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W. A. Mozart

Così fan tutte

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Mozart himself requested the libretto that became *Così*, specifically on account of the success of *Don Giovanni*:

"Our opera of *Don Giovanni*," said he in a letter written to me from Prague, "was represented last night to a most brilliant audience. . . The success of our piece was as complete as we could desire. *Guardassoni* [the impresario] came this morning almost enraptured with joy, into my room. Long live Mozart, long live Da Ponte, said he: as long as they shall exist, no manager shall know distress. Adieu! my dear friend. Prepare another opera for your friend Mozart." I was so happy of the opportunity, that although I had on hand at that time two other dramas, nevertheless I did not neglect my favourite Mozart, and in less than three months I gave a tragicomic drama, entitled *Assur*, king of Ormus, to Salieri. . . an heroicomic to Martini, called *L'arbore di Diana*, and a comic opera to Mozart, with the title of *La scola degli Amanti*, which was represented in Vienna, in Prague, in Dresden, and for several years in Paris, with unbounded applause. . .³

This letter from Mozart is generally regarded as a fabrication, and with good reason. For one thing, Da Ponte's *L'arbore di Diana* had preceded, not followed the opera for Prague, receiving its première on 1 October 1787. And in the complete Italian version of Da Ponte's memoirs, the trilogy is said to comprise *Axur*, *Don Giovanni*, and *L'arbore di Diana*.

1789 would seem far more likely than 1787 as a date of composition for the libretto of *Così fan tutte*, not least because the Viennese revival of *Le nozze di Figaro* in August of that year was just the sort of success which might lead to a new commission. The dire financial straits in which Mozart found himself by this time have led various writers to assume that Mozart had no choice but to set Da Ponte's 'unworthy' text to *Così*. Németschek in 1797 stated that:

In the year 1789 in the month of December Mozart wrote the Italian comic opera *Così fan tutte*, or 'The School for Lovers'. . . It was not in his power to refuse the commission, and the text was given expressly to him.⁴

Georg Nikolaus von Nissen, the second husband of Constanze Mozart, plagiarized this passage in his biography of the composer,⁵ and in 1837 the writer Friedrich Heinse sketched in some further details, claiming that

. . . Mozart was in fact expressly commissioned by Joseph II to compose this libretto. According to a rumour, an incident that had actually happened at that time in Vienna between two officers and their lovers, which was similar to the plot of the libretto, offered the emperor the occasion of honouring his court poet Guemara [*sic*; Heinse confuses Da Ponte with one of his successors, Giovanni de Gamerra] with the commission to make this piece of gossip into a *Drama giocoso da mettersi in musica*.⁶

2 Genesis

The mystery of the commission

There is little direct evidence on the origins of Mozart and Da Ponte's last operatic project. Mozart's correspondence is nearly silent on *Così fan tutte*, apart from two notes to Puchberg, cited above. This situation is in marked contrast to the case of *Idomeneo*, whose genesis is well documented because librettist and composer were working in different cities, and of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, on the progress of which Mozart reported enthusiastically to his father in Salzburg. Da Ponte's memoirs, written long after the fact, tell us little of substance about *Così*:

. . . to my misfortune, there arrived [in Vienna] a singer, who without having any great claims to beauty, delighted me first of all by her voice; later, as she showed great propensity towards me, I ended by falling in love with her. . . For her I wrote *Il pastor fido* and *La cifra* with music by Salieri, two operas that marked no epoch in the annals of his musical glory, though they were in many parts very beautiful; and *La scola degli amanti*, with music by Mozart, a drama which holds third place among the sisters born of that most celebrated father of harmony.¹

The singer in question was Adriana Ferrarese; Da Ponte's 'misfortune' was that she was already married (to one Luigi Del Bene), and that her offstage behaviour eventually caused both her and Da Ponte to be sacked. Ferrarese did not in any sense commission the operas Da Ponte mentions; the power to decide which operas were staged seems to have rested with the High Chamberlain, Count Franz Orsini-Rosenberg, and his assistants Baron Michael von Kienmayer and Johann Thorwart.² The correspondence between Joseph and Rosenberg makes no mention of *Così*, and this has left room for several rather fantastical accounts to arise as to how the opera came into being. One of these derives from Da Ponte himself. In the *Extract from the life of Lorenzo da Ponte*, a preliminary version of his memoirs that he wrote in 1819, the poet implies that

