubbish, the other characters conclude by taking the high moral ground in their tutti "Questo è il fin di chi fa mal." Julian Rushton says modern audiences may find this ending too neat, "a trivialization of the action."¹ Michael Beckerman calls the scene "somewhat hollow."² Successive critics, according to Wye Allanbrook, have found it "woefully inappropriate."³

If the scene is not up to the dramatic level of the rest of the finale, perhaps it should be removed. It was commonly cut in nineteenth-century productions. Nowadays it seldom is. Interestingly there is evidence that the composer and Da Ponte themselves intended to cut it at the time of the Vienna production in 1788. The 1788 Vienna libretto ends with Don Giovanni's death and with the other characters coming on just in time to witness it and to cry out in horror. The final scene is not there. Da Ponte was then official theatre poet and responsible for the printing of all librettos for the Burgtheater. It is hardly conceivable he would have authorized this version believing (at the time of printing at least) it was not to be performed that way.⁴ Mozart abetted this ending by adding to his

1 Julian Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: "Don Giovanni"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 65.

2 Michael Beckerman, "Mozart's Duel with Don Giovanni," *Mjb*, 1984-85, p. 14.

3 Wye J. Allanbrook, "Mozart's Happy Endings: A new Look at the 'Convention' of the 'Lieto Fine,'" *Mjb*, 1984-85, p. 2.

4 I am grateful to Dorothea Link for confirming that Lorenzo Da Ponte was responsible for the publishing of librettos for the Burgtheater in 1788.

autograph, at some point in time, a full vocal chord in m. 596 on which the characters sing the syllable "Ah."⁵ This is their cry of horror as they enter to see Don Giovanni disappearing. The fact that Mozart later crossed this chord out may be held to mean that he came to think this ending ineffective and that the last scene was not cut in 1788. However the intention of composer and librettist at some point in time to cut it seems clear.⁶

The fact that there are two alternative endings, both of which have been found more or less acceptable at different periods, has led modern commentators to consider the aesthetic qualities of each. In essence the arguments in support of one or other are as follows. If the opera ends with Don Giovanni's descent into hell, into which he plunges in spectacular fashion, his death and his behavior at the time are the audience's last and most vivid impression. In this circumstance "he becomes the hero, an object of awe and admiration."⁷ This is also the ending likely to lead the imagination to dwell on man's irrationality and on his capacity to self-destruct – fascination with this aspect of the story may be one reason why nineteenth-century audiences preferred this ending to the other. The second alternative, the one that retains the final scene, ties the various dramatic loose ends more effectively together. It produces a calmer, more rational atmosphere. The spotlight moves from Don Giovanni to the other characters who react to his death by resolving their affairs in a reasonable way and by proclaiming in the tutti the lesson to be learned.⁸ This close obeys the convention that a comic opera should terminate with a *lieto fine*, a happy finish.

5 See NMA, 11/5/17, xii–xiii.

6 Kunze, *Don Giovanni*, p. 56, also holds that Mozart thought of cutting the last scene. 7 Beckerman, "Mozart's Duel," p. 14.

8 Sabine Henze-Döhring, *Opera Seria, Opera Buffa und Mozarts "Don Giovanni"*, Laaber: Laaber, 1986 (*AnM.* 24), p. 251, argues that the final scene completes the span of action started by the act II sextet "Sola sola, in buio loco." The various characters wronged by Don Giovanni vow in the sextet to fight for justice. If the last scene of the finale were not there, she maintains, they would not have the opportunity to establish for themselves that their ambition is fulfilled.

Preoccupation with the aesthetic quality of the two endings has drawn attention away from the fact that both obey the structural procedures of a 1780s finale. It is the prime purpose of this article to review some of these procedures, and coincidentally to improve awareness of the options available to Mozart and Da Ponte when they came to create the last finale of a comic opera – and a comic opera on the subject of *Don Giovanni* in particular. This means examining the conventions affecting the final scenes both of comic opera in general in Vienna in Mozart's time and of particular settings of the *Don Giovanni* story prior to Mozart's (some seen in Vienna but others not), and seeing the extent to which the conventions are followed regardless of which ending is used.

What of the atmosphere generated by the two endings? That the final scene with its relatively "happy" denouement for the characters on stage is in the eighteenth-century tradition no one would deny. It is less easy to square the shortened ending with that tradition, for it is commonly associated with nineteenth-century interpretations of the opera which overlay the comedy with "Romantic" gloom and doom. Even to suggest that Mozart sanctioned the shortened version may be unacceptable to some, because of the possible implication that the composer had a "Romantic" view of the subject. In fact, as this article will make clear, there is a case for saying that eighteenth-century audiences would not have found the shortened, "tragic" close unconventional. The mistake is to imagine, against all the evidence, that any eighteenth-century opera that was officially "comic" had to end as comedy. This is nowhere more so than in the case of operas on the *Don Giovanni* story.

