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Opera buffa in Mozart's Vienna

Edited by Mary Hunter and James Webster



14 Operatic ensembles and the problem John Platoff of the Don Giovanni sextet

strange to me. This ensemble occurs at the climax of the initially from the second act of Don Giovanni has always seemed a little comic subplot involving Leporello's disguise as Don Giovanni The "problem" of my title is actually my problem: the great sextet nearly being killed by Don Ottavio - and pleads cringingly for his Masetto. When they discover Leporello he reveals himself - after arrivals, first of Donna Anna and Don Ottavio, then of Zerlina and attempts to get away from her. But his escape is blocked by the Having led Donna Elvira off into the darkness, Leporello here ensemble.1 But after the five characters react in shock to removed from the unshadowed comedy of the typical opera buffa mystery, and tragic intensity. This is, of course, an atmosphere far Andante that creates an atmosphere of increasing darkness, almost as though the first movement has raised questions that the this extraordinary ensemble snaps suddenly back to routine comic Molto allegro of a typical stretta movement; the dark mystery of Leporello's unmasking, the Andante gives way to the energetic life. These events occur in a single musical movement, a long strongly marked cadence on the dominant of C minor, to the Molto nects these two movements – from the end of the Andante, with its second movement is utterly unable to answer, or even to address. frenzy, in a shift that seems disruptive and unconvincing. It is allegro in the tonic key of E flat. The problem is made only more acute by the tonal shift that con-

with this particular spot, has led me to think about the nature of The dissatisfaction I feel with this ensemble, or more precisely

oping those views arises from just such a contextual approach. or unusual. Whether or not my views on the sextet are persuasive strate how a contextual study, grounded in an awareness of what shaped in part by his experience as a composer of instrumental structured as it is, and above all why Mozart employed the shift it will be clear that much of the information I draw upon in devel form conclusions about whether certain musical choices are typical insights into Mozart's own music. In particular, it permits us to contemporary composers were doing, can give us additional music. Second and more broadly, my investigation will demonfrom V/vi to I. In brief, my answer will be that his choices were seem to be perfect: they do not invite questioning. In what follows, the question is so difficult but because his decisions so frequently I hope to suggest at least some of the reasons why the sextet is ticular decision is not very common, not only because answering Mozart's decision-making process. Asking why Mozart made a par-

subdivided: it may begin with a solo stanza for each character, in with continuous music. But while many ensembles work in just this dialogue takes place in shorter interchanges among the characters. 2 After these stanzas, which set the stage for dramatic action, true which his or her initial activity or emotional position is made clear instead expresses their feelings. The first phase is itself frequently together in a tutti that ceases to move the action forward and moves the story forward; in the second, the characters sing expressive. In the first, dialogue among the characters on stage using two distinct poetic and musical styles, which I label active and way, they do not consist entirely of action. Most are constructed the expression of feelings, ensembles combine dramatic action bles. It is a truism that, unlike arias, which are generally devoted to Let me begin with a general characterization of opera buffa ensem-

known to me is the quintet "Deh lasciate ch'io respiri" from Cimarosa's and ones, from quartets to septets - are almost universally comic. The only exception Even in opere buffe with serious elements, the ensembles - above all, the larger Casti's Il matrimonio segreto (1792)

Ronald J. Rabin, writing about the same phenomenon, describes it somewhat and the Dramaturgy of Opera Buffa: Italian Comic Opera in Vienna, 1783-1791," Dialogue, and Tutti), the first of which may be omitted. See "Mozart, Da Ponte, differently: he sees three distinct phases (called respectively Statements, PhD diss. Cornell University, 1996, pp. 287ff.

action/expression cycle (such as "Cinque – dieci", the opening duet entirely of a single expressive tutti, to those that comprise a single pieces (such as "Soave sia il vento" from Così fan tutte) consisting pieces comprising two or three cycles are not uncommon. finales, which may comprise eight or more cycles of active dialogue of a series of cycles. The most elaborate and lengthy ensembles are from Le nozze di Figaro), to larger and more complex pieces made up and expressive tutti.3 Other ensembles do not reach this size, but Collectively, the ensembles of Viennese opera buffa range from

tists. By writing active scenes in dialogue and punctuating them contained rather little stage-action seem more substantial and punctuating tuttis could also make a musical number that actually the dramatic pace and the musical texture of ensembles. And the with expressive tutti passages, they enabled composers to vary both immediately by an expressive tutti. In this way Da Ponte and voice. Each command is countermanded by the Countess, followed come out of the closet, and later to speak so that he can hear her interesting. For example, in the Act II trio of Le nozze di Figaro, expression, when what actually takes place could quite easily have Mozart created an ensemble of two parallel cycles of action and "Susanna, or via sortite," the Count commands Susanna first to occurred in one rather concise cycle. The creation of these structures began, of course, with libret-

expression, while expressive ones may include a plan, or the hope of am amazed. What now?" (both from the Don Giovanni sextet). ously expressive as "What! [It's] Leporello! What trickery is this? I have suggested. Not every bit of dialogue is as clearly active as dialogue and tutti passages respectively are not always as pure as I some future event. Yet structurally, because of the consistent "Stop, you rogue! Where are you going?" nor every tutti as obvi-Taken line by line, active passages frequently contain emotional organization by which dialogue is followed by tutti, the distinction It must be noted that the "active" and "expressive" qualities of

easily recognized.4 underlined by the music, the shift from one to the other may be between action and expression is clearly maintained – and when it is

stanza of text in an ensemble.⁵ ulating device is a change in the end-rhyme used to close each quartet until m. 70. A more subtle but occasionally important artic-Giovanni sextet, which actually begins as a duet and continues as a permits, the number of characters may change, as in the Don action/expression cycle and the start of the next. When the plot following tutti but most typically between the end of one changes of poetic meter, sometimes between a dialogue and the tutti to create articulations. Longer ensembles frequently contain Librettists used other means as well as the shifts from dialogue to

one, simply by repeating earlier lines and having characters sing effect of producing more sections than the librettist provided. For articulation; but the composer may ignore this poetic cue and set switch to a new movement (see below), thus creating an important that matter, a tutti may be created where the librettist did not write tempo and meter within a passage in a single poetic meter has the the new text to more of the old music.7 Conversely, a change of instance, a change of poetic meter typically leads a composer to complete control to highlight, obscure, or simply overrule it. For poetic meter, a character's entrance or exit – the composer has made available by the libretto – a shift from dialogue to tutti, a new "the dramatist is the composer." For every point of articulation tist proposes, the composer disposes"; or to quote Joseph Kerman, But with respect to all these devices we may say that "the libret-

 $_3$ See John Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure in the Opera Buffa Finale," JM

⁴ For a discussion of the musical styles used in active and expressive passages, see ibid., 197-227.

