

# Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

Essays on his Life and his Music



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## Catalogue Arias and the 'Catalogue Aria'

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'SUCCESS has a thousand fathers, while failure is an orphan'.<sup>1</sup> This saying may help us understand the widespread interest in proposing models or antecedents—'fathers', if you will—for Leporello's 'Catalogue Aria' in Act 1 of Da Ponte and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. In a recent history of opera, for example, it is stated that a patter catalogue aria in Haydn's *Orlando paladino* 'must surely be ranked as the forerunner of Leporello's . . . aria'.<sup>2</sup>

Ho viaggiato in Francia, in Spagna,  
Ho girato l'Allemagna,  
La Sassonia e la Turchia;  
Ma vi giuro in fede mia  
Che ho una fame da crepar.  
Ho espugnato Varadino  
Sono stato nel Pechino,  
Vidi ancor la Tartaria;  
Ma vi giuro in fede mia  
Che ho una fame da crepar.

I've travelled in France, in Spain,  
I've been around Germany,  
Saxony and Turkey;  
but I swear to you in faith  
that I'm dying of hunger.  
I've conquered Varadino,  
I've been in Peking,  
I have also seen Tartary;  
but I swear to you in faith  
that I'm dying of hunger.<sup>3</sup>

Alberto Ghislanzoni is equally sure that Leporello's catalogue aria 'is an obvious re-working [*manipolazione*] of the list of charges read by the chief of police to the disgraced Teodoro' in Casti and Paisiello's *Il re Teodoro in Venezia* (1784, Vienna):

Ventimila gigliati ai Tunisini,  
Quattromila e seicento ai Livornesi,  
Ghinee quindicimila e due scellini  
Per più cambiali ai negozianti Inglesi;  
Quarantamila ottantasei fiorini

Twenty-thousand gigliati to the Tunisians,  
four thousand, six hundred to the Livornese,  
fifteen thousand guineas and two shillings  
for more bills to the English merchants;  
forty thousand, eighty-six florins

<sup>1</sup> The original version is 'As always, victory finds a hundred fathers but defeat is an orphan', from the diaries of Count Galeazzo Ciano; see *Familiar Quotations*, ed. J. Bartlett (Boston and Toronto, 14/1968), 1053a.

<sup>2</sup> C. Headington, R. Westbrook and T. Barfoot, *Opera: a History* (London, 1987), 100. The libretto of the opera, first performed in Eszterháza in 1782, is by Nunziato Porta.

<sup>3</sup> The complete text is given in M. Hunter, 'Text, Music, and Drama in Haydn's Italian Opera Arias: Four Case Studies', *Journal of Musicology*, vii (1989), 46. It continues with two more stanzas listing Pasquale's travels, each closing with the same two-line refrain, and a final couplet.

In vari tempi e date, agli Olandesi;	at various times and dates, to the Dutch;
Debiti inoltre in Cadice, in Lisbona,	additional debts in Cadiz, in Lisbon,
In Amburgo, in Marsiglia, in Barcellona. <sup>4</sup>	in Hamburg, in Marseilles, in Barcelona.

Such claims are problematic for two reasons. For one thing, these scholars and others did not find the right model: as Stefan Kunze has shown, Da Ponte's *Don Giovanni* text for Mozart is based directly on the one-act *Don Giovanni* libretto written by Giovanni Bertati, set by Giuseppe Gazzaniga and first performed in Venice in February 1787.<sup>5</sup> Bertati's libretto contains a catalogue aria for Pasquariello (the Leporello character) from which Da Ponte borrowed liberally in creating his own, much superior text,<sup>6</sup> as we shall see.

More generally, attempts to link Leporello's catalogue aria to some particular earlier example fail to recognize that the world of eighteenth-century *opera buffa* was filled with catalogues—lists of people, places, foods, dance steps and so on. The catalogue aria was a familiar comic type, one of several varieties of *buffa* aria. To claim that one catalogue among the dozens or hundreds of catalogues was the model for Leporello's misses the point. Da Ponte had no need of a specific model, though he did indeed have one, in Bertati's aria text. He knew many catalogue arias and had written a fair share himself. Indeed his transformation of Bertati's text into a more effective comic piece reflects his own wide acquaintance with the catalogues of his predecessors and contemporaries, from Goldoni and Petrosellini to Casti and Bertati himself. Here I shall offer a brief survey of the catalogue aria of Da Ponte's time, pointing out some of its most typical and consistent features; then we will look more closely at Bertati's catalogue aria, Da Ponte's improvements on it and Mozart's handling of the resulting text.