Both acts of an Italian comic opera of the 1780s–90s ended with a large, multi-sectional finale in which the large majority of the characters participated. This was indeed more than a convention; it was the rule. Da Ponte in an often-quoted passage refers to the necessity of bringing all characters on stage during a finale: "And if the plot of the play does not allow of it, then the poet must find a way to make it do so, in despite of good sense and reason and all the

Aristotles on earth.”⁹ Had he wished, Da Ponte could have invoked Aristotle’s name again to make a crucial distinction between first-act and second-act finales. For while the finale in the first act left the plot unresolved, so that the drama could continue, that in the second contained the denouement. This involved use of what Aristotle called “peripeteia,” that moment towards the end of a drama where there occurs a drastic change of fortune – usually the result of the discovery of new knowledge. Aristotle’s own example of peripeteia is the arrival of the messenger in Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*.¹⁰ One should remember that although Aristotle mentioned peripeteia specifically in relation to tragedy, Italian dramatists of the Renaissance onwards who were influenced by his writings employed peripeteia in all spheres of drama, comedy and comic opera included. Obviously the most suitable moment for a peripeteia was near the end of the final act, which in the case of comic opera before c. 1780 meant Act III. In third acts the moment of peripeteia and the subsequent denouement were commonly set as simple recitative. When however the number of acts of comic opera contracted from three to two, as happened in the 1780s,¹¹ the peripeteia and denouement necessarily shifted to the end of the second act, which already by custom had a large finale. For the first time therefore they were no longer set as recitative but as part of a large, lyrical ensemble.

The final tutti, also incorporated into the second-act finale in the 1780s, had an equally ancient ancestry. It can be traced back through Renaissance tragedies and pastoral plays ultimately to Sophoclean drama, which ended with a choral commentary. The appearance of choral commentaries at the end of late sixteenth-century pastorals (exemplified by Tasso’s *Aminta* and Guarini’s *Il pastor fido*) is particularly important, since early opera developed from the pastoral

⁹ *Memoirs of Lorenzo Da Ponte, Mozart’s Librettist*, trans. L. A. Sheppard (London: Routledge, 1929), p. 114. ¹⁰ *Poetics*, 1452.^{a-b}

¹¹ Included in the general category of two-act operas are also operas in four acts, like *Le nozze di Figaro*, that end with a large finale. Single-act operas may also end with a large finale.

genre. For a variety of reasons it is worth while quoting the final chorus of Guarini's play. The "pair" cited are the lovers Mirtillo and Amarilli, who after many trials and tribulations receive permission to marry in the closing pages.

Oh fortunata coppia,
Che pianto ha seminato e riso accoglie!
Con quante amare doglie
Hai raddolciti tu gli affetti tuoi!
Quinci imparate voi,
O ciechi e troppo teneri mortali,
I sinceri dilette e i veri mali.
Non è sana ogni gioia,
Né mal ciò che v'annoia.
Quello è vero gioire,
Che nasce da virtù dopo il soffrire.

[O happy pair, who have shed tears and welcome laughter! How you have softened your joys with sadness! So, blind and tender mortals, learn [the difference between] true delights and falsehoods. Not every joy is wholesome, nor is everything that annoys evil. True joy is what springs from virtue after suffering.]¹²

- 12 Battista Guarini, *Il pastor fido*, ed. J. H. Whitfield, Edinburgh Bilingual Library (Austin, 1979), p. 410; my translation. Comments by eighteenth-century writers on how a drama should finish are few and far between. However Francesco Saverio Quadrio, *Della Storia e della Ragione d'ogni Poesia*, Milan, vol. 3, part 2 (1744), pp. 394–95, has this to say about the final chorus of Guarini's *Il pastor fido*:

L'Epicharma [Ε'πὶχαρμα], che vale quasi *Congratulazione*, non si dee considerare, come parte distinta dal Coro, ma è il Coro stesso, che come nelle Tragedie lugubri faceva il Commo, o Pianto, così nelle Favole di fine lieto si congratula, e allegrasi. Questo Epicharma fu anch'esso da alcuni Italiani nelle lor Pastorali usitato, come dal Guarini nel suo *Pastor fido* [sic]: poichè quel Coro, con cui termina la sua Favola, il quale incomincia, *O fortunata Coppia*, è propriamente un Epicharma [sic].

(Epicharma . . . which almost means the same as *Celebration*, should not be considered as something different from the [end] chorus, but is itself the chorus. Just as [the end chorus] in sorrowful tragedies made the Commos, or song of lamentation, so in plays with a happy ending it celebrates and rejoices. This Epicharma was used by many Italians in their pastorals, including Guarini in his *Pastor fido*: for the chorus commencing *O fortunata Coppia*, which ends his play, is exactly an Epicharma.)