⁵ Tim Carter, W. A. Mozart: "Le nozze di Figaro" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 80-87.

⁶ Joseph Kerman, Opera as Drama (New York, 1956; rev. edn., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 91.

⁷ See, for example, the opening duet from Le nozze di Figaro: the final tutti quatrain musical setting. James Webster, "To Understand Verdi and Wagner We Must changes from ottonario lines to decasillabo, a change carefully hidden by Mozart's Understand Mozart," 19CM 11 (1987-88), 184

single action/expression cycle can be lengthened into two cycles, and then the expressive tutti a second time. In all these ways the by the simple expedient of using some or all of the active dialogue them together. Sometimes an ensemble whose text provides a passages, their relative length and importance, and the resulting composer has the final say over the number of active and expressive form and sense of pace in the ensemble.

smallest gesture to the most shocking and dramatic break in the an operatic number exist along a continuum of strength, from the music in a single tempo and meter.8 Points of articulation within on "movements," by which I mean relatively lengthy passages of changes, alterations in texture, new melodies or accompanimental the musical structure in all sorts of ways: with cadences, dynamic musical flow. Composers create articulations at different levels of - plot events, entrances or exits of characters, changes in poetic single most powerful articulating device is a change from one meter, and the like – create articulations as well, which may or may motives, and so on. And features of the stage-action and the poetry and/or meter. Such articulations obviously vary in impact, movement to another, by which I mean the shift from music in one not coincide with points of musical articulation.9 In my view the depending, for example, on whether they occur congruently with tempo and meter to new music in a perceptibly different tempo articulating strength, they consistently affect the musical flow occur attacca or after a pause, whether they involve a full or halfarticulations in the poetry and/or stage-action, whether they also occurs, and so on. Yet while tempo and meter changes vary in cadence or no cadence at all, whether a small or large tonal shift A brief digression is called for here, to explain my concentration

will do in this study. examine a large operatic repertory in terms of this variable, as I its structure - though certainly not the only important one - and view the number of movements in an ensemble as a key aspect of more strongly than any other single element. One can therefore

a full action/expression cycle. Mozart's decisions - to divide the sextet into three movements, and to create a tutti at the end of the ongoing active dialogue. Instead Mozart makes a decisive tutti (in some but not all of the characters on stage, are often set within an first of these – make more distinct the two phases of the action, the the quartet portion of the ensemble contains not merely action but Despina, who repeats her lines 10–12 (see lines 20–22). As a result mm. 38-48): to the texture of the three male voices he adds to suggest an expressive tutti; but such remarks, when made by recognize us/them, there's nothing to fear." These lines may seem join Don Alfonso in singing "Now matters are settled; if she doesn't appearance of Ferrando and Guglielmo in disguise, the two men the first section, after Despina has responded laughingly to the as a single action/expression cycle, into two cycles. In lines 17–19 in Mozart's other change articulates the sextet, whose text can be read expression of feelings into an exciting and relatively lengthy stretta action. And a 2/2 Molto allegro begins at the final tutti, making that thus highlighting the separation between two distinct phases of the in common time changes to a 3/4 Allegro when the sisters enter, continuous movement but in three movements. The initial Allegro end (lines 38-46). Mozart, however, sets the sextet not as one passage in this part of the scene, just one for all six characters at the Dorabella not yet having entered. The text contains no tutti rhyme. In the first 25 lines only four characters sing, Fiordiligi and consists of 46 lines, 10 all in ottonario and relying on a single endalters Da Ponte's implied structure in two principal ways. The text In the sextet from Act I of Così fan tutte, we can see how Mozart

⁸ This would exclude, for example, calling a six-measure passage in a new tempo a This "multivalence" in Mozart's operas is discussed in Webster, "Analysis," pp. complete formal design." See Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony and the Idea of movement. I differ here from Webster, who argues for a distinction between Classical Style (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 186-87. "movements" and "sections" in which the former, unlike the latter, "articulate a 103-4 and passim

¹⁰ This includes three repeated lines, which I discuss below. The text is laid out as in the original printed libretto, which is reprinted in facsimile in Warburton, vol. 3,

first being the encounter of the disguised lovers with Despina and the second their meeting with the outraged sisters. 11

FIORDILIGI)		25	DON ALFONSO	DESPINA	DORABELLA)	FIORDILIGI)	\smile		20 DESPINA)	DON ALFONSO)	GUGLIELMO)	FERRANDO)	٠	15	DESPINA		DON ALFONSO		,	IO	DESPINA		Ŧ	GUGLIELMO)	5 FERRANDO) F	•	フ	•	DON ALFONSO A	Così fan tutte, Sextet No. 13
Ragazzaccia tracotante,		Fa con arte; io qui m'ascondo.	Ecco l'istante!	Le padrone!		Ehi Despinal olà Despinal	O se Turchi son costor.	Io non so se son Vallacchi,	Che figure! che mustacchi!	Non c'è più nessun timor.	Se costei non li/ci ravvisa,	Or la cosa è appien decisa;	Vero antidoto d'amor.	Hanno un muso fuor dell'uso,	Per parlarvi schietto, schietto,		Che ti par di quell'aspetto?	O se Turchi son costor.	Io non so se son Vallacchi,	Che figure! che mustacchi!	Che sembianze! che vestiti!	I begli occhi il mio tesor.	Fa che volga a me sereni	Per quei rai di grazie pieni,	Per la man che lieto io bacio,	Consolar il vostro cor.	Non dipende che da lei	Vi presento, amici miei;	Alla bella Despinetta	
	(Si ritira.)		(a Despina)		quinte)	(dentro le										Despina)	(piano a			ridendo)	(da se,			affetata)	(con tenerezza					

Tim Carter has also noted Mozart's overriding of the structure proposed by Da Ponte's poetry; he sees this sextet as an example of "Mozart's eagerness to form organization." "Mozart, Da Ponte and the Ensemble: Methods in explore . . . looser, more progressive structures . . . [as] alternatives to sonata-Progress?" in Sadie, Wolfgang Amade Mozart, p. 247.