As Kurt Kramer has pointed out, Joseph's declining health during this period makes it unlikely that he would have turned his attention to matters as frivolous as this. Since 1837, no firm evidence has come to light to substantiate Heinse's assertion.⁷

Another nearly contemporary explanation directly contradicts the notion of an imperial commission for *Così* going expressly to Mozart. During 1829 the British music publisher Vincent Novello and his wife Mary came to Salzburg in order to offer funds to Mozart's indigent sister, and while there also interviewed the composer's widow, Constanze Mozart Nissen. From her they heard that 'Salieri's enmity arose from Mozart's setting the *Così fan tutte* which he had originally commenced and given up as unworthy [of] musical invention.' The Italian had 'first tried to set this opera but failed, and the great success of Mozart in accomplishing what he could make nothing of is supposed to have excited his envy and hatred, and have been the first origin of his enmity and malice towards Mozart...'⁸ Disregarding the fact that this was hardly the beginning of their rivalry, the scenario is chronologically plausible, as Salieri produced no other new opera between February and December of 1789. The story's fundamental truth can now be demonstrated, on account of John Rice's recent discovery, in the Music Collection of the Austrian National Library, of Salieri's autograph score for his settings of the first two numbers of the opera, catalogued (with their textual incipits) as 'Zwei Terzette'.⁹ Though now reversed in order, in a modern binding, from the recitative text it is clear that 'È la fede delle femmine' was meant to follow 'La mia Dorabella capace non è', just as in Mozart's setting. 'È la fede' appears in full score, with much evidence of Salieri's revisions and corrections; for the other trio there are vocal parts only, apart from an initial orchestral flourish (itself much corrected), and the end of the number is not preserved. Evidently, the Metastasio-derived second trio (on which see below) was Salieri's initial point of attack – not surprisingly, in view of his literary interests, which Da Ponte thought highly unusual in a composer.¹⁰

The level of musical invention in Salieri's settings is consistent with abandonment of the project in the manner related by Mozart's widow. The finished piece, 'È la fede', moves amiably in 6/8 metre, with neither the mocking superiority of Mozart's Alfonso, nor the indignant explosions of the officers, as in the younger composer's setting (see Example 2.1).

In the sketched number there is even less, musically, to differentiate the characters – though the instruments presumably would have helped in this regard.

Although Constanze Mozart had reported that Salieri found the libretto 'unworthy [of] musical invention', Salieri's earlier willingness to set texts at least as risqué as that of *Così*, and on similar subject matter (notably Casti's *La grotta di Trofonio*) suggests that there were other factors in his decision not to persevere with his setting. One may well have been the souring of the composer's almost 'brotherly' friendship with Da Ponte, during Lent of 1789, as a result of the librettist's exclusion of Salieri's favourite, Catarina Cavalieri, from participation as a singer in the pasticcio *L'ape musicale*. Indeed, in listing the charges against his 'primary enemy' Salieri, in a later memorandum, Da Ponte mentions his having 'made sing in the capacity of prima donna la Cavalieri, whom I had proposed to pension'.¹¹

Whether Mozart was the only other composer Da Ponte approached with his libretto, we cannot know. Given the success of his two prior collaborations with Da Ponte, he can hardly have hesitated to accept another libretto from him. In at least two respects it closely suited his tastes in opera buffa (as stated in a letter of 7 May 1783): in being newly written, as opposed to a revision of an earlier text, and in introducing 'two equally good female roles', one *seria*, and the other *mezzo carattere*.¹² But there can be little doubt that Mozart, in inheriting the project, demanded and got revisions from the poet – as is suggested by the quite different texts of the recitative that precedes 'È la fede', in his and Salieri's settings.¹³ The changes here – which made for a much smoother, and more thoroughly comic introduction to the quotation from Metastasio – may be indicative of the two artists' negotiations generally.

The literary impulse

Though many critics have remarked on the density of literary allusion in *Così fan tutte*, few have realized that, rather than constituting a mere stylistic veneer, these are basic to the conception of the opera. In an important essay published in 1973, Kurt Kramer sought to explain Da Ponte's choice and treatment of subject matter largely in terms of his humanistic education, noting that the Latin and Italian poetic traditions provided a wealth of useful material on the theme of sexual jealousy.¹⁴ Already in 1954 Ernst Gombrich had

Un poco andante

Don Alfonso

È la fe - de del - le fem - mi - ne co - me

4

l'a - ra - ba Fe - ni - ce; che vi sia cia - scun lo

7

di - ce; do - ve si - a, do - ve si - a, do - ve

10

Don Alfonso

si - a nes - sun lo sa.