Guarini's play was standard reading in European literary circles until well into the nineteenth century. J. H. Whitfield has calculated that over forty editions of the text were printed in Europe between 1780 and 1820 alone.¹³ The general message of the pastoral was thus very well known too: true joy is acquired only through a state of being virtuous, and becoming virtuous is acquired only through suffering. Nowhere is this message more clearly pronounced than in Guarini's final chorus. The same message was proclaimed time and again by eighteenth-century Italian dramatists of the Arcadian movement, and especially by Pietro Metastasio, the imperial *poeta cesareo*, whose "serious" opera librettos dramatize the heartaches of royal and imperial heroes as they are put under stress to behave virtuously, though their base inclinations prompt them to do otherwise.

Final choruses (or *tuttis* as I shall henceforth call them) of Italian eighteenth-century comic opera were as much derived from the pastoral as those of serious opera.¹⁴ It cannot be said that the typical Metastasian *tutti* is strong in didactic content; most of his texts end with generalized statements about love and happiness. But there was even less incentive for librettists to finish comic operas with a strong moral message; comic opera, after all, was meant to be amusing. So the pastoral message was in comic opera very watered down. Vague echoes of the pastoral idea may be read in the third and fourth lines of Da Ponte's *tutti* to *Così fan tutte*:

Quadrio's definition of "Epicharma" [Ἐπίχαρμα] as celebration might make it a suitable term for the final "happy" choruses and *tuttis* of eighteenth-century comic opera. My slight reluctance to use the term in the comic-opera context stems from the definition of Epicharma in Henry George Liddell's and Robert Scott's *A Greek-English Lexicon*, new edn. (Oxford, 1940), p. 672, as "malignant joy" or "object of malignant joy." (Author's note)

¹³ *Il pastor fido*, p. 29.

¹⁴ There was no firm convention in the seventeenth century that an Italian opera should end with an ensemble or chorus. Many seventeenth-century operas finish with a duet or even with a solo aria. Why a concluding ensemble or chorus became *de rigueur* in all but a few *opere serie* after about 1700 requires investigation.

Fortunato l'uom che prende
Ogni caso pel buon verso
E tra i casi e le vicende
Da ragion guidar si fa. [italics added]

...

[Happy is the man who looks at everything on the right side *and through trials and tribulations makes reason his guide* . . .]¹⁵

But nine out of ten comic operas produced in Vienna in the 1780s finish with *tuttis* of quite vacuous content that consists merely of expressions of general rejoicing. The librettists' intention seems to have been to express some joyful consensus of view that will send an audience happily away from the theatre. Particularly revealing in this respect is a comparison of the ending of Da Ponte's libretto of *Il pastor fido*, based on Guarini's play and produced with Salieri's music in Vienna in 1789, with Guarini's original. Da Ponte's plot is simpler than Guarini's. The very trite tutti, which avoids all mention of suffering, reads:

<i>Selvaggio, Dorinda, Mirtillo, Amarilli</i> <i>Tutti</i>	Vieni, o caro/cara a chi t'adora! Sia felice il nostro amor! O che coppie fortunate! Che felice genitor! A celebrar si vada, Sì fausto avvenimento; Suonin le vie d'Arcadia D'insolito contento; E tutte l'alme esultino In lor felicità! [<i>sic</i>].
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[Come, dearest, to the one who adores you. May our love be happy! Oh what happy couples! What a happy father! Let us go and celebrate such a joyful event. Make the paths of Arcadia resound with perfect contentment, and let every soul rejoice in their happiness.]¹⁶

¹⁵ Translation [by Lionel Salter] from the libretto to Mozart, *Così fan tutte* (Deutsche Grammophon 2709-059. Polydor International GmbH, 1975).

¹⁶ The differences between Guarini's and Da Ponte's final lines occur in spite of Da Ponte's avowal printed at the end of his libretto (issued "Nella Imper. Stamperia dei Sordi, e Muti," Vienna, 1789):

Among the obvious exceptions to the observation that eighteenth-century comic opera ends in a mood of joyous celebration are the works based on the subject of *Don Giovanni*.¹⁷ These are really black comedies, and they create a paradox. Although officially "comic" their message is severer than the one customarily found in contemporary serious and pastoral operas that dramatize salvation through suffering. There is no salvation for the hero here. Their last *tuttis* point out in unequivocal terms that the fate of Don Giovanni is eternal damnation. Two quotations from *tuttis* will suffice to reveal the substance of the *Don Giovanni* message, the first from *Il convitato di pietra*, words by Pietro Pariati and music by Giuseppe Calegari, produced in Venice in 1777:

Sorge ormai nel ciel l'aurora,
E rivolta a noi tremando
All'aspetto si scolora
Dell'Averno, e palpitando

Avendo io tratto questo Dramma dalla famosa Opera del C. [sic] GUARINI ho cercato di lasciare, quant'ho potuto i versi stessi dell'Autore per non defraudare il Pubblico di tutte quelle grazie e squisitezze ond'è [sic] ripiena quell'Opera.