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	45	•				40								35					w			
DON ALFONSO	5 DESPINA	FERRANDO	GUGLIELMO			0	FIORDILIGI	DORABELLA	à 6	FERRANDO	GUGLIELMO	DESPINA		5 DORABELLA	FIORDILIGI		DESPINA	GUGLIELMO	30 FERRANDO			DORABELLA
\smile	$\overline{}$	$\overline{}$	\smile				$\overline{}$	\smile		$\overline{}$	\smile	$\overline{}$		_	$\overline{}$		$\overline{}$	\smile	\smile			$\overline{}$
Quella rabbia e quel furor.	Mi dà un poco di sospetto	Quella rabbia e quel furor.	Qual diletto è a questo petto	Innocente è questo cor.	Ah perdon, mio bel diletto;	Di dispetto, e di furor.	Tutta piena ho l'alma in petto	Ah, che più non ho ritegno!				Deh calmate quello sdegno!	Chi fu mai l'indegno autor?	Dell' enorme tradimento,	Giusti numi! cosa sento?	Spasimanti adorator.	Due meschin, di vostro merito (s'inginocchiano)	Al bel piè languir mirate	Ah madame perdonate!	O ti fo pentir con lor.	Falli uscire immantinente,	Che fai lì con simil gente?

structure of the sextet reveals connections to procedures found rarely in opera, but quite often in instrumental music. porary composers typically did. And from these perspectives, the in fact, did do in other ensembles, but also in view of what contemmust be seen not only in light of what else he might have done, and, particular decisions Mozart made in that piece. These decisions Don Giovanni sextet, of course, since we are concerned with the

Vienna in 1781 and the composition of Don Giovanni, he had written instrumental music than opera buffa. 12 Between his move to Vienna, Mozart was much more experienced in the composition of not be a great shock. Unlike nearly all his operatic competitors in Finding a link to instrumental music in a Mozart opera should

¹² The only clear exception is Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, who succeeded in Vienna with German Singspiel but had little success in opera buffa.

and numerous other instrumental works. In this light it would be of Singspiel. 13 During the same period he had composed three symonly two full-scale operas, one of them in the quite different genre more surprising if his operas did not reflect the perspective of for violin and piano, six larger pieces of chamber music with piano, phonies, fifteen piano concertos, seven string quartets, ten sonatas instrumental music.

section is initially a duet and then a quartet, with quatrains for (ottonario, quinario at line 21, and ottonario again at line 43). The first organized in three distinct sections, each with its own poetic meter essary background for the points I address below. Da Ponte's text is sung tutti by the others (lines 39-42). The final section, back in demand his death, despite Elvira's pleas for mercy. After Leporello of Zerlina and Masetto, marked by the shift to quinario, does conmeant to continue directly into the next section. And the entrance the courtyard.14 This section has no closing tutti: the action is Donna Elvira, Leporello, Don Ottavio, and Donna Anna, in turn, discussion of the text and Mozart's setting of it can provide the necexcept for allowing Leporello to express his terror - add nothing provided to permit an extended, energetic musical conclusion to ottonario, is another expressive tutti with complementary words for reveals himself there follows a quatrain of shocked response to be tinue the action, as all confront the supposed Don Giovanni and followed by shorter utterances for the first two as they try to leave new to the dramatic situation the sextet, like the stretta of a typical act finale, since its words -Leporello and the other five characters. This second tutti is clearly I will not offer here a full-scale analysis of the sextet; but a brief

) Che m'a tradito!			
) Ah mora il perfido	<i>à</i> 4	25	
		DON OTTAVIO		
) Come era quà!	<i>d</i> 2		
) Ecco il fellone.	DONNA ANNA		
la faccia)	$\overline{}$	MASETTO		
(Lep. s'ascona) Dove ten vai!	<i>à</i> 2		
) Ferma, briccone,	ZERLINA		
		[QUINARIO]	nð]	
Mas.)				
in Zerl. e				
s'incontrano				
(Nel sortire) Cheto cheto io vo partir.		20	
) Una porta là veggio	<i>a</i> 2		
vista)		•		
senza esser				
(dalla porta	Se mi trova son perduto:	LEPORELLO		
vista)				
(senza esser	Ah dov' è lo sposo mio?	DONNA ELVIRA		
	Il mio pianto può finir.			
	Sola morte, o mio tesoro,		15	
	Questo picciolo ristoro,			
	Lascia almen alla mia pena	DONNA ANNA		
	Pena avrà de' tuoi martir.			
	L'ombra omai del genitore			
vestiti a lutto	E dà calma al tuo dolore,		IO	
(entrano	Tergi il ciglio, o vita mia,	DON OTTAVIO		
porta)				
(şbaglia la	Ecco il tempo di fuggir.			
	Piano, piano, l'ho trovata,			
	Questa porta sciagurata:			
	Più che cerco, men ritrovo	LEPORELLO	٦ı	
	Che mi sembra di morir.			
	E m'assale un tal spavento			
	Palpitar il cor mi sento,			
	Sola, sola in bujo loco,	DONNA ELVIRA		
		[OTTONARIO]	[0	
	19	Don Giovanni, Sextet No. 19	Dα	

lutto)

³ The two are Le nozze di Figaro (1786) and Die Entführung aus dem Serail (1782). Mozart also wrote a one-act Singspiel, Der Schauspieldirektor (1786), and made Mozart fully or partially drafted a total of ten numbers. false starts on two opere buffe: L'oca del Cairo and Lo sposo deluso. In these last two

¹⁴ These opening quatrains exemplify what Rabin calls the "Statements" phase of an ensemble (see n. 2 above), and what I have described as the first of two phases in the active dialogue