Catalogues, Daniela Goldin has noted, are a virtual requirement of *opera buffa* librettos, and a speciality of Bertati in particular. These lists may be 'geographical, theatrical, medical, literary, gastronomic . . . the range is nearly infinite'.<sup>7</sup> Among other common categories, in addition to those cited by Goldin, are clothes; things for sale, especially luxury items like jewellery; and types of people, whether described by nationality, social rank, occupation, physical appearance or personal qualities.

<sup>4</sup> A. Ghislanzoni, *Giovanni Paisiello: valutazioni critiche rettificcate* (Rome, 1969), 100. The text is not an aria but an accompanied recitative within the finale to Act 2.

<sup>5</sup> S. Kunze, *Don Giovanni vor Mozart: die Tradition der Don-Giovanni-Opern im italienischen Buffa-Theater des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1972). Kunze also edited the score of the Gazzaniga-Bertati *Don Giovanni* (Kassel, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> The broader background of historical precedents for Bertati's and Da Ponte's catalogue aria texts is explored in U. Weisstein, 'Per porle in lista: Da Ponte/Leporello's Amorous Inventory and its Literary and Operatic Antecedents from Tirso de Molina to Giovanni Bertati', *Komparatistik: theoretische Überlegungen und südosteuropäische Wechselseitigkeit: Festschrift für Zoran Konstantinovic*, ed. F. Rinner and K. Zerinschek (Heidelberg, 1981), 179–98; and F. W. Müller, 'Zur Genealogie von Leporellos Liste', *Beiträge zur romanischen Philologie*, ix (1970), 199–228. Kunze, *Don Giovanni vor Mozart*, reprints the texts of several catalogue arias from Don Juan operas by librettists other than Da Ponte and Bertati.

<sup>7</sup> D. Goldin, 'Aspetti della librettistica italiana fra 1770 e 1830', *AnMc*, no. 21 (1982), 128–91; repr. in *La vera fenice* (Turin, 1985), 23. She provides numerous examples both here and in 'In margine al catalogo di Leporello', in *La vera fenice*, 149–63.

The extensiveness of catalogues varies just as widely as the subjects catalogued. Aria texts range from those that employ a brief catalogue only in passing to those composed entirely of one or more catalogues. In this comic aria from *Il mercato di Malmantile* (1784, Vienna; the music is by Josef Barta, the libretto by Francesco Bussani after Goldoni), Lena's list of insulting names for Berto occupies only six of the aria's 23 lines.

Che sei un grand'asino,	That you are a big donkey,
Un babbuino,	a baboon,
Un petulante,	a petulant one,
Un mascalzone,	a scoundrel,
Un arrogante,	an arrogant one,
Un bel birbone.	a great rogue.

Similarly, a list of social ranks, in Monsieur de Crotignac's aria from Petrosellini and Cimarosa's *Il pittore parigino* (1781; 1785, Vienna), occurs only in the final stanza of the 24-line text:

Contesse, baronesse,	Countesses, baronesses,
Duchesse, principesse,	duchesses, princesses,
Marchesi, cavalieri,	marquises, knights,
Mercanti, finanzieri	merchants, bankers
Col caro nepotino	await me
Mi stanno ad aspettar.	and my little nephew.

On the other hand, when Conte Zeffiro in Bertati and Gazzaniga's *La vendemmia* (1778) imagines his wedding feast, all but the beginning and end of his aria is devoted to a list of foods:

Quando vedrai chi sono	When you see who I am
Sorpreso resterei,	you will be surprised
E stupirai di me.	and astonished by me.
Per render ben servito	To satisfy
Il numero invito	the invited guests
Senti l'idea qual'è.	listen to what my plan is.
Quattro zuppe alla santè.	Four soups, for good measure.
Un gran tesso di vitella,	A big rack of veal,
Un buon fritto di cervella.	a good dish of fried sausage.
Un pasticcio di rigaglia,	A pie of giblets,
Colla tortora, e la quaglia.	with turtle-dove and quail.
Una gran carapotina	A big casserole
Con piccione, e beccaccina,	with pigeon and snipe,
Fricassè poi d'animelle,	then a fricassee of sweetbreads,
Piccion grossi in pappardelle,	large pigeons in macaroni,
Un salmij colla beccaccia,	a stew of woodcock,
E una nobil torta in faccia:	and a fine tart across from it:
Un bodino all'uso inglese	a pudding in the English style,
Ed un altro alla francese,	and another in the French style,

Poi l'arrosto di fagiani,	then a roast of pheasants,
Con dei tordi, ed ortolani,	with thrushes and songbirds,
Beccafichi, lodolette,	warblers, larks,
Mazzorini, e follegghette	wild ducks and hummingbirds.
Che ne dici, che ti par?	What do you say, how does it seem?
Non ti senti liquefar?	Doesn't it make your mouth water?
Ah mi par d'averla in bocca	Ah, I can almost taste it,
Che dolcezza, che sapor! <sup>8</sup>	What sweetness, what a flavour!