[Having taken this drama from the famous work of C. [sic] GUARINI I have tried, in so far as possible, to leave intact the author's own lines, so as not to defraud the public of the many graces and subtleties found so plentifully in that work.]

- 17 The most recent study of plays and operas on the subject of *Don Giovanni* produced prior to October 1787, when Mozart's opera appeared, is by Charles C. Russell, *The Don Juan Legend before Mozart* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1993). It includes full texts of the following operas: *La pravità castigata* (music by Eustachio Bambini, Brno, 1734), *Il convitato di pietra o sia Il dissoluto* (words by Nunziato Porta, music by Vincenzo Righini, Prague, 1776), *Il convitato di pietra* (words by Pietro Pariati, music by Giuseppe Calegari, Venice, 1777), *Il convitato di pietra* (words by Giambattista Lorenzi, music by Giacomo Tritto, Naples, 1783), *Il nuovo convitato di pietra* (words by Giuseppe Maria Foppa, music by Francesco Gardi, Venice, 1787), and *Il capriccio drammatico* (words by Giovanni Bertati, music by various composers, Venice, 1787) of which *Don Giovanni o sia Il convitato di pietra* (music by Giuseppe Gazzaniga) forms Part II. From these it is possible to study how different librettists treated Don Giovanni's fall. The book also contains excerpts of the text of *Il Don Giovanni* (text based on Nunziato Porta's, music by Gioacchino Albertini, ?1780).

A further opera on the same subject is *Il convitato di pietra* (text based on Lorenzi's libretto, music by Vincenzo Fabrizi, Rome, 1787).

Mostra forse il nuovo dì.
Ma da notte sì terribile
Chiaro resta a noi visibile
Come un empio il Ciel punì.

[The dawn rises in the sky. Discoloured by [the fires of] hell, it turns to us, who are quaking at the sight, and timidly reveals the new day to us. But of the [preceding] night we still have the clear image how heaven punished an evil one.]¹⁸

The second is from *Il convitato di pietra*, words by Giambattista Lorenzi and music by Giacomo Tritto first produced in Naples in 1783:

Ah! che il cor mi trema in petto!
Ahi! qual giel mi cadde sopra!
Ecco il fin di chi mal opra,
Ecco il Cielo che sà far.

[Ah how my heart trembles in my breast! Ah what ice descends upon me! This is the end of whoever exercises evil. This is how heaven acts.]¹⁹

The similarity between Lorenzi's third line "Ecco il fin di chi mal opra" and Da Ponte's line "Questo è il fin di chi fa mal" is obvious, and raises the question whether Da Ponte knew the Lorenzi libretto. No question arises though as to which tradition the Da Ponte tutti follows. Hardly surprisingly its lineage may be traced to previous operas on the *Don Giovanni* theme.

The time has now come to look at Da Ponte's finale text itself. It is already clear that among the structural features of this piece he had to arrange for (1) a peripeteia, (2) a consequent unraveling of the plot, and (3) an end tutti expressing some consensus view among the characters. His choice of incident serving as peripeteia was the same as that of practically all dramatists who had previously used the theme: the appearance of the stone guest in response to Don Juan/Don Giovanni's invitation to dinner. Subsequent incidents, however, had to be carefully considered.

¹⁸ Russell, *The Don Juan Legend*, p. 275. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

Nearly every version of the *Don Giovanni* story involves the death of the hero and his descent into hell. Some spoken dramas on the subject place this event at the very end in the presence of a minimum number of onlookers. Molière's *Don Juan ou Le Festin de pierre* is a good example. An opera however could not end in precisely this way because of the need for a final tutti. Without several characters or a chorus present the tutti could not be sung.

Most librettists kept to the tradition of letting Don Giovanni die in front of the stone guest and one or two human witnesses, so they needed to bring the other characters back afterwards for the tutti.²⁰ Da Ponte followed this tradition too. How then was his action to close? One solution discovered by his predecessors was to create a spectacular vision of hell into which the hero has fallen and in which he is seen surrounded by devils. In the Pariati/Calegari and Lorenzi/Tritto works mentioned earlier the surviving mortals watch him suffering below and comment accordingly in their tutti. A similar vision appears at the end of *Il convitato di pietra, o sia il dissoluto*, produced in Prague in 1776 and Vienna in 1777 with words by Nunziato Porta and music by Vincenzo Righini. In this case though the chorus of devils takes over the function of the tutti, as none of Don Giovanni's earthly companions is present.²¹

The other solution was pioneered by Giovanni Bertati in his one-act *Don Giovanni o sia il convitato di pietra*, set to music by Giuseppe Gazzaniga and premiered in Venice in carnival time 1787. Put simply, he omitted the vision and let the surviving characters finish the action on their own. Da Ponte did the same. Hell manifests itself in both their texts, but only in the scene leading to the hero's fall. In the Bertati finale non-singing demons appear on stage at the moment of his death and accompany him below. In the Da Ponte finale an invisible chorus of demons chants "Tutto a tue colpe è

20 *Il nuovo convitato di pietra*, words by Francesco Gardi and music by Giuseppe Maria Foppa (Venice, carnival 1787), seems the one and only *Don Giovanni* opera to terminate with the death scene.