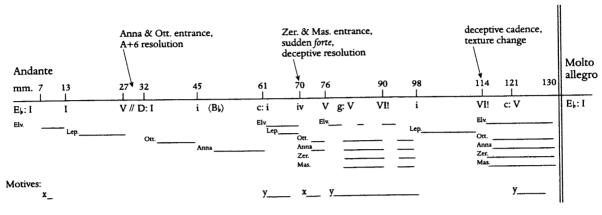
	DONNA ELVIRA	È mio marito,	
		Pietàl pietàl	
	DON OTTAVIO) È Donna Elvira	
30	ZERLINA) Quella ch'io vedo?	
	à 4) Appena il credo;	
	MASETTO) No no, morrà!	(in atto di
	DONNA ANNA		ucciderlo)
	LEPORELLO	Perdon perdono,	(Lep. si scopre,
		Signori miei,	e si mette
35		Quello io non sono.	in ginocchio
		Sbaglia costei;	davanti gli
		Viver lasciatemi	altri)
		Per caritàl	
	TUTTI $[a 5]$	Deil Leporello!	
40		Che inganno è questo;	
		Stupido/a resto,	
		Che mai sarà!	
[or	[OTTONARIO]		
		Mille torbidi pensieri	
		Mi s'aggiran per la testa;	
45		Che giornata, o stelle, è questal	
		Che impensata novità!	
	LEPORELLO	Mille torbidi pensieri	
		Mi s'aggiran per la testa;	
		Se mi salvo in tal tempesta	
20		È un prodigio in verità!	

ottonario to quinario, is not marked by a new tempo or meter Masetto, which accompanies a change of poetic meter from three suggested by the text. That is, the entrance of Zerlina and darkens as it progresses long, continuous, and foreboding movement whose atmosphere within the ongoing flow of the Andante. The brilliant result is a more subtly, not as a change of direction but as an interruption did not ignore Da Ponte's point of articulation; instead he treated it final tutti in ottonario, which is set as a Molto allegro. But Mozart Instead the initial Andante persists all the way to the start of the Mozart's setting comprises only two movements rather than the

> graphs for Elvira and Leporello into something quite gripping. tone of the ensemble from the rather conventional initial paraminor. Her music makes a remarkable transition, darkening the Ottavio sings in D, Anna in D minor modulating through B flat to C timpani - one of the most celebrated moments in the opera an augmented-sixth chord, supported by piano trumpets and Donna Anna follow, after a stunning modulation to D by means of cadencing in the dominant. The quatrains for Don Ottavio and Elvira) in the tonic and the second (for Leporello) moving to and manner typical of ensembles, Mozart set the first quatrain (for Arrows mark the principal points of foreground articulation. In a surprisingly its motivic and tonal relationships are quite complex -I have recorded here only those features relevant to my argument Figure 14.1 charts the course of the Andante movement. 15 Not

enter; all the characters become aware of one another for the first changes to quinario, with a new end-rhyme; Zerlina and Masetto joint couplet suggests a tutti a due, and thus a subsequent point of since Elvira and Leporello are speaking to themselves; and their time; and the central action of the ensemble begins – the discovery far more dramatic than Anna's conclusion at m. 61. The poetry closure in the text. Moreover, that textual articulation – at m. 70 – is has the end-rhyme; true dialogue cannot be said to be occurring, suggests one sort of change at m. 61: the series of opening quatrains logue. On the other hand, the initial ottonario has not changed, nor concludes, followed by the shorter exchanges characteristic of diam. 61 and those at m. 70. The organization of the text (see p. 387) This process involves ambiguous relations between the events at without a clear division of the movement into separate sections. second phase of the Andante without a big articulation and knits together various signs of beginning and ending, initiating a At m. 61, where Anna concludes, begins a passage that skillfully

My analysis borrows in part from one provided as Table 2 by Lawrence Schenbeck in a talk entitled "Ecco il fellone: Leporello as Picaresque Hero," February 9, 1991. presented at the Hofstra University Mozart Conference, Hempstead, NY,



of "Don Giovanni," followed by the revelation that he is actually Leporello.

Ottavio and Anna's quatrains terns played by appearance, contrasting strongly with the accompanimental pat recurs throughout mm. 61–130. This figure stands out from its first rhythm, played by strings alone (labeled y in Figure 14.1), which ately apparent is the chromatically descending figure in a dotted tonal stability can only be perceived retrospectively.) More immedi cadences, contrasts with the range of modulation earlier, not only latter key. This relative tonal stability, despite several deceptive minor and G minor, with the central segment (mm. 80–120) in the new phase in the movement.Tonally, mm. 61–130 stay close to C Measure 61 is marked tonally and motivically as the beginning of continuity, rather than decisively suggesting a break at either point multivalently with those in the text to create an overall Mozart's 27-28 but within Donna Anna's quatrain. (Of course such musical the strings (with woodwind support) during creates musica

at m. ously cadential tutti a due for Leporello and Elvira (which rhymes moving musical atmosphere that prevailed before their entrance. statement, are palpably pulled back into the suspenseful, slower perceived meter also suggests an interruption: mm. 70–76 seem to cally more as an interruption than as a new section. This is confirmed thing new from the point of view of the stage action – is treated musi features Zerlina's and Masetto's entrance – clearly the start of some orchestral motive from early in the movement (x). Yet despite these insist on 4/4, while measure 76 returns to the 2/2 feeling of the rest of figure (y), which controls the music for the next 22 measures. The towards F minor, a sudden *forte* outburst, and the reappearance of an 70 itself is marked by a deceptive resolution, a momentary inflection musically with Leporello's earlier cadence at mm. 25–27). Measure lighted musically in several ways. First, it is preceded by the obvi The moment of Zerlina's and Masetto's entrance (m. 70) is high 76 by the return both of the piano dynamic and of the dotted The newly arrived characters, after their angry initial

sion of shock at Leporello's unmasking (mm. 114ff.), is likewise a pattern. 16 The strong deceptive cadence and new orchestral texture momentary interruption contained within the ongoing motivic although mm. 114–30 serve as a brief shock tutti, 17 their separation grated by the return of the controlling dotted figure at m. 121. So monies in the following seven measures, are subsequently re-inteat m. 114, marked also by dynamic changes and chromatic harwhat might be called "atmospheric" continuity throughout this instead, Mozart has used various means to maintain musical and created two distinct movements, with the change coming at m. 70: ture of the text to this point, a composer would normally have from the preceding music is carefully minimized. Given the struclong Andante. The last important articulation in the Andante, the tutti expres-