And a list of amorous conquests, one with obvious resonances in Leporello's catalogue, makes up virtually the whole of this aria text sung by the Cavaliere in Goldoni's *Viaggiatore ridicolo* (1757; set several times by different composers). Here the list combines two familiar topics, geography and social rank:

A Lion la Contessa la Cra.	In Lyons the Countess la Cra.
A Paris la Marchesa la Gru.	In Paris the Marchesa la Gru.
A Madrid la Duchessa del Bos.	In Madrid the Duchess del Bos.
In Inghilterra Miledi la Stos.	In England Milady la Stos.
In Germania ho le mie baronesse	In Germany I have my baronesses,
In Italia le mie principesse.	in Italy my princesses.
E conosco le femmine ancor	And I also know the women
Nel serraglio del Turco Signor.	in the harem of the Turkish gentleman.
Vuò scrivere nel diario	I will write in my diary
Madama la Marchesa,	my lady the marchesa,
Madama la Contessa,	my lady the countess,
E voi mia principessa,	and you my princess,
Regina del mio cuor. <sup>9</sup>	the queen of my heart.

The extreme of the fully fledged catalogue aria may be represented by an aria from Da Ponte's very first opera libretto: an extravagantly long text for the avaricious Strettonio in Salieri's *Il ricco d'un giorno* (1784, Vienna). It contains no fewer than four catalogues: a list of enjoyable activities (lines 5–10), a brief pair of expressions of excitement (15–18), a list of words and phrases to describe money (23–32) and a list describing how Strettonio plays with his riches (33–40):

I capricci del cervello	The caprices of the mind
Vari sono e ognun lo sa;	are varied, as everyone knows;
Ed il mondo ci par bello	and the world seems lovely to us
Sol per questa varietà.	solely because of this variety.
5 Chi del gioco si diletta,	Some take delight in gambling,
Chi di caccia, e di cavalli,	some in the hunt, and some in horses,
Chi a una turba che l'alletta	some in a crowd that is drawn to
Dà conviti, feste, e balli,	giving banquets, festivals and balls,
Chi vuol tutte aver le mode,	some want all the latest styles,

<sup>8</sup> I am grateful to Mary Hunter for giving me access to her handwritten copy of this libretto.

<sup>9</sup> Goldin, 'In margine al catalogo', 157.

	E chi gode di viaggiar.	and some love to travel.
10	Io poi soletto	I then, alone
	Nel mio stanzino	in my little room,
	Godo di chiudermi	love to shut myself up
	Sera, e mattino,	evening and morning,
15	Con cor che balzami	with a heart that leaps
	Per la dolcezza,	for happiness,
	Per l'allegrezza,	for joy,
	Con man che tremami	with a hand that trembles
	Al mio carissimo	to my dearest
20	Scrigno m'accosto,	money-box I turn,
	Dove in bell'ordine,	where in good order
	Vedo disposto	I see arranged
	Raro tesoro,	rare treasure,
	D'argento, e d'oro,	of silver and of gold,
25	Piastre, zecchini,	piastres, sequins,
	Doppie, dobbloni,	gold-pieces, doubloons,
	Scudi, ducati,	crowns, ducats,
	Gran medallioni,	great medallions,
	Frutto dolcissimo	the sweetest fruit
30	De' miei sudor,	of my labours,
	Sola delizia	the sole delight
	Di questo cor.	of my heart.
	Le borse io piglio,	Taking the purses,
	Cavo il danaro;	I remove the money;
35	Consola il ciglio	such a rare colour
	Color sì raro:	calms my spirit:
	Poi numerandolo	then I count it
	Tre volte almeno,	at least three times,
	Guardolo, tastolo,	I look at it, I taste it,
40	Lo stringo al seno,	I press it to my breast,
	E dal diletto	and from the delight
	Che m'empie il petto	that fills my soul
	Mi cresce l'anima	my spirits rise,
	Si gonfia il cor,	my heart swells,
45	E ho in tasca Venere,	and I have in my pocket Venus,
	Bacco, ed Amor. <sup>10</sup>	Bacchus and Cupid.

These texts are similar in many ways to the texts of other *buffa* arias in late eighteenth-century Italian opera.<sup>11</sup> Designed to build to a comic highpoint, they are usually lengthy, proceeding from regular stanzas to a more free continuation, often with a shift of poetic metre from longer lines to shorter. Whatever the subject of the aria, it must make plausi-

<sup>10</sup> Goldin, 'In margine al catalogo', 160-1.