Ferrando
Guilelmo

La Fe - ni - ce è Do - ra -

12

Don Alfonso

Ferrando
Guilelmo

bel - la. La Fe - ni - ce è Fior - di - li - gi

Non è

remarked on the striking parallels between *Così*'s plot and a Greek myth in which a husband tests the fidelity of his wife by courting her in disguise; Kramer went further, citing specific correspondences of language between *Così* and a less ancient version of the Procris story: the forty-third Canto of Ludovico Ariosto's epic *Orlando furioso*.¹⁵ That this sixteenth-century poem was indeed among the basic materials with which Da Ponte began his libretto is suggested also by the derivation of the names of all three of the opera's women from characters in *Orlando furioso*.¹⁶ And in fact, as Elizabeth Dunstan has recently shown, Da Ponte drew not only on Canto 43, but also on Canto 24, and particularly Canto 28, with its multiple

tests of fidelity. Most of the major themes of the opera can be found in *Orlando furioso*, as well as numerous locutions that audiences today know from recitatives and set pieces in *Così*.

That Da Ponte was prone to quotation and paraphrase is abundantly clear from his memoirs, which are peppered with Latin maxims, his own and others' verses, and praise for his nation's literary heritage. (Already in 1791, in the satirical pamphlet *Anti-da Ponte*, he was specifically charged with plundering the works of Metastasio and Beaumarchais, and mocked with various 'daponitsch' Latin or pseudo-Latin citations.) In *Così fan tutte*, Da Ponte's mouthpiece Alfonso uses a Latin phrase in his very first utterance, and starts the second number with a near-quotation of an entire quatrain from Metastasio.

Da Ponte's intention of creating a thoroughly allusive libretto is signalled by the opera's main title, a line from an ensemble in *Le nozze di Figaro*. But otherwise, the spectators were left to discover on their own the sources of the literary references. Da Ponte's reticence about his sources allowed for a promiscuous miscegenation of material from widely different periods, as well as for subtle manipulations and recombinations of elements from within Ariosto's epic. Spectators in the know could congratulate themselves on recognizing the familiar passages from Sannazaro and Metastasio, while savouring the comic distortions to which Ariostian characters and language were subjected. The number of persons capable of catching Da Ponte's allusions was probably not large. Though there was a substantial community of resident Italians and italophiles in Vienna at the end of the eighteenth century (when Lombardy, Tuscany and Trieste were all still Austrian possessions), only those who had received educations comparable to Da Ponte's, and who attended the opera, would have caught his allusions. One who probably did was Count János Fekete de Galántha, whose description of life in Josephinian Vienna includes remarks on the Italian opera repertory, and who even attempted a translation of *Orlando furioso* into his native Hungarian.¹⁶

Another person capable of appreciating the erudition in *Così* was Salieri, the composer who was originally to have composed the opera. In recounting the rupture in their friendship Da Ponte writes wistfully of having 'passed many learnedly happy hours' (. . . ore dottamente felici) in his company, which can hardly refer to any but literary diversions.¹⁷ Any pleasure Salieri may have had in hearing the libretto in its musical dress must have been mixed with gall, given the circumstances.

Topicality

References to events, issues and persons of current interest to the original spectators are conspicuous in *Così fan tutte* – though scarcely more so than in *Figaro*, which brims with references to its own theatricality, or in *Don Giovanni*, the second finale of which includes a sustained joke about operas given recently in Prague and Vienna. But critics have been especially quick to note the topicality in *Così*, perhaps because of its central function in the work's first-act finale. The opera could readily accommodate topical references, given that its text was already saturated with literary allusions. Both devices shaped Da Ponte's libretto in ways more than incidental, lending an overt theatricality which participated significantly in the characterizations of the protagonists.