chatter frantically in eighth-note patter, while the other five characfinale, above all the consistent textural device of having Leporello movement has much in common with the final stretta of the Act I vigorous opening in E flat, the tonic key of the sextet. This stretta begins the Molto allegro, from a half cadence in C minor to the both Leporello and Don Giovanni sing the patter). ters sing together and generally in much longer notes (in the finale Separation is maximized, though, by the sudden tonal shift that

suggested by the libretto. The second, discussed below, involves the cedures of instrumental music. The first involves the division of effective, the other clumsy and unconvincing – as related to the protonal shift from V/vi to I. the piece into only two movements, rather than the three clearly two of Mozart's compositional decisions - one of these very Mozart's experience as a composer of instrumental music? I see How does this brief analysis of the form of the sextet suggest

those found in instrumental music. while fewer movements make possible the use of formal plans like in an ensemble might offer advantages in terms of operatic drama Giovanni's seduction. Generally speaking, then, more movements coincides with and confirms Zerlina's capitulation to Don opera. For example, in "Là ci darem la mano" the change to 6/8 ical progression, both of which are of prime importance in an can suggest or highlight changed circumstances or even psychologfar less likely. On the other hand, new movements in an ensemble an ensemble is in a different tempo or meter, such a double return is and the initial thematic material can occur. If the latter portion of at least one in which a highly articulated double return of the tonic movement allow for the possibility of a sonata-like formal plan, or different tempos or meters. 18 Moreover, ensembles in a single instrumental movement, which only rarely has multiple sections in ments enhances continuity; it also makes an ensemble more like an movements in an ensemble? In general, a smaller number of move-What factors might lead a composer to create more or fewer

ensembles in the Da Ponte operas contain strikingly fewer move operas and in nineteen works by other composers. 19 Mozart's upon information about the ensembles in Mozart's three Da Ponte between his works and those by other composers. Here I draw contemporaries enables one to make meaningful comparisons Examining a substantial number of operas by Mozart's Viennese

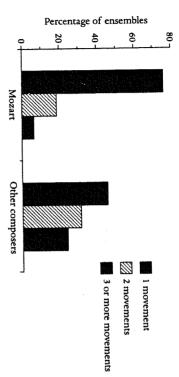
The lapse of dramatic realism at this moment – since Leporello sings for a full 16 Original was Mozart? Evidence from Opera Buffa," EM 20 (1992), 113-15. measures before the others react in shock - is discussed in John Platoff, "How

¹⁷ For a discussion of the shock tutti see Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure,"

The sonata-form first movement with slow introduction is an obvious exception

¹⁹ In pursuing this line of research, I have developed a data-base containing giorno, Il talismano, and La cifra; Salieri/Casti, La grotta di Trofonio; Sarti/an demogorgone; Rust/Mazzolà, Il marito indolente; Salieri/Da Ponte: Il ricco d'un Democrito corretto; Gazzaniga/Da Ponte, Il finto cieco; Martin y Soler/Da Ponte: Il operas included in this study are: Bárta/?Bussani (after Goldoni), Il mercato di Mozart and his contemporaries - performed in Vienna during the 1780s. In all, information on each musical number in over two dozen opere buffe - by both malcontenti; Storace/Da Ponte, Gli equivoci; Weigl/Mazzolà, Il pazzo per forza barbiere di Siviglia; Paisiello/Casti, Il re Teodoro in Venezia; Righini/Da Ponte, Il burbero di buon cuore, Una cosa rara, and L'arbore di Diana; Paisiello/Petrosellini, Il Malmantile; Cimarosa/Bertati, Il matrimonio segreto; Dittersdorf/Brunati, the data-base comprises more than 700 musical numbers. The non-Mozart

contemporaries Figure 14.2 Number of movements in ensembles: Mozart and his Viennese



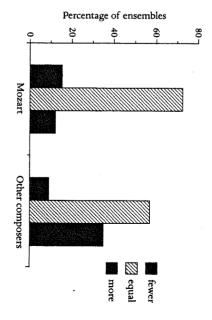
34) have more than two movements, compared to 24 percent for composers. Conversely only 6 percent of Mozart's ensembles (2 of prise a single movement, compared to only 45 percent for other may be seen in Figure 14.2. 76 percent of Mozart's ensembles comsquare test, are significant at the 1 percent level, meaning that the other composers. These differences, analyzed by means of a Chiments than those in the operas of his Viennese contemporaries, as movements purely by happenstance is less than 1 in 100.20 likelihood of Mozart's ensembles having this pattern of fewer

percent of the time (in 5 numbers), while other composers did this can also compare Mozart's response to the texts of his ensembles by cues in the libretto - above all by changes of poetic meter - we even more rarely (9 percent). But only 12 percent of the time did fewer movements in an ensemble than there were poetic meters 15 with the practices of his contemporaries (Figure 14.3). Mozart used Since composers typically were guided in subdividing ensembles

The Chi-square test is a common measure of the degree of independence given result occurring by chance is less than .05 (or .01); that is, if it would occur between two variables in a population. Very simply, the test gives a measure of fewer than five times (or once) in a hundred result is usually considered to be statistically significant if the probability of the with one, two, or three or more sections - might occur simply by chance. A the likelihood that the given distribution - here, the frequency of ensembles

22

Mozart and his Viennese contemporaries Figure 14.3 Number of movements in ensembles vs. number of poetic meters:

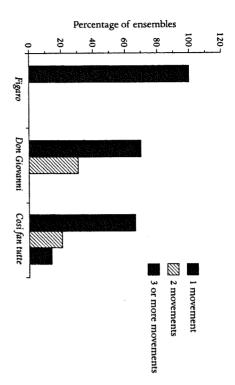


bles. The differences in Figure 14.3 are significant at the 5 percent while other composers did this in over one-third of their ensem-Mozart create more movements than there were poetic meters,

with the final tutti making a last reprise of one of the principal or meter clearly creates a more instrumentally organized piece, opening duet, Mozart's suppression of a potential change of tempo poetic meters. One of these is the Act III sextet; in the other, the movement,²² even though two of them feature texts with two 14.5). The nine ensembles of Le nozze di Figaro are all in a single approach in each of the three Da Ponte operas (Figures 14.4 and This analysis can be carried a bit further by examining Mozart's