<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the *buffa* aria, see J. Platoff, 'The Buffa Aria in Mozart's Vienna', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, ii (1990), 99-120.



ble the singer's gradual increase in excitement, leading to a closing section dominated by rapid comic patter. This can, of course, be accomplished in a variety of ways. The climactic emotion might be jealous rage, the excitement of a storyteller caught up in his own story (or pleased with its effect on his listeners), pride in one's own attractiveness, an excess of amorous feeling or even profound confusion.

At their highpoints, *buffa* aria texts rely on shorter and shorter syntactic units: sentences give way to phrases, then to one- or two-word groups, thereby accelerating the rate at which ideas are communicated. The comic frenzy, at least in the best cases, is thus actually built into the text itself. Moreover, the acceleration, or rather compression, frequently derives in part from the use of two rhetorical devices: *asyndeton*, the omission of conjunctions, which produces a catalogue or list of related items, and *anaphora*, in which successive lines or phrases begin with the same word.<sup>12</sup> These features may be seen in the catalogues given above, both separately and together.

They also appear in a *buffa* aria not usually thought of as a catalogue aria: Figaro's 'Aprite un po' quegli' occhi', from Act 4 of *Le nozze di Figaro*.<sup>13</sup> After two opening quatrains of *settenario*, the text continues in *senario* as follows:

	Son streghe che incantano	They are witches who cast spells
10	Per farci penar,	to make us suffer,
	Sirene che cantano	sirens who sing
	Per farci affogar;	to make us drown;
	Civette che allettano	night owls who fascinate
	Per trarci le piume,	to pluck our feathers,
15	Comete che brillano	comets who dazzle
	Per toglierci il lume;	to deprive us of light;
	Son rose spinose,	they are thorned roses,
	Son volpi vezzose,	they are alluring vixens,
	Son orse benigne,	they are smiling she-bears,
20	Colombe maligne,	malign doves,
	Maestre d'inganni,	mistresses of deceit,
	Amiche d'affanni,	lovers of anxiety,
	Che fingono, mentono,	who cheat, lie,
	Amore non sentono,	feel no love,
25	Non senton pietà.	have no pity.
	Il resto nol dico,	The rest I need not say,
	Già ognuno lo sa.	for everyone already knows it.

Lines 9-16 present four metaphorical descriptions of women, each of two lines, but only the first pair of lines actually contains a verb. The other three pairs follow without a conjunction, creating a list of four items ('They are witches, sirens, night owls, comets') that relies on *anaphora* in each second line ('Per . . .'). The compression, already begun by these two-line descriptions after the four-line ideas in the initial two quatrains of the aria, takes

<sup>12</sup> Goldin gives examples of both devices in 'In margine al catalogo'.

<sup>13</sup> This aria is further discussed in Platoff, 'The Buffa Aria', 112-16, 119.

three further steps. First, the metaphors are reduced to one line each, again employing *anaphora*, the lines all beginning with the same word (17–19). Next, the verb in each metaphor disappears, producing another list (20–2). Finally, a new list appears—a list of verbs, without the conjunctions that should separate them (23–5). Da Ponte's use of two *sdrucchiolo* lines here intensifies the effect by linking the lines more tightly together.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, he heightens the density even further by using the same vowel sound six times in just three lines: 'Che fingono, mentono, / Amore non sentono, / Non senton pietà'.

In general, then, the same features of text construction underlie most *buffa* aria texts, whether or not they make use of catalogues. A lengthy text allows time for excitement to build. As the aria progresses its text tends to become more fragmented, relying on shorter syntactic units that are frequently juxtaposed without conjunctions. The effect of compression is central, and the asyndetic quality of any catalogue makes it an ideal way to achieve compression, although certainly not the only one.<sup>15</sup> Finally, some sort of epigram or tag-line provides the opportunity for an effective ending.

The musical settings of catalogue arias, like their texts, display the features commonly found in other types of *buffa* arias. These pieces begin in a neutral, relatively calm fashion, gradually build to a greater level of excitement, and reach a climax achieved through rapid patter, usually followed by a closing tag-line. The fast text declamation of patter singing occurs routinely, whether to express joy, anger, excitement or fear. Moreover, the repetition of the same rhythmic pattern for successive lines, a hallmark of the *buffa* aria, often makes the patter sound mechanical and impersonal (see Ex. 13.1, from 'Scorsi già molti paesi', sung by Figaro in Petrosellini and Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, 1782). In this sense its humour has very little to do with the specific, individual feelings of a particular character, and everything to do with the character's glorying in, or being reduced to, mere chattering. The orchestral accompaniment to this *parlando* singing relies generally on repeated motivic ideas arranged in an alternating harmonic pattern (most often I–V; see Ex. 13.1, bars 20–6), broken only at the end of a stanza when the musical period is brought to an end by a cadence.<sup>16</sup>

The increase in excitement and the appearance of patter declamation normally coincide with the greater text compression in the later part of the aria; this is true, for example, in 'Aprite un po' quegl' occhi'. But the exact musical shape of a particular catalogue aria, as of any *buffa* aria, depends on the text itself. Some texts, as we have seen, begin immediately with a list. Settings of these texts may rely almost entirely on patter from the very beginning, with little change during the course of the piece.<sup>17</sup> But more often the initial lines of a catalogue aria text prepare the way for the catalogue(s), and composers tend to set these

<sup>14</sup> Mozart explicitly underscored this by eliding the last syllable of line 23 with the opening of line 24 (see bar 39).

