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Opera buffa in Mozart's Vienna

Edited by Mary Hunter and James Webster



13 | Understanding opera buffa: analysis = interpretation

James Webster

In the mid-1980s, the analysis of operatic music was catapulted into musicological discourse as a central issue, notably with the publication of *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner*.¹ Not surprisingly, the approaches were decidedly mixed: some contributors adopted or adapted methods that for generations had been applied to “absolute” instrumental music; others, notably Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, sharply criticized such methods and called for new ones.²

Today, such revisionist stances have become the norm in operatic studies. However else they may differ, most if not all scholars of eighteenth-century opera would agree on the following theses: (1) The eighteenth-century operatic “work” was multifarious and contingent. An opera had multiple authors, including not only the composer, but also the impresario, librettist and stage-director,³ set-designer, and especially the principal singers, whose “performative” activity centrally defined the experience of the work.⁴ By the same token, an opera had no fixed text; it was always subject to change, whether through substitution of arias more to singers’

liking, or wholesale revision in new productions.⁵ (2) Opera’s mutability is not merely a matter of what happened two hundred years ago. An opera is a dramatic action; it lives not only through music, but also plot, characterization, staging, ideational content, and so forth. Hence, although any operatic number can indeed be analyzed, its form – that is, the resolution of one’s analytical results into a coherent image that can be described in prose or represented in a diagram, or that seems to exemplify a well-defined type – remains fluid and contingent.⁶ (3) In addition, operatic numbers must be interpreted. Our sense of the meaning of a given number depends not only on analytical results but also, again, on many other things that cannot be analyzed in any ordinary sense;⁷ which character sings it and with what motivation, the dramatic context, how it is performed; and beyond, to the role it plays in our view of the work as a whole.⁸ (4) All eighteenth-century operas (including Mozart’s) were composed and understood in the context of powerful conventions of genre; today as well, an adequate knowledge of the generic context is essential for understanding.⁹ (5) As public,

¹ Ed. Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); see especially the editors’ introduction. These essays, like those in the present volume, originated as contributions to an international conference at Cornell University (held in 1984; hence the phrase “mid-1980s”).

² My contribution to the same conference was likewise of mixed character, although my main concern was not so much the putative differences between operatic and instrumental analysis as the lack of analytical attention to Mozart’s operas. It was published as “To Understand Verdi and Wagner We Must Understand Mozart,” *19CM* 11 (1987–88), 175–93.

³ On the librettist’s function as stage-director, see Hertz, *Mozart’s Operas*, ch. 5.
⁴ On the importance of singers and especially their performative function, see, for example, Hertz, “When Mozart Revises: Guglielmo in *Così*,” in Sadie, *Wolfgang Amadé Mozart*, pp. 155–61, as well as his essay in this volume; Mary Hunter, *The Poetics of Entertainment: Opera Buffa in Vienna, 1770–1790* (Princeton University Press, forthcoming), ch. 3.