21 Gluck's ballet *Don Juan ou Le Festin de pierre*, produced in Vienna in 1761, also ends with the furies tormenting Don Juan in hell.

poco / Vieni c'è un mal peggior" ("All sins are small compared to yours. Come, there is yet worse for you") just before Don Giovanni disappears. Once Don Giovanni dies, however, all hellish apparitions cease. Left to their own devices Bertati's characters sing a "happy" tutti (unusual in an opera on this subject) in which, in such delight at the removal of Don Giovanni that they seem half-crazed, they imitate the sounds of musical instruments. Da Ponte's finish with a "moral" tutti, which, as we have seen, is more in the tradition of *Don Giovanni* tuttis over-all.

The important point to recognize is that, by choosing the less "tragic" solution, Da Ponte also chose the less spectacular. Had he concluded his libretto with the vision, he would have created opportunity for maximum stage spectacle at the end of the finale rather than in the middle of it (the scene of Don Giovanni's downfall). And he would have kept the spotlight on the hero at the close. These are actually the conditions that apply in the *shortened* version of his and Mozart's opera.

Before tackling musical aspects of the case, we should perhaps deal with the question whether, if the last scene is cut from performances of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, the convention of the final tutti is ignored. In fact it can be said to have been obeyed, but only up to a point. Some may argue that the shorter alternative does not, and cannot, contain a tutti because Leporello is the only human left on stage at the final curtain. But there is a subterranean chorus singing "Tutto a tue colpe è poco" just before Don Giovanni disappears. And given that tuttis were sometimes sung by a chorus rather than by the soloists, it is possible to say that Mozart's chorus serves – just about – in this capacity. This is although it is in the background and is barely heard in many performances.

Cutting the last scene certainly blocks half the "unraveling of the plot." Don Giovanni's death is not affected, but how the others will resolve their affairs afterward remains uncertain if the curtain falls immediately after it occurs. The advantage of bringing on all the characters to witness his downfall – the device intended to be used by Da Ponte and Mozart at one time (see the Viennese 1788

libretto) is that we are assured they at least know it has happened. The fact that, in the original and longer version of the finale, they do not come on in time to see his demise is the one sure sign that librettist and composer had not already thought through the possibility that the work could end at this point. Had Da Ponte brought on the other characters a few seconds earlier, he might well have strengthened the shorter ending and almost made the longer one redundant. I say "almost," for the fate of the other characters would still be uncertain. Da Ponte could have introduced a scene earlier in the opera in which they discuss what they would do in the event of Don Giovanni's death. But if the intervention of hell was to retain its shock value, he could not forewarn them of it or indicate in advance what difference this might make to their behavior.

The music at the end of the shortened version is not *lieto*. But what about at the end of the longer? What interpretation are we to put on Mozart's setting of "Questo è il fin di chi fa mal"? His indication of Presto, his choice of D major and the predominantly diatonic style, the trills and sparkling eighth-note patterns of the accompaniment, induce many performers nowadays to interpret the music as one more expression of the normal joyousness of comic endings. Perhaps their view is correct. It means that Mozart played safe and put the happiest gloss on the *Don Giovanni* story. The one curious feature of this tutti is its semi-fugato opening; Donna Anna and Donna Elvira state the subject "Questo è il fin," etc., Zerlina repeats it in the dominant like a fugal answer, then Masetto and Leporello recommence it in the tonic – though it is this time modified. That is all the fugato there is. But why have a fugato at all? None of the tuttis to Mozart's other comic operas starts this way, and none written at the time by Salieri and Martín y Soler, his main composer contemporaries in Vienna, does either. There is no way of knowing whether Mozart attached any extra-musical significance to it. But it is worth noting that two other operas premiered in Vienna between 1784 and 1786 have tuttis with semi-contrapuntal beginnings, and both these tuttis have "other-than-

happy" texts. Mozart's start, though apparently joyful, could be a commentary on his also "other-than-happy" message.

The two operas in question are Giovanni Paisiello's *Il re Teodoro in Venezia*, produced to Giambattista Casti's words in August 1784, and Stephen Storace's *Gli equivoci*, produced to Da Ponte's words in December 1786.²² The tuttis of both works start with imitation, as Mozart's does. Both contain fast patter in the upper stringed accompaniment. The technical difference in the imitation is that whereas Mozart's voices enter alternately tonic-dominant, Paisiello's and Storace's enter all in the tonic (i.e. the voices' initial entries sound like the start of a canon). Casti's libretto is about a dethroned King Teodoro who lives in exile beyond his means and is thrown into prison for debt. At the end of the opera the other characters, instead of arranging for his happy release, leave him in prison with the following, rather cynical farewell:

Come una ruota è il mondo,
Chi in cima sta, chi in fondo,
E chi era in fondo prima,
Poscia ritorna in cima,
Chi salta, chi precipita,
E chi va in su, chi in giù.
Ma se la ruota gira
Lascisi pur girar,
Felice è chi fra i vortici
Tranquillo può restar.