<sup>15</sup> The aria 'Pian pianin veggiamo un poco', in Da Ponte and Martín y Soler's *Il burbero di buon cuore* (1786), illustrates a non-catalogue aria text that works much the same way. As the excitable Ferramondo contemplates a chess game, his fragmentary thoughts are expressed in shorter and shorter phrases, eventually being reduced to single words: 'Check! Mate! I've got him!'.

<sup>16</sup> Some of these features are noted by Kunze, *Don Giovanni vor Mozart*, 101–2.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., 'Ho i fini lavori', from Act 2 of *Il burbero di buon cuore*.



EXAMPLE 13.1 Paisiello, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1782; Petrosellini), 'Scorsi già molti paesi'

FIGARO

20

In Ma-dri-dio de-but-ta-i,

23

fe-ci un' o-pe-ra, e ca-sca-i; fe-ci un' o-pe-ra, e ca-

26

-sca-i; e col mio ba-gaglio ad-dos-so me ne cor-si a più non pos-so, e col mio ba-gaglio ad-

29

-dos-so me ne cor-si a più non pos-so,

opening lines more neutrally, reserving the patter for the catalogue itself. In this way catalogue arias behave just as other *buffa* arias do: their textual compression and musical intensification work in tandem to create the greatest excitement towards the end.<sup>18</sup>

To return from the general to the specific, let us reconsider Leporello's catalogue aria in the light of these typical features, as well as in relation to the Bertati text that Da Ponte took as his model. A comparison of the catalogue aria by Da Ponte and Mozart with that by Bertati and Gazzaniga offers clear evidence of Da Ponte's superior skills as a librettist. But it underlines another point as well: that many of the structural and expressive features

<sup>18</sup> 'Scorsi già molti paesi', part of which is given in Ex. 13.1, is an impressive example of a good composer's ability to create the effect of gradual acceleration, increasing the psychological pace in several steps by harmonic and motivic means.

of an operatic number stem directly from the character and organization of its text. Indeed, one cannot fully understand Mozart's catalogue aria, in both its conventional and unusual aspects, without a recognition of Da Ponte's contributions to its form and style.

As noted earlier, Da Ponte based his own *Don Giovanni* libretto extensively on Bertati's.<sup>19</sup> In fact Da Ponte used the first 18 scenes of Bertati's libretto as the opening part of Act 1 and the last seven to close his Act 2. In scene after scene, number after number, Da Ponte followed Bertati closely, though not without rewriting the poetry and making important changes in the drama. The scenes leading to the catalogue aria are quite similar in the two versions: Donna Elvira appears, sings an aria, remonstrates with Don Giovanni who flees, and is compelled to listen to Leporello (or Pasquariello) list the Don's amorous accomplishments.

Da Ponte-Mozart		Bertati-Gazzaniga	
	Madamina, il catalogo è questo Delle belle che amò il padron mio: Un catalogo egli è che ho fatt'io; Osservate, leggete con me.		
5	In Italia seicento e quaranta, In Lamagna duecento e trent'una, Cento in Francia, in Turchia novant'una, Ma in Ispagna son già mille e tre. Vhan fra queste contadine,	A Dell'Italia, ed Alemagna Ve ne ho scritte cento, e tante. Della Francia, e della Spagna Ve ne sono non so quante: Fra madame, cittadine,	5
10	Cameriere, cittadine, Vhan contesse, baronesse, marchesane, principesse, E vhan donne d'ogni grado, D'ogni forma, d'ogni età.	B artigiane, contadine, cameriere, cuoche, e guattere; Perchè basta che sian femmine Per doverle amoreggiar.	
15	Nella bionda egli ha l'usanza Di lodar la gentilezza; Nella bruna, la costanza; Nella bianca, la dolcezza; Vuol d'inverno la grassotta, Vuol d'estate la magrotta;	E Vi dirò ch'è un'uomo tale, Se attendesse alle promesse, Che il marito universale Un dì avrebbe a diventar. Vi dirò che egli ama tutte, Che sian belle, o che sian brutte:	10
20	È la grande maestosa, La piccina è ognor vezzosa. Delle vecchie fa conquista Pel piacer di porle in lista;	D Delle vecchie solamente Non si sente ad infiammar. Vi dirò . . . [ELV.] Tu m'hai seccata. Vi dirò . . .	15
25	Ma passion predominante È la giovin principiante; Non si picca se sia ricca, Se sia brutta, se sia bella;	C [ELV.] Non più: v'ha via. Vi dirò che sì potria Fin domani seguitar. [ELV.] (Il mio cor da gelosia Tutto sento a lacerar.)	20
30	Purché porti la gonnella, Voi sapete quel che fa.	E	