The extravagant Mesmerian charade in the first finale of *Così*, in which Despina magnetically cures the supposedly poisoned suitors, has been a major stumbling block for directors and spectators alike during much of the opera's history. In some nineteenth-century productions this action was eliminated, or replaced with a more logical ploy. But conversely, the modern director Jonathan Miller has staged the scene quite seriously, citing Mozart's childhood connection to the famous healer, who in 1768 (supposedly) sponsored a performance of Mozart's opera *Bastien und Bastienne* in the garden of his home in Vienna's Landstraße district.¹⁸ The issue of the magnetic cure deserves to be considered seriously, as the episode is a turning point in the opera's plot. In considering the Mozarts' friendship with Franz Anton Mesmer, though, it would be a mistake to assume that either Leopold or (later) Wolfgang necessarily believed in the doctor's controversial theories. Self-interest was likely the most important factor: Mesmer had been willing to patronize the twelve-year-old prodigy, at a time when intrigues at court were preventing the performance of his opera *La finta semplice*. The Mozarts continued in later years to correspond with Mesmer and his cousin Joseph, but mainly about musical matters.¹⁹ As for Da Ponte, it seems unlikely that he would have portrayed Mesmerism sympathetically in an opera that ended with the words 'Happy is he who . . . lets himself be guided by reason.' The historian Robert Darnton has described Mesmer's movement as specifically anti-Enlightenment in spirit, noting that his 'treatments' thrived in an atmosphere of 'overheated *sensiblerie*'; encouraged by appropriate music, subjects were induced to a state of crisis through manipulations of the 'magnetic

fluid' passing through them.²⁰ When Mesmerism was officially debunked in 1784, by a French government commission that included Benjamin Franklin among its members, Mesmer's cures were attributed mainly to the suggestibility of his predominantly female subjects. The two sisters from Ferrara in *Così*, so susceptible to sentiment and sentimental language, would be willing believers in the veracity of the 'Albanian' suitors' Mesmerian paroxysms.

The music that accompanies Despina's ministrations, and especially the exaggerated cadential trills (bars 381 ff.) which poke fun at Mesmer's adopted home of France, dispel any thought that the collaborators meant the audience to take the action here at face value.²¹ Yet, as Darnton reminds us, Mesmer's ideas were hardly more outlandish than Newton's 'invisible fluid', or Lavoisier's 'caloric'.²² Even among the Viennese aristocracy there were followers of Mesmer – notably Count Franz Joseph von Thun, whose wife Wilhelmine was one of Mozart's most loyal patrons.²³

For Viennese spectators at the first performances of *Così fan tutte*, war was a subject just as timely. Though the opera is set in Naples, and the nationality of the foe is never named, modern commentators have invariably connected this side of the plot to the war Emperor Joseph was then prosecuting against the Turks. The original audience probably did the same, given the charged atmosphere which followed the Austrians' capture of Belgrade in October of 1789. The Viennese press covered the military campaign almost to the exclusion of other news, and citizens and saw their city transformed by the increased military presence. The contemporary Viennese commentator Johann Pezzl referred to the war as a 'Schauspiel' (play) to which all Europe was a spectator;²⁴ how natural, then, to find reverberations of the Turkish war on the city's actual stages. Even in peacetime, military officers were a strong presence in the Viennese Burgtheater, renting places in the *parterre noble* – an enclosure directly in front of the orchestra and the stage; the playwright Joachim Perinet told how in this part of the auditorium one was wont to hear 'more talk of war than of theatre . . .'.²⁵ Da Ponte and Mozart played directly to this segment of the public, beginning the very first scene of the opera with the loud boasts of the officers Guglielmo and Ferrando. The military side of the plot had its darker aspects, too: the dangers and hardships of war (described ironically by the chorus in No. 8), and the more ticklish issue of sexual constancy among soldiers (the subject of an entire aria, No. 12).

It seems obvious enough that the surname of Da Ponte's mistress Adriana Ferrarese, the first Fiordiligi, was what prompted the poet to specify that the two sisters came from Ferrara. That they are said to be 'living in Naples' is likely due to the famously intoxicating atmosphere of the port city, so conducive to love intrigues, and to the convenient proximity of Mount Vesuvius, already stereotypical in opera buffa as a metaphor for passion.²⁶ Da Ponte specifies a sea-side decoration twice during the opera, and astute stage designers would have needed little prompting to include recognizable Neapolitan features in the backdrops. We first meet the Ferrarese sisters in a 'giardino sulla spiaggia', as they gaze love-struck at portraits of their fiancés. By the end of this tableau, and the officers' feigned departure for battle, the setting itself is the subject of discourse, in the trio 'Soave sia il vento, / Tranquilla sia l'onda', No. 10. The invocation of the elements here encourages the abandoned women to indulge in their sorrow, and the spectators to forget that the poignant situation is the result of a bet. The second tableau of the next act brings back essentially the same set, now with *sedili d'erba* (turf benches), and a flower-bedecked barque full of musicians; in these exquisite surroundings the mysterious strangers begin seducing in earnest, with a serenade ('Secondate aurette amiche', No. 21) in which the elements are again addressed directly.