- conform to his musical plan for setting them. in Table 1. On the other hand, Mozart did not frequently overrule his librettist in This means of course that the differences are less strongly suggestive than those he surely collaborated with Da Ponte to produce ensemble texts that would Mozart worked extensively with his librettists in the creation of their texts, and either direction - note that Mozart and Da Ponte "agreed" 73 percent of the time, compared to just 57 percent for other composers and their librettists.
- See above for a definition of "movement" as I use it here. This is not to say that passage of accompanied recitative in the Act I trio of Le nozze di Figaro, "Cosa there are no important articulations in these ensembles; see for example the

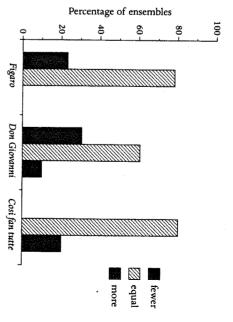
Figure 14.4 Number of movements in ensembles: Mozart's three Da Ponte operas



more movements than poetic meters.²⁶ These somewhat over-It is also striking that Cosi fan tutte contains three ensembles with the other five include pieces with three and even four movements. 25 But the picture is quite different in Così fan tutte, written more than darem," has more movements than poetic meters (see Figure 14.5). written in a single movement. Only one piece in the opera, "Là ci o misera," despite also having a text with three poetic meters, is textual points of articulation.²⁴ The first-act quartet, "Non ti fidar, (the introduzione and our sextet) - there too Mozart suppresses of the two-movement pieces have texts with three poetic meters bles are in a single movement and three in two movements, but two themes of the ensemble. 23 In Don Giovanni seven of the ten ensemtwo years later. While ten of its ensembles use a single movement,

- 23 See n. 7 above. Of course, this does not mean that the decision is not operatic characterization. Any such choice can be made for various reasons, and dramatically effective, or that it was not made at least in part for reasons of have various effects.
- The other ensemble in two movements is "Là ci darem."
- 25 II. The three two-movement ensembles are the Fiordiligi/Dorabella duet in Act These are, respectively, the Act I sextet and the Fiordiligi/Ferrando duet in Act I, the quintet and chorus in Act I, "Di scrivermi ogni giorno!" and the Act II quartet "La mano a me date."
- 26 These are the sisters' duet in Act I, the Act I sextet, and the Fiordiligi/Ferrando duet

Mozart's three Da Ponte operas Figure 14.5 Number of movements in ensembles vs. number of poetic meters:



cerned with the kinds of formal issues that are central in instrureflect a more purely operatic approach by Mozart, one less consimplified criteria suggest that the ensembles in Così fan tutte may mental music.

number of ensembles, and significantly they are all in Le nozze di sonata-form or sonata-form-like structures in Mozart's operas sonata form in Mozart's ensembles. Those critics eager to find Figaro or Don Giovanni. 27 The absence from their lists of any ensem (most notably Kerman and Charles Rosen) have cited only a limited This suggestion is bolstered by the history of the search for

1972), pp. 290–302; Carter, "Figaro", pp. 88–104. See also Carter, "Mozart, Da Rosen, The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven (1971; New York: Viking, sonata form in Mozart's operas, see, e.g., Kerman, Opera as Drama, pp. 63-68; Figaro cited above, which is in a two-part, exposition-recapitulation form. On taci, ingiusto core." To this list should be added the Act II trio from Le nozze di Don Giovanni writers have cited, besides the present sextet, the trio in Act II, "Ah Unity", COJ 2 [1990–91], 205-7, and John Platoff, "Tonal Organization in 'Buffo' sextet in Act III, along with the Act II finale, well-known for its allegedly sonata-The examples in Le nozze di Figaro include the Act I trio, "Cosa sento," and the Ponte and the Ensemble," p. 249. Finales and the Act II Finale of 'Le nozze di Figaro'", M&L, 72 [1991], 387-403). In like tonal shape (but see Webster, "Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical

useful explanatory concept even for musical numbers in Le nozze di bles from Cosi fan tutte corroborates the view that Mozart has could be described, even with somewhat tortured logic, in sonata Mozart's structures have moved further away from any design that Figaro or Don Giovanni. Rather, the point is that in Così fan tutte, This is not to say, incidentally, that sonata-form is a particularly moved in that work away from instrumentally influenced thinking

writing instrumental music. This is not in itself a bad thing: the compositional thinking has been influenced by his experience in ate their effects in each individual case. specific aspect. But it is relevant, in seeking to understand why of it, is not linked to any value judgment about the piece or the connection to instrumental music in this sextet, or in some aspect most gripping passages in the opera. More generally, finding a Andante movement is a brilliant achievement, creating one of the linking of so many disparate dramatic elements in the long ments, then, can be viewed as one possible sign that Mozart's Mozart did what he did, to explore all possible influences and evalu-The organization of the Don Giovanni sextet into only two move-

a half-cadence in the relative minor to the tonic at the start of the music in the sextet is the dramatic and highly articulated shift from accomplishes this return by means of a tonal shift extremely rare in returns to and closes in its original tonic key, a practice nearly uni-Molto allegro. The issue is not, of course, that the ensemble pret the return in the sextet, though, the ensembles of Mozart's terms) of the tonal issues earlier in the sextet. 28 However we intermovement as a kind of recapitulation or resolution (in sonata return the principles of sonata form, and views the lengthy second instrumental writing. Rosen, incorrectly in my view, sees in this the operatic repertory of his time, though it is familiar enough in versal in late eighteenth-century opera. It is rather that Mozart The second manifestation of a connection to instrumental