<sup>19</sup> Kunze, *Don Giovanni vor Mozart*, the claim that Mozart based some of his setting on Gazzaniga's, or that he even saw Gazzaniga's score, has little compelling evidence to support it. For a refutation see J. Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: 'Don Giovanni'* (Cambridge, 1981), 151 n. 13.

- Little lady, this is the list  
of the beauties my master has loved:  
a list I've made myself;  
take a look, read it with me.
- 5 In Italy six hundred and forty,  
in Germany two hundred and thirty-one,  
a hundred in France, in Turkey ninety-one,  
but in Spain already a thousand and three.
- 10 Among them are country girls,  
waiting-maids, townswomen,  
there are countesses, baronesses,  
marchionesses, princesses,  
and there are women of every rank,  
of every shape, of every age.
- 15 With a blonde he has the habit  
of praising her kindness;  
with a brunette, her constancy;  
with a white-haired one, her sweetness;  
in winter he wants a plump one,  
20 in summer he wants a thin one;  
a tall one is majestic,  
a small one is always graceful.  
He lays siege to the old ones  
for the pleasure of adding them to the list;
- 25 but his supreme passion  
is the young beginner;  
it doesn't matter if she's rich,  
if she's ugly, if she's beautiful;  
as long as she wears a skirt,  
30 you know what he'll do.
- From Italy and Germany  
I have written a hundred and more.  
From France and from Spain  
there are I know not how many:  
among ladies, townswomen, 5  
tradeswomen, country girls,  
maids, cooks and scullery-maids;  
for it's enough that they're women  
to make him obliged to court them.  
I tell you that such a man, 10  
if he kept his promises,  
would one day have to become  
the universal husband.  
I tell you that he loves them all,  
be they beautiful, or be they ugly: 15  
only with the old ones  
is he not inflamed.  
I tell you . . .  
[ELV.] You've annoyed me.  
I tell you . . .  
[ELV.] No more: go away.  
I tell you that I could 20  
continue until tomorrow.  
[ELV.] (I feel my heart  
torn by jealousy.)

The relationships between Bertati's text and Da Ponte's version are immediately apparent; but just as apparent are Da Ponte's improvements on his model. In the lines labelled 'A', Da Ponte replaced Bertati's vague references to large numbers with specific and very large numbers. Moreover, the closing line of Da Ponte's quatrain, 'Ma in Ispagna son già mille e tre', provides a comic highpoint lacking in Bertati's 'Ve ne sono non so quante'. Bertati's three-line list of occupational and social types ('B') becomes in Da Ponte's hands a longer, four-line list. Gone are the 'cucioche, e guattere', which are not only the kind of ugly-sounding words Da Ponte tended to avoid (especially 'guattere') but represent the socially least desirable types on the list. He replaced them with aristocrats—countesses, baronesses, marchionesses and princesses—while adding to the singsong effect by managing an internal rhyme in the third line.

Three other specific ideas from Bertati's text also appear in Da Ponte's. The 'old ones' scorned by Bertati's Don Giovanni, Da Ponte's Don will pursue, if only to increase the

numbers on his list ('C'). The juxtaposition in the lines labelled 'D' of 'belle' and 'brutte'—ubiquitous in catalogues of female attributes—Da Ponte again improves, writing a pair of lines that employ both *anaphora* ('se sia . . .') and another internal rhyme ('picca' and 'ricca'). Finally, Bertati's observation, 'it's enough that they're women to make him obliged to court them', is transformed almost beyond recognition ('E'). 'As long as she wears a skirt'—a vulgar and much more evocative way of putting it—'you know what he'll do', the routine spelling-out replaced by a leering innuendo, with which any capable Leporello can do a lot. Da Ponte saw this idea, buried in the middle of Bertati's text, as an ideal closing epigram, and shifted it to the end of the aria.

Having thus copied or adapted several ideas from Bertati, Da Ponte nonetheless created a quite different structure. He added an introductory quatrain in which the catalogue itself is explained; this had been in Bertati's recitative preceding the aria. He omitted the dialogue with Elvira that closed Bertati's number, having settled instead on the leering epigram in the final two lines as a perfect ending. And to Bertati's two lists, the first geographical and numerical, the second a catalogue of occupations and social ranks, he added a third. This is of course the brilliant sequence of physical types of women, matched with Don Giovanni's wooing techniques for each (lines 15–22).