[The world is like a wheel; whoever is at the top goes to the bottom, and whoever was at the bottom then goes to the top; whoever leaps falls, whoever rises descends. But if the wheel turns, let it turn. Happy is the one who can stay calm while it whirls.]

Paisiello's reaction to these words was to compose an opening motive with a long downward, then sharply upward swing – presumably inspired by the image of a wheel. The other voices then

²² Mozart saw *Il re Teodoro in Venezia* at least once; see Leopold's letter to Nannerl of 14 September 1784 (Mozart, *Letters*, p. 883; *Briefe*, vol. 3, p. 331).

Example 10.1 Paisiello, *Il re Teodoro*, Finale II (I-Nc Rari 3.3.2)

Moderato

Lisetta, Belisa

Co - me u - na ruo - ta è il mon - do, chi in ci - ma sta, chi in

Gafforio, Sandrino

Viola col Basso

fon - do, e chi e - ra in fon - do pri - ma

enter in groups creating a sort of musical “round” (see Example 10.1).

The tutti to Storace’s opera, based on Shakespeare’s *A Comedy of Errors*, is an elaborate one about how things are often the opposite of what they seem (see Example 10.2). It commences:

Si vede che nel mondo
 S’equivoca assai spesso,
 S’equivoca negli altri,
 S’equivoca in se stesso.

Example 10.1 (cont.)

po - scia ri - tor - na in ci - ma, chi sal - ta, chi pre

Co - me un - na ruo - ta è il

Lisetta, Belisa, Gafforio, Sandrino: The world is like a wheel; whoever is at the top goes to the bottom, and whoever was at the bottom then goes to the top; whoever leaps, falls.

[One sees that in the world one commonly makes mistakes. One is deluded about others, one is deluded about oneself.]

While musical style affects the atmosphere of a tutti, it does not create the conditions for a tutti to end an opera. The tonality chosen for the tutti is more important in this respect. One expects a last finale composed in the 1780s to have a multi-sectional structure, each section marked by a change of musical style, pace, and/or of key signature. John Platoff, in his own study of key patterns in Viennese finales, concludes that the commonest shift of key between sections is to a fifth away, less common but more dramatically striking are moves to a major or minor third away, and least common a move upward by a minor second.²³ There was no convention agreed upon by all composers about how often such shifts should occur or whether they should go more to the sharp or

23 John Platoff, "Music and Drama in the *Opera Buffa* Finale: Mozart and his Contemporaries in Vienna, 1781-1790" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1984), pp. 22-23.

Example 10.2 Storacè, Gli equivoci, Finale II (A-Wn K.T. 133)

Allegro assai

1 *Tutti sotto voce*

Sofronia, Sostrata

Si ve - de che nel mon - do s'e -

Lesbia, Eufemio S. (octave lower)

Eufemio E., Dromio E., Egeone

- qui - vo - ca as - sai spes - so, s'e - qui - vo - ca negli

Si ve - de che nel

Example 10.2 (cont.)

7

al - tri, s'e - qui - vo - ca in se stes - so, s'e -
mon - do s'e - qui - vo - ca as - sai spes - so, s'e -
Si

10

- qui - vo - ca ta - lo - ra chi - - - - -
- qui - vo - ca negli al - tri, s'e
ve - de che nel mon - do s'e
f

Tutti: One sees that in the world one commonly makes mistakes. One is deluded about others, one is deluded about oneself.

Table 10.1. Sectional plan of Storace's *Gli equivoci* Act II finale

Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Time signature	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	2
	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2
Tempo indication	Allegro	Andante e staccato	Allegro	[recitative]	Allegro	Larghetto	Adagio quasi ad libitum	[no tempo]	Allegro assai
Key signature							[P]		
								[T]	

Notes:

The graph does not indicate the relative length of each section.

P=peripeteia

T=final tutti

flat side. All agreed however that a finale should begin and end in the same key.²⁴

It is difficult to find a "typical" structure of a last finale composed in 1780s Vienna, for the form of each finale is different. Table 10.1 is a graph of the second finale of Storace's *Gli equivoci* showing the various changes of tempo and of time and key signatures within it. The complicated story of the opera concerns two sets of twin brothers, each twin being constantly confused with his double. None of them knows his brother is in the same town. This remains the situation till well into the second finale. Peripeteia occurs in

²⁴ Though it is worth recording that Mozart was himself not entirely averse to giving a finale an irregular key structure. The finales to Acts I and II of his *La finta giardiniera* (1775) exceptionally begin in one key but end in another.

section 6 (Larghetto, note the effective change from D to E flat major!). Here for the first time all four come face to face, to their own and everyone else's astonishment. The other characters sort out their relationships with the twins in sections 7–8, and the tutti embraces section 9.