> significance. 29 is necessary, the moment of return need not be of any particular articulated manner, making clear that while an ending in the tonic frequently return to the tonic in a more routine and less highly contemporaries show far less concern for such resolutions: they

immediately or after a brief transition. nant, and is followed by the final movement in the tonic, either ing ensembles the penultimate movement cadences in the domireturn like that in most instrumental forms. In most of the remain movement marks a point of rhythmic articulation, but not a tonal return to the tonic key has already occurred; the start of the last the tonic, with either a full or a half-cadence. In other words, the these, however, this follows a penultimate movement that closes in examined, the last movement begins in the tonic; in over half of In about 90 percent of the multi-movement ensembles I have

instrumental music.31 who was, like Mozart, an experienced and talented composer of Righini, and the other three from Democrito corretto by Dittersdorf all five are by just two composers: two are from operas by Vincenzo times, 30 I have found only five examples in ensembles or finales, and Apart from Don Giovanni, where it occurs no fewer than three as are returns following a half-cadence in any key besides the tonic.) highly articulated returns to I from any key besides V are quite rare, tonic is extremely rare in this repertory. (In fact, conspicuous or In short, the V/vi-I shift by which Mozart's sextet returns to the

slow movement is in the relative minor, and may close on its domiare, of course, not hard to find. In many Baroque concertos, the V/vi to I – whether within a movement or between movements -If we search outside the operatic repertory, tonal shifts from

This is also true in many arias, as I have argued elsewhere: see John Platoff, "The Buffa Aria in Mozart's Vienna," COJ 2 (1990), 105–16.

The other two cases besides the sextet are discussed below.

In all, these five examples - four are in ensembles and one in a finale - come as in the Don Giovanni sextet three of them does the shift to the tonic occur at the start of the last movement from over 550 transitions between sections of an ensemble or finale; and in only

²⁸ Rosen, The Classical Style, p. 301.

followed by recapitulations that begin back in the tonic.33 numerous examples of development sections concluding on V/vi above all that of J. S. Bach, is not hard to make. But a source closer produces exactly the juxtaposition found in Mozart's sextet. 32 And nant. The start of the succeeding movement back in the tonic key to home for this tonal shift is the Classic sonata form: there are the case for Mozart's familiarity with Baroque instrumental music

a return to the stability and familiarity of the beginning. In such a shift, confirming that it really does go back to the tonic. In addition, double return the thematic return clarifies the meaning of the tonal accompanied by the restatement of the opening theme, represents context. In a sonata-form movement the return from V/vi to I, move functions in an operatic as opposed to an instrumenta operatic context the shift is a surprise. There is no thematic return. tion as a half-cadence in a fully established local tonic. But in an through a series of rapid modulations; it does not normally func-V/vi has been heard as a "point of furthest remove," 34 arrived at It is crucial to recognize, however, how differently this tonal

- 32 Examples include such familiar works as the Bach Brandenburg concertos Nos. 1. ${\mathfrak z}$ (with just two chords standing between the outer movements, clearly implying some sort of improvisation on a Phrygian cadence to V/vi), and 4. In the sixth Brandenburg the slow movement also concludes on V/vi, even though most of in Opp. 3 and 4 alone (Op. 3 Nos. 2, 6, and 8; Op. 4 Nos. 1, 4, 7, 9, and 10). the movement is in IV. Looking at Corelli's trio sonatas, one finds eight examples
- Among others, see the first movement of the Dittersdorf Symphony in C Major Symphony in E flat of 1783 (cited by Rosen in Sonata Forms [New York: Norton 64, No. 6 (cited by Webster in "Sonata Form," The New Grove Dictionary of from Haydn's symphonies. See also the first movement of Haydn's Quartet Op. juxtaposition at the point of recapitulation and cites a number of examples к. 199. Webster, Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony, pp. 134-45, discusses the V/vi-l thread. Mozart adopts this approach in the Presto finale of the Symphony in G, notes by unaccompanied first violins providing the slightest possible connecting Symphony No. 85 in B flat, "La Reine," does virtually the same thing, with two by the start of the recapitulation in the tonic. The first movement of Haydn's development leads to a prominent half-cadence on V/vi, followed after a rest (publ. 1785), the first of his set based on Ovid's Metamorphoses. The Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie, vol. 17, p. 502) and Michael Haydn's
- See Leonard Ratner, Classical Music: Expression, Form, and Style (New York: Schirmer, 1980), p. 226.

much different and perhaps even unintended effect in this context. sextet seems to employ a procedure from sonata form, but it has a because of the solid dominant preparation. In short, Mozart's to prepare the stretta in the same key. The stretta begins with a which the finale opened – most listeners cannot hear that – but in C (mm. 526-32), with something of the same introductory topos, manages to escape"). 35 There Mozart wrote a massive half-cadence feeling of tonal stability and solidity, not because it is the key in both instances the villain is discovered and confronted, but expectations; it has an effect not of resolution, as asserted by Waldoff notes, the two movements are "parallel dramatically . . . in the similar stretta movement that ends the finale to Act I (as Jessica Rosen, but of misdirection. Consider by contrast the approach to is a contradiction of the listener's (or at least this listener's) tonal major). The leap from the dominant of C minor to the key of E flat clearly expected is a fast continuation in C minor (or perhaps C that of a slow introduction to an instrumental Allegro: what is Moreover the topos of these measures (above all in mm. 127-30) is Andante movement; it is a well-established key in mm. 121-30 Mozart's sextet. C minor has controlled a good part of the lengthy the shift as a tonal return, either. In fact just the reverse is true in material heard before. And there may be no reason to understand since the new movement following the shift does not restate

Leporello's unmasking has already elicited a shocked response from of the Andante and the start of the Molto allegro. As we have seen, prising events. 36 But in the sextet nothing happens between the end down a fifth) from more distant, usually chromatic ones, with the as I have shown elsewhere, Mozart and other composers dislatter serving to mark new phases of the action or to highlight surtinguished routine tonal moves between movements (usually up or for by the dramatic situation? This is plausible in principle; in finales, Might we argue that this tonal misdirection in the sextet is called

See her essay elsewhere in this volume. She also points out the similarity of Leporello's lines in the sextet stretta to those of Giovanni in the stretta of the Act 36 See Platoff, "Tonal Organization in 'Buffo' Finales," pp. 390-93.

the other characters, with an appropriate musical reaction, in mm typical of stretta movements. So the claim that a surprising change passage as a whole, but in the deceptive resolution and change of of key is dramatically appropriate here is unconvincing. 37 instead expressing the sort of conventionalized consternation texture in m. 114. The text of the Molto allegro changes nothing 114-30. Their shock is signaled not only in the seventeen-measure