Bertati's text is all in *ottonario*, arranged in an initial stanza of nine lines, followed by three quatrains and a closing couplet for Elvira.<sup>20</sup> By contrast Da Ponte's text contains two sections in different metres: its two quatrains of *decasillabo* are followed by a more freely constructed *ottonario* passage in groups of six and 16 lines.<sup>21</sup> These structural features are crucial, because composers relied on the organization of the poetry in creating their musical settings. In the vast majority of cases the musical paragraphs of an operatic number correspond with the stanzas of the text, with important cadences coinciding with the final *tronco* line of a stanza. Within stanzas composers generally maintained musical continuity, often at the expense of the expressive highlighting of a particular textual point. In Gazzaniga's setting of Bertati's catalogue aria text, the first nine lines are treated as a continuous unit (Ex. 13.2). Lines 1 and 3 of the first list, and all three lines (5–7) of the second, are set in rapid patter; since neither list has a strong finishing-line nor ends a stanza, they are not punctuated in any striking way. Instead, lines 8–9 form the closing cadence of the first paragraph.

The remaining stanzas are treated similarly, at least in their first presentation (the aria then continues with a varied restatement of much of the text). Each quatrain begins with patter and concludes with slower declamation to make a strong cadence. But since these

<sup>20</sup> Goldin, 'In margine al catalogo', 158, notes that *ottonario* is a particularly apt metre for catalogues, because of the possibility created by the metre of presenting 'an anaphoric juxtaposition . . . of antithetical types'. She gives an example that includes the lines: 'Una dona e l'altra prende, / Una piglia e l'altra rende; / Or la bella si fa brutta, / Or la brutta si fa bella'. I might add that the metre also enhances the opportunity for a singsong effect, because of the two identical accent patterns into which a line of *ottonario* divides: weak-weak-strong-weak, weak-weak-strong-weak. *Senario*, which divides into two patterns of weak-strong-weak, offers similar possibilities.

<sup>21</sup> Goldin, 'In margine al catalogo', 163, notes that Figaro's 'Non più andrai' also contains two quatrains of *decasillabo* followed by lines of *ottonario*.

EXAMPLE 13.2 Gazzaniga, *Don Giovanni* (1787; Bertati), 'Dell'Italia, ed Alemagna'

15  
PASQUARIELLO

C: I IV V

18

I IV V

22

I v7V

25

v7V

28

V<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> v7V V

stanzas are just four lines long their patter lasts only for two lines of text; and while in the opening nine lines the excited patter began to develop some momentum, in the later part of the aria it cannot. The part of the text that is most suitable for creating a musical climax is badly located, at the beginning rather than near the end (Ex. 13.3).

Mozart's aria benefits from the superior organization of Da Ponte's text. After the introduction, the list of countries and numbers comprises a quatrain, which as we have seen ends with a strong punch-line. The second list is also set as a stanza: four lines for the list itself and two closing lines that rely for their energy on *anaphora* (13-14). The effectiveness of this organization is made plain by Mozart's setting. The first list is set expansively, without patter, and with an appropriately exaggerated musical treatment of its final line. This gives way to a patter setting of the second list, the patter phrases initially separated by rests and then accelerating as the rests disappear for the last two lines (bars 16-49).

Before proceeding to the rest of the text, Mozart restates each of these paragraphs. The restatements largely resemble the original presentations except that the patter in the second list is compressed and more energetic, leading to a strong closing cadence that ends the first section of the aria. This unusual plan—repetition of the first part of a *buffa* aria text before the presentation of a later part—is a strategy that develops from Mozart's unusual reading and re-conceptualizing of Da Ponte's text. Here we leave the realm of the conventional, of the ways in which competent professional librettists and composers did their work, and step into the mysterious territory of genius.

EXAMPLE 13.3 Gazzaniga, *Don Giovanni*, 'Dell'Italia'

31  
PASQUARIELLO

Vi di-rò ch'è un uo-mo ta-le, se at-ten-des-se al-le pro-mes-se, s'at-ten-des-se al-le pro-  
C: V

34  
- mes-se, che il ma-ri-to u-ni-ver-sa-le, u-ni-ver-  
V/V

37  
- sa-le un dì a-vreb-be a di-ven-tar, un dì a-  
V V/V V

40  
- vreb-be a di-ven-tar. Vi di-rò ch'e-gli a-ma  
V/V V V<sub>2</sub>

43  
tut-te, che sian bel-le, che sian brut-te: Del-le vec-chie so-la-  
I<sup>6</sup> V<sub>5</sub> I V/vi

46  
men-te, so-la-men-te non si sen-te ad in-fiam-  
vi IV vii<sup>4</sup>/vi vi<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>6</sup> V/vi

49  
DONNA ELVIRA

Tu m'hai sec-ca-ta.  
- mar. Vi di-rò... Vi di-  
vi V<sub>5</sub>/V V



EXAMPLE 13.3 *cont.*

52

Non più: va vi - a.