Da Ponte took care to integrate the opera's setting with the literary elements of the plot, in ways that were probably more obvious to eighteenth-century spectators than to us today. For those with some schooling in Italian letters, the conjunction in *Così* of 'Alfonso' and 'Ferrara', along with all the echoes of *Orlando furioso*, would have brought to mind the fact that the epic's author had worked in Ferrara at the court of Alfonso d'Este.²⁷ Da Ponte also gives Naples its due, referring to the city as 'Sebeto', a name dating back to Antiquity, in the early version of 'Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo'.²⁸ Da Ponte or Mozart apparently sensed that this last reference was too esoteric, for it was changed to 'Vienna' in Mozart's score. Mozart's decision to replace this piece was likely due to a number of factors, among which was a superabundance of other topical references: to the famous dancer Le Picq, to figures from mythology, even the furious Orlando himself.

But more pervasive in *Così* than any of these sorts of topicality are the many references to opera. These take both literary and musical form, implying a significant degree of coordination between poet and composer. In terms of function, the operatic quotations,

clichés and parodies work like the literary allusions, affording the characters with ready-made substitutes for autonomous thinking when confronted with a situation. But whether invoked knowingly or unwittingly, the usual formulas do not always lead to the usual results, which makes for a vastly more interesting opera.

The compositional process

The decision to make opera a central topic in *Così fan tutte* naturally had consequences for the process by which the work took shape, particularly as regards its relationship to other operas recently produced in Vienna. But in what follows we will look at the opera's compositional history in the narrower sense, mainly as gathered from examination of the autograph score and other primary materials. Much of what follows is derived from the pioneering work of Alan Tyson, whose investigations of paper-types and watermarks have resulted in a greatly improved idea of Mozart's working methods.²⁹

The August revival of *Le nozze di Figaro* was one of few bright spots for Mozart in 1789, during which he made a somewhat disappointing German concert tour, suffered both illness and the loss of a daughter at birth, and fell ever deeper into debt. In the new production of *Figaro*, the recently arrived Adriana Ferrarese took the role of Susanna, whose creator Nancy Storace meanwhile had returned to England. Not all of Storace's arias in *Figaro* suited Ferrarese, and Mozart's modifications and additions to her music helped to acquaint the composer with the voice and character of his future Fiordiligi. There is no mention of the new opera in Mozart's letters until the end of the year, when it was already in rehearsal. But it was probably underway by October, since the same paper-type on which he wrote most of the first act is used also in two insertion arias (K.582 and 583) which he composed for Louise Villeneuve – Dorabella in *Così* – to use in a revival of Martin's *Il burbero di buon cuore*. The pieces were entered in Mozart's 'Verzeichniß', or thematic catalogue, in October; performances of *Burbero* began on 9 November. Well before this date Da Ponte and Mozart were probably mapping out the general contours of their opera, perhaps even details as specific as aria- and verse-types. Mozart's work on *Così* seems to have been unusually rushed, to judge from the many abbreviations in his autograph score. Composition – though probably not orchestration – must have been largely

complete by 31 December, the date of the 'small opera rehearsal' at his home to which Puchberg and Haydn were invited. Interestingly, in the same note he promises Puchberg that he will tell him about 'Salieri's cabals, which however have all come to naught' – a remark which resonates with the Novellos' comments quoted above. It was likewise in December that Mozart entered 'Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo' – or rather, 'à me' (No. 15a) – in his catalogue, as 'an aria which was meant for the opera *Così fan tutte*, for Benucci'. By this time, presumably, he had already composed the shorter and less risqué 'Non siate ritrosi' as its replacement.