Storace's key changes are mostly on the flat side of the main tonality – Mozart's last-act finales also show a predilection for the flat side.²⁵ The detail that deserves more attention though is the return to the tonic in the middle (sections 3–5). Composers tended to avoid coming back to the tonic in the middle of a finale and then moving out of it again unless there was good reason.²⁶ Storace's choice of D major in sections 3–5 may have been affected by the need for trumpets (in those days generally in C or D) at the start of section 3 and by the calculation that a shift from D to E flat at the start of section 6 would be particularly effective. But what should one say about Mozart's return to the tonic minor in the middle of his *Don Giovanni* finale? He avoids the tonic (major or minor) in the middle of the last finales to *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*, so what is the advantage of it here?

The plan of the last finale of *Don Giovanni* is shown in Table 10.2. The music veers to the flat side of the tonic (D major) during the three short wind serenades (sections 2–4) and remains so until the entry of the stone guest at the start of section 7, when the tonality returns to D (though this time to D minor, not D major). Throughout the dramatic episode between the stone guest, Don Giovanni, and Leporello (sections 7–9), the key remains officially D

25 Whether the music concentrates on the flat rather than the sharp side partly depends on the choice of tonic. The tonality of D major invites moves to the flatter keys more obviously than the tonality of E flat. Mozart's last finales of *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* are both centered on D; that of *Così fan tutte* on C. The *Così fan tutte* finale is the only one of the three to exploit tonalities on the sharp side of the home key.

26 Few last finales in operas written for 1780s Vienna contain middle sections in the tonic. The last finales of Storace's *Gli sposi malcontenti* (produced June 1785), Martin y Soler's *Il burbero di buon cuore* (produced January 1786), and Salieri's *La ciffra* (produced December 1789) have this feature. None offers the performers a suitable choice of alternative ending.

Table 10.2. Sectional plan of Mozart's Don Giovanni Act II finale

Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Time signature	4	6	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2
	4	8	4	2	4	2	2	2	2	4	2	2
Tempo indication	Allegro vivace	[no tempo]	[no tempo]	[no tempo]	Allegro assai	Molto allegro	Andante	Più stretto	Allegro	Allegro assai	Larghetto	Presto
Key signature	[major] [P] [minor] [T] [major] D major/minor G major C major F major B$\flat$ major											

Notes:

The graph does not indicate the relative length of each section.

P = peripeteia

T = final tutti

minor, though the music is so chromatic that it is more frequently out of the key than in it. The final scene, after Don Giovanni's disappearance (sections 10–12), starts in G but returns to D major for the tutti.

The crucial point is that Mozart ends section 9, the one in which Don Giovanni falls to his death, with a cadence on the tonic major chord. Admittedly the cadence is a plagal one, with a major third that sounds more like a "Tierce de Picardie" than a confirmation that D major has supplanted D minor. Nonetheless the reappearance of the tonic major chord coincides with the climax of the action, namely the disappearance of the hero. The action can end here, and the musical convention that a finale shall begin and end in the same key is not broken if it does so. A premature, yet satisfactory (or semi-satisfactory) close to the drama coinciding with a premature return to the tonic is rare in eighteenth-century last finales. No one seems yet to have pointed to a similar case.

However there is a similar case in at least one of the earlier operas on the subject of *Don Giovanni*. Tritto's finale to *Il convitato di pietra* (Naples, 1783) is in eight musical sections, as demonstrated in Table 10.3.²⁷ E flat major, the tonality at the start and finish of this piece, is also the key of the central episode (sections 5–6), during which Don Giovanni and his servant Pulchinella take supper in the presence of the stone guest. Don Giovanni dies at the end of this episode. The key shifts to G major at the start of section 7, when the other characters come on demanding to know where he is. It reverts to E flat in section 8, as they watch him suffering in hell.

This does not mean that there was a tradition of making Don Giovanni die in the home key. Exclusive of Tritto's and Mozart's works, we have music of two other *Don Giovanni* operas of the 1780s with finales that advance the action beyond the death scene. These are Gazzaniga's *Don Giovanni o sia Il convitato di pietra* and Vincenzo Fabrizi's *Il convitato di pietra* (Rome, autumn 1787). In neither of

27 MS I-Nc Rari 2.5.6. I am obliged to Eugenio Ottieri for pointing out to me the interesting structure of this finale.

Table 10.3. Sectional plan of Tritto's *Il convitato di pietra* finale

Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Time signature	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	8	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Tempo indication	Allegro	Recitativo	Allegro	[Allegro]	Andante	Allegro	[Allegro]	[Allegro]
G major C major F major B $\flat$ major E $\flat$ major								

Notes:

P=peripeteia

T=tutti

these cases is the death scene set in the tonic.²⁸ It is thus not easy to say whether Mozart did or did not have a model for the key scheme that he adopted at the end of his own opera.