- rò... Vi di - rò che sì po - tri - a fin do - ma - ni se - gui -

$V_2^{\sharp}/V$   $V$

55

(Il mio cor da ge - lo - si - a tut - to -

- tar, fin do - ma - ni se - gui - tar, fin do -

$V^{\sharp}/V$   $V_2^{\sharp}$   $V^{\sharp}/V$   $V_2^{\sharp}$   $V^{\sharp}/V$

58

sen - to a la - ce - rar, tut - to sen - to a la - ce -

- ma - ni se - gui - tar, fin do - ma - ni se - gui -

$V_2^{\sharp}$   $V^{\sharp}/V$   $V$   $V/V$

61

rar, tut - to sen - to a la - ce - rar.)

- tar, fin do - ma - ni se - gui - tar.

$V$   $V/V$   $V$

As we have seen, Da Ponte's aria text divides into two sections after line 8, which separates the passage in *decasillabo* from the continuation in *ottonario*. But Mozart perceived a different division, based on content rather than metre, and decided to override Da Ponte and divide the aria after line 14.<sup>22</sup> Up to that point the two lists treat women numerically; thereafter the text addresses a number of types of women individually, taking the time as well to describe Don Giovanni's attitude to each of them. Mozart's virtually unique response to this opportunity involved not only dividing his setting into two distinct musical parts at precisely this point, but making the second part slower than the first, contrary to the natural tendency to put the energetic highpoint at the end of a comic aria.<sup>23</sup>

This tactic has several consequences. Perhaps the most important is the opportunity Mozart was able to give the singer playing Leporello to treat more individually Don Giovanni's preferences and responses. I hardly need dwell on the differentiated musical expression given to 'gentilezza', 'costanza' and 'dolcezza', or the mighty comic anticlimax created when 'La piccina è ognor vezzosa' follows 'È la grande maestosa'. In this section also, Mozart's adoption of the stately minuet, music appropriate to Don Giovanni rather than Leporello, enables the latter to act his master's part at length and to great comic effect (bars 85–123).

A less obvious result of Mozart's large-scale structural decision is to change the function of the aria's first section. Since no climactic finish is to be provided by the Andante con moto, the Allegro itself must provide the build-up to a climax normally found at the end of a catalogue aria. In this light, the restatement of the first two lists (in bars 50–84), a restatement anchored by an extensive and vigorous cadence, becomes much more comprehensible.<sup>24</sup>

\*

With the excellent, if conventionally organized, text provided him by Da Ponte, Mozart created a unique catalogue aria. In its opening Allegro it presents effectively the traditional devices of a catalogue or other *buffa* aria: a solidly neutral opening, a section of rising comic excitement full of rapid patter and an emphatic final cadence. This section lacks only the epigram with which a *buffa* aria normally closes, an absence rectified by the Andante that follows.

In this Andante traditional models have been abandoned; instead of musical compression and excitement, there are expansiveness, relaxation and the individualized expression of particular text lines at which Mozart was unmatched. He found in the last part of Da

<sup>22</sup> This point is also made by P. Gallarati, 'Music and Masks in Lorenzo da Ponte's Mozartian Librettos', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, i (1989), 235–6. Such cases, in which a change in poetic metre is ignored by the composer in favour of some other point of division, are in fact quite rare. Another example is 'Ma piano; adagio andiamo' from Brunati and Dittersdorf's *Democrito corretto* (1787, Vienna).

<sup>23</sup> As has been noted, Paisiello created a similar fast-slow structure in Figaro's 'Scorsi già molti paesi'; the first part of that aria is also a geographical catalogue.

<sup>24</sup> The point made here is discussed in greater detail in Platoff, 'The Buffa Aria', 116–17.

Ponte's conventional catalogue text—for all the typical features may be seen here, the rhyme schemes, the *anaphora*, the complete phrases stacked two to a line—the opportunity for a more subtle and truly human comedy. Here the humour emerges not from the rather mechanical display of patter declamation but from the depiction of human foible. In describing Don Giovanni and his behaviour, Leporello is showing us himself, in a personal way very different from the coldly energetic comedy of the typical catalogue aria. The high quality of Da Ponte's text explains much of the success of this piece. Ultimately, however, it is the brilliance and originality of the Andante—a section that could have been realized only by Mozart—that sets Leporello's aria apart from the many other catalogue arias with which it might be compared.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> I am grateful to Professor Kenneth Lloyd-Jones of Trinity College, Hartford, for his advice on translations of the Italian texts.