For lack of other evidence, one is forced to fall back on the autograph score of *Così*, the first act of which was among the Mozart manuscripts considered lost after World War II, but which reappeared in the late 1970s at the Biblioteka Jagiellońska in Kraków, Poland. Paper-types are helpful in determining chronology mainly as regards Act I, for the second act was essentially all written on the same paper. Tyson discerned three layers in the composition of set pieces in Act I: simple recitatives would have been left until last. The earliest layer comprises numbers written exclusively on what he terms paper-type I: most of the ensembles (though not yet the finale), and a single aria, Dorabella's 'Smanie implacabili', No. 11. Though Mozart was familiar with the voices at his disposal, according to Tyson 'he may nevertheless have wished to complete the principal arias in consultation with the individual singers, at a time when most of the ensembles were behind him'.³⁰ Two numbers written on a mixture of paper-types I and II – Ferrando's 'Un'aura amorosa' (No. 17) and the ensemble 'Recitativo' 'Di scrivermi ogni giorno' – represent a later group, written as Mozart was exhausting his supply of type-I paper. Significantly, Mozart did not give it a separate number in his autograph score. His note 'ist ganz instrumentiert' was possibly intended for the court theatre's copyist, who might have thought that the sketchily scored piece was not yet finished. A third layer of pieces, all on type-II paper, includes Fiordiligi's showpiece 'Come scoglio' (No. 14); Despina's 'In uomini, in soldati' (No. 12); Guglielmo's 'Non siate ritrosi' (No. 15), which replaced the 'Rivolgete' aria; the first finale; and the easily dispatched Nos. 5 and 8 (Alfonso's 'Vorrei dir' and the chorus 'Bella vita militar' respectively). The overture was apparently composed last, as was Mozart's usual practice.

Tyson found additional clues on compositional chronology also in Mozart's inconsistency with regard to names. His crossing-out

and switching of the sisters' names on their staves in four of the Act-I ensembles (all on type-I paper) in which they sing suggest that in his haste to write out the score, Mozart initially confused the ranges of the two singers. (There are similar changes as regards Susanna and the Countess in the *Figaro* autograph.) In No. 10 (from Tyson's middle layer) and in the first finale, the women's names are correctly entered. Also problematic was the name Guglielmo – which in fact is never spelt that way either in Mozart's score or in the original libretto. Using paper-types as an index, Tyson distinguishes tentatively between early ('Guillelmo') and later ('Guilelmo') forms of the name, but draws no firm conclusions. One might think that these variants represent a German-speaker's difficulty with Italian liquid consonants, were it not for the fact that Salieri's abortive score also unambiguously gives the reading 'Guilelmo'. This form persists in several early librettos and published scores, only gradually giving way to the more common spelling 'Guglielmo'.

Several interesting *pentimenti* within the first act demonstrate typically Mozartian refinements of dramaturgy. Early on, Mozart extended No. 3 ('Una bella serenata') with a postlude on an extra leaf of paper, thus rounding off the opera's opening trio of terzettos. Revisions are also evident at the point where Despina is introduced. Cancelled annotations in the score show that she was originally to have had a cavatina at her entrance in Scene 8, which in its ultimate form begins simply with her recitative complaints about life as a servant. (A cavatina here would have upstaged Despina's mistresses, neither of whom has had an aria yet.) The original libretto reveals second thoughts even in the extant aria for Despina, which was not set as Da Ponte had envisaged. The first three lines of text:

In Uomini, in Soldati,
Sperare fedeltà?

Non vi fate sentir per carità!

(*Così fan tutte*, No. 12: To expect fidelity, in men, in soldiers?
For pity's sake, don't let anyone hear you!)

were clearly supposed to have concluded the preceding recitative: they remain in the *versi sciolti* typical of recitative, and indentation in the libretto starts only with the lines 'Di pasta simile / Son tutti quanti. . .'. Mozart made an orchestrally accompanied transition out

of what should have been the recitative cadence, allowing Despina to repeat her lines with exaggerated incredulity.

Within Act II, paper-type is of little help in determining the order of composition, though gaps in this part of the autograph – the serenade, No. 21; the accompanied recitative preceding Fiordiligi's *rondo*, No. 25; and No. 30 – possibly indicate that these portions of the music were written quite late. It is certainly surprising that the 'Andante' in which Alfonso proclaims the motto of the opera's title might have been a last-minute addition, yet this is supported by the title page of an early copyist's score, which originally bore no title other than *La Scuola degli Amanti*. Though Da Ponte had further reason to suppress the work's main title (see above), it is tempting to think, along with Tyson, 'that the title *Così fan tutte* was Mozart's inspiration. . . perhaps being adopted only after No. 30. . . had been set to music.'