Giovanni where Mozart uses the same tonal shift: once in each of a surprise. Instead it stands - ineffectively in my view - at the point coincides with an event that, if not surprising to the audience, is at statue of the Commendatore is coming. Here too the tonal surprise see why Donna Elvira screamed, returns in terror to say that the finale the same shift, from V/d to F, occurs when Leporello, sent to one might say - that justifies the surprising tonal move. In the Act I assailant. This is a surprise - a bit of misdirection by Don Giovanni, Giovanni emerges, unexpectedly claiming that Leporello was her movement in F when, with everyone rushing to Zerlina's aid, Don the end of the finale to Act I, a half-cadence in D minor leads to a between movements anywhere in the other Da Ponte operas.) Near the two finales. (As I have indicated, Mozart never used this shift home key.38 If my claim about the borrowing of this tonal shift served to make the beginning of the E-flat stretta sound like the where a more typical dominant preparation would have better tonal shift does not coincide with a new phase of the action or with least out of the ordinary! But in the sextet, as we have seen, the This is especially true by contrast to the two other places in Don

here undermines it instead. that the gesture, which indicates tonal resolution in that context, from an instrumental context is correct, there is an irony in the fact

than light comedy. 40 stretta seems to admit, is after all no place for anything deeper lenges presented by the Andante. An opera buffa ensemble, the does not seem up to the task of adequately dealing with the chal that far more than a comic juxtaposition is at stake. In other patter) reinforces the hypothesis that a comic juxtaposition, rather stylistic levels (with the 'low' characterizaton of Leporello's comic words, and as I suggested at the outset, Mozart's stretta simply others on stage."39 Yet as we have seen, the Andante surely insists than a real clash, is taking place between the servant and the nessed; in Sergio Durante's words "the introduction of two mine the importance of the dark experiences we have just wittone, the conventional stretta gestures of the movement underthe penultimate and final movements of the Act I finale.) As for its (Compare again the logical and persuasive relationship between quential, less related to the shocking revelation that precedes it. key-change makes the reaction in the stretta sound non-conseme, both the key and the tone of this stretta are misjudged. The musical treatment in a movement like the Molto allegro. But to significant recognition scenes than this one often receive lengthy expression, and that m. 114-30 have not been nearly sufficient. In the musical world of eighteenth-century opera buffa, far less nonetheless true that their shock requires time for adequate ticularly to our understanding of the characters' feelings - it is new action takes place in it - and while its words do not add par-I am not arguing that the stretta itself is unnecessary. While no

³⁷ Elsewhere in this volume (p. 336, n. 47), Sergio Durante argues that the tonal shift is "an appropriate parallel to the stage situation." But he is wrong in claiming that "until the cadence [at m. 130], five characters have been addressing particular, just like the words they sing in the stretta. Giovanni/Leporello": their words clearly express shock addressed to no one in

In rejecting Rosen's sonata-form view of the sextet, Julian Rushton makes the of Opera, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: MacMillan, 1992), vol. 3, p. 494 though such a procedure would have been." "Mozart," The New Grove Dictionary same if it ended in C rather than E flat major, a licence the harmonic situation extraordinary statement that "the dramatic effect [of the sextet] would be the before the Allegro (a dominant of C minor) would certainly permit, exceptional

See his essay elsewhere in this volume, text corresponding to his n. 47

⁴⁰ Waldoff makes the insightful point that the sextet "is in part a comic enactment Giovanni" (trans. Peter Gellhorn) (London: Eulenburg, 1976), pp. 105-12. denouement at the end of Act I." (See p. 303.) This may be part of the explanation of the recognition scene yet to come and in part a repetition of the thwarted unsuccessful. For a more admiring view see Hermann Abert, Mozart's "Don for its mixture of the serious and the conventionally comic, a mixture I find

great composers, Mozart was one of the most interested in the putting it in a larger context. There is ample evidence that, of all the Burgtheater. All the more crucial, then, that we study these operas what other opera composers in Vienna were doing, and what the composers and their works; and there is every reason to view his Da rehearsals. We know a great deal about his opinions of other his attendance at concerts and operatic performances and music of his contemporaries. Letters and other documents attest to to indicate what can be learned about Mozart's operatic music by sextet that I hope will be persuasive or at least provocative, has been My goal in this paper, beyond presenting a view of the Don Giovanni other operatic works, that Mozart brought to the composing of with the same broad musical perspective, the same knowledge of Viennese public liked to see and hear on the stage of the Ponte operas as having been written with a keen understanding of

sufficient evidence to warrant considering the matter further Giovanni, while this influence has diminished in importance by the corollary to this hypothesis is the claim that the connection to some of Mozart's musical choices in his Da Ponte operas reveal tion: since it is accepted scholarly practice to cite "operatic" ele-And, for those inclined to reject it out of hand, I close with a quespaper as having proved the proposition, there seems to be time of Così fan tutte. 41 Although I certainly do not regard this instrumental music is strongest in Le nozze di Figaro and Don the influence of his experience as an instrumental composer. A ments in Mozart's instrumental music, 42 why should we be Considering the sextet in this way has led to the hypothesis that

the opposite direction?⁴³ surprised to discover evidence of musical connections running in

H. C. Robbins Landon, ed., The Mozart Compendium (New York: Schirmer, 1990) pp. 254, 345; Rosen, The Classical Style, pp. 226-67; Robert Levin, "Concertos," in Girdlestone, Mozart and his Piano Concertos, 2nd edn. (London: Cassell, 1958), Nathan Broder (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), pp. 305, 309; Cuthbert

43 My thanks to Janet M. Levy, Leonard B. Meyer, Ruth R. Montgomery and Ronald J. Rabin for intellectual and technical advice.

Cf. Carter, "Mozart, Da Ponte and the Ensemble," p. 249: "If Figaro is an eminently 'instrumental' opera, Così is eminently operatic."

⁴² See for example Reinhard Strohm, "Merkmale italienischer Versvertonung in others Albert Einstein, Mozart: His Character, his Work, trans. Arthur Mendel and abound particularly in discussions of Mozart's piano concertos: see among Italien" (Rom 1974) (AnM, vol. 18 [1978]) pp. 219-36. References to opera buffa style Mozarts Klavierkonzerten," in Friedrich Lippmann, ed., Colloquium "Mozart und