I have here argued that the second-act finale of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is constructed according to normal late eighteenth-century conventions. It has a peripeteia, subsequent unraveling of the plot, and a tutti. Some of its features, for instance the downfall of the hero and the moral tone of the tutti text, seem "serious" for a supposed comedy, but these are consistent with what is found in other operas on the same subject. Mozart's unusual setting of the tutti perhaps mirrors its moral message.

Finales of the 1780s began and ended in the same key. In this respect Mozart's finale ends conventionally enough. It is more

²⁸ Gazzaniga's opera is published as *Don Giovanni, o sia, Il convitato di pietra*, ed. Stefan Kunze (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1974). Fabrizi's finale is in MS GB-Lbl RM 22.c.6 (3).

remarkable to find that the shortened version of this piece also ends with the tonic chord. The fact that this version has its own tutti (or token tutti) in the form of an underworld chorus adds further to the argument that it violates none of the conventions as regards the structure of a last finale.

I have also maintained that at some point Mozart and Da Ponte proposed the use of the shortened version. (Whether the finale was performed thus in Mozart's lifetime is another matter.) By cutting the last scene they were in effect raising the heroic and tragic status of Don Giovanni, and removing all trace of a so-called *lieto fine*. Beyond the fact that previous operas on the *Don Giovanni* theme had also ended with a scene highlighting the discomfort of the hero, how might Mozart and Da Ponte have argued in favor of their shortened, "tragic" alternative?

A feature of the tragic close is that it creates both a very dramatic and a very scenic finish. Don Giovanni plunges to his death while flames flicker and the earth quakes about him. Stefan Kunze has built up a theory that the scenes of hell common to most eighteenth-century *Don Giovanni* operas were popular with audiences because they were stage spectacles, not because they were tragic. For Kunze these scenes are not tragic; they are merely variants, peculiar to *Don Giovanni* settings, of the pleasurable endings common to all comic operas. Thus the alternative endings of Mozart's finale are not tragic and comic either. For Mozart,

the alternative was not comedy or tragedy, but simply the [differing] performing conventions relating to normal comic endings and to endings suitable for operas on the subject of the stone guest, which favored theatrically effective spectacle.²⁹

Mozart's shortened ending, in other words, may be black comedy, but it is still comedy.

Eighteenth-century operas on the subject of *Don Giovanni* are technically "comic" because they depict characters of several different classes; "serious" operas by comparison depict only sove-

²⁹ Kunze, *Don Giovanni*, p. 57.

reigns and members of the nobility. But if an eighteenth-century person of good education had been asked what subcategory of comedy the various *Don Giovanni* operas came under, it is unlikely he would have replied with an expression such as "black comedy." Such a categorization appears in no eighteenth-century theory book. It is more likely he would have considered these operas to contain elements of tragedy within comedy, in other words that they were close to dramas of mixed genre. Pastoral plays were other examples of mixed genre, though the formulas were different. The death of the hero/heroine at the end of a tragic drama was supposed – here we are back to Aristotelian theory – to induce catharsis and a feeling of compassion. If the death of Don Giovanni induces a similar feeling of compassion, then there is a case for saying that Mozart's shortened ending is in eighteenth-century terms tragic and not comic.

There are other eighteenth-century operas which end with a death combined with spectacle, and these are definitely not comedies. Metastasio's *dramma per musica Didone abbandonata*, set to music by Domenico Sarro in 1724 and then by a large number of other composers, is the most obvious case. Metastasio's storyline, based on the *Aeneid*, concerns the arrival of Aeneas at Carthage, his love affair with Queen Dido, and his abandonment of her in order to fulfill his destiny, which is the founding of Rome. As the future founder of Rome he is the one whom eighteenth-century audiences would have regarded as "heroic" and "virtuous." However the manner in which he abandons her tends to shift the audience's sympathy in her direction. In the final scene, in which she finds herself alone and commits suicide in the ruins of her burning city, she becomes a genuinely tragic figure, an object of compassion and pity.

The "Dido factor," the term I use to describe the ambiguity of feeling that may result when the wrong person acquires tragic status, and thus our sympathy, by suffering a scenically horrific death on stage, is also an element in dramatizations of the *Don Giovanni* story. Don Giovanni becomes the hero, although he in no

way deserves this description save by the manner of his dying. The more the treatment concentrates on his death, and on his loneliness at the time of it, the more tragic and sympathetic he becomes. It is not suggested Mozart and Da Ponte were influenced by any particular tragic opera, say a setting of *Didone abbandonata*, when they considered cutting the final scene. But they were aware of the techniques of tragic endings, and the effects to be obtained by them. It is therefore a reasonable hypothesis that they proposed the shortened alternative believing (1) its scenic and dramatic impact was greater, and (2) it produced extra sympathy for Don Giovanni as a human being. The action, after all, revolves entirely around the hero, and it might not have done for the opera to be all about an unsympathetic person!