Space does not permit a discussion here of the extant sketches for the second finale, but some loose ends in the score demand our attention, in so far as they reveal Mozart changing his mind about important musical and dramatic issues. The accompanied recitative preceding No. 26, during which Guglielmo apprises Ferrando of the faithlessness of his beloved Dorabella, had originally ended with Ferrando's plea 'dammi consiglio' (give me advice), and a firm cadence in C minor. But Mozart subsequently extended the recitative to a cadence on D, elided to the four bars of dominant harmony at the start of Guglielmo's G-major aria 'Donne mie, la fate a tanti'. Tyson asks whether Ferrando's aria 'Tradito, schernito' (No. 27) might originally have come here; that piece begins in C minor, and would have followed logically upon Ferrando's elaborately prepared cadence. 'But when Ferrando has asked for advice, it may have struck Mozart that it would be undramatic for him to prevent such advice being given by singing a cavatina; it would be more effective for Guglielmo to tender his counsel at this point in an aria on the subject of woman's nature.'³¹ According to this theory, 'Tradito, schernito' was delayed until the next scene and provided with a new accompanied recitative. A similar tonal disjunction, between Dorabella's aria 'È Amore un ladroncello', No. 28 (in Bb) and the end of the preceding recitative (a tritone away, in E) was corrected only in copyists' scores, not in Mozart's autograph – though the new version may derive from him. If the aria we know replaced an earlier one in a different key, as Tyson surmises, then this would seem to have been done only after the composition of No. 30, for

Dorabella's final line, 'Che anch'io farò così', is a first-person conjugation of the motto of the opera.

More noticeable to the listener than these rough spots, which were smoothed over before the opera reached the stage, is a pseudo-quotation in the second finale that refers back to music the listener has never heard. The passage comes shortly after the officers' unexpected return, as they reveal to their fiancées, through ironic quotation of music each had sung while in disguise, that they are the very same 'strangers' with whom the women have just signed marriage contracts. Two of the three passages are recognizable excerpts from earlier numbers, but the first one, during which Ferrando makes 'affected compliments' and introduces himself as the 'Cavaliere dell'Albania', bears no relation to any preceding music or text. As Daniel Hertz has argued, on both musical and dramatic grounds,³² the most logical origin for Ferrando's D-minor introduction is No. 13 in Act I, in which the two suitors had presented themselves with comic formality to Despina, but not even informally to the two sisters. If the five bars for Ferrando in the finale came from a sacrificed portion of this long, multipartite ensemble, then Mozart must have had too little time to replace them with music from elsewhere in that character's role, or little inclination to alter what is otherwise a delightful and effective moment in the finale.

Towards the première

As *Così* was being readied for performance, a sample libretto was printed, on paper of inferior quality, probably for proofreading purposes and for submission to the censor. The presence of Guglielmo's 'Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo' points to a date before the end of December 1789, though the title page gives the date 1790, in anticipation of the première. In the definitive libretto, produced after Mozart had replaced Guglielmo's first-act aria, the first line of the original version is included by mistake at the end of the preceding recitative, as are also two quatrains of the replacement that were not set by Mozart. The recitative before Fiordiligi's *rondò*, and the beginning of the second finale likewise contained lines left unset by the composer. There are also two apparent interventions by the censor, both in lines sung by Despina. In I/10, both the first libretto and Mozart's score show her rebuffing Alfonso's offer to do her good with the lines 'A una fanciulla / Un vecchio come lei non può far nulla' (an old man like you cannot do anything to a girl); as

revised, this became simply 'Un uomo come lei. . .' (a man like you. . .). Similarly, in her aria 'Una donna a quindici anni' (No. 19) at the start of the second act, her statement that a young woman should know, among other things, 'Dove il diavolo ha la coda' (where the Devil keeps his tail) was replaced in the second printing by the harmless but useless phrase 'Quel che il cor più brama e loda' (that which the heart most desires and praises). In both cases, it is impossible to say whether the censor's injunctions were actually followed in performance.

Towards the end of December we find Mozart cancelling a musical evening with Puchberg (as guest) and the violinist Joseph Zistler, saying, 'I have too much work.'³³ Mozart's haste as the première approached is confirmed in a little-known account by his composition pupil Joseph Eybler, remembered today mainly as the person to whom Constanze Mozart first gave her late husband's Requiem for completion. In an autobiographical sketch published in 1826, Eybler explained that Mozart was the unwitting cause of his forswearing a career in the theatre:

For when Mozart wrote the opera *Così fan tutte*, and was not yet finished with the instrumentation, and time was short besides, he requested that I rehearse the singers, and in particular the two female vocalists Fer[ra]rese and Villeneuve; whereby I had opportunity enough to become acquainted with theatre life, with its disorders, cabals and so forth. . .³⁴

The faint-hearted Eybler was probably assisted in the theatre by the librettist, and by deputy Kapellmeister Joseph Weigl, who had helped rehearse both *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*.³⁵

One aspect of the musical preparations can be followed quite directly in the copyist's score used by Mozart in rehearsals and performances: namely, autograph cuts in the musical text. These included two long (and repetitive) passages in the first finale (bars 461–75, 515–85), and Ferrando's entire aria 'Ah lo veggio', No. 24. (It was also probably in rehearsal, as he saw that Despina required more time to accomplish her Mesmerian cure, that Mozart added the woodwind repeat of the accompaniment to her previous phrase.) Most surprising of all is Mozart's replacement of the canonic toast ('E nel tuo, nel mio bicchiere') in the second-act finale with a non-canonic setting of the same text, based on musical material in the section just preceding (bars 158 ff.). The substitution is preserved in Mozart's hand, on a sheet that was apparently inserted in the performance score.

Despite the supposed cabals of Salieri, time pressures and the difficult personalities and vocal limitations of at least some of the singers, *Così fan tutte* went into performance on 26 January 1790 and was well received. The circumstances which limited the number of performances – the emperor's death, followed shortly by the end of the opera season – have to this day coloured the public's perception of this opera's success. And it is sad to report also that Mozart seems not to have received the fee he expected for the opera. In his 'begging letter' to Puchberg (quoted in Chapter 1) Mozart had stated that, 'according to the current arrangement', during January he would receive 200 ducats – 900 florins or gulden, at that date. Dexter Edge has recently located weekly ledgers from the Viennese theatres for the 1789/90 season in which payment of Mozart's fee for *Così* is recorded, and the amount is 450 florins, not 900.³⁶ Edge points to cases in which Salieri and Cimarosa were given double or even triple the customary 100 ducats for their operas, and speculates that Mozart may have been promised a similar fee for *Così* (or thought that he had been), and that this may not have been honoured after Joseph's death. It is likewise possible that Mozart's claim about a 200-ducat fee represented wishful thinking; in any case, the amount paid him was a mere 50 florins more than the sum he was asking to borrow from Puchberg.

3 *Synopsis*

The many literary quotations, allusions and proverbs in Da Ponte's Italian text to *Così fan tutte* make it less readily translatable than many other opera buffa librettos. It is perhaps for this reason that the libretto was available in 'Italian only' (bloß italienisch), as one reads on the poster for the first performance (see Plate 1). It follows that any English-language synopsis will inevitably convey the humour and richness of the original text only imperfectly.

Though Guglielmo's aria 'Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo' was replaced well before the première, in modern performances of *Così* it has sometimes been reinstated, and is thus included here. On this and other changes of plan during the work's composition, and on cuts during the original production, see Chapters 2 and 7, respectively.

Scenic directions below follow the Neue Mozart-Ausgabe (NMA), which conflates the indications in the original libretto and the autograph score. The numbering of pieces, however, follows the more traditional scheme of the 1941 C. F. Peters edition by Georg Schünemann and Kurt Soldan (reprinted 1983 by Dover, New York).

Cast of characters

FIORDILIGI	woman from Ferrara living in Naples, in love with Guglielmo	Adriana Ferrarese del Bene, soprano
DORABELLA	woman from Ferrara living in Naples, in love with Ferrando	Louise Villeneuve, soprano
GUGLIELMO	officer, in love with Fiordiligi	Francesco Benucci, bass
FERRANDO	officer, in love with Dorabella	Vincenzo Calvesi, tenor
DESPINA	the women's maidservant	Dorothea Bussani, soprano
DON ALFONSO	old philosopher	Francesco Bussani, bass
Chorus of soldiers		
Chorus of servants		
Chorus of sailors		

The scene is Naples and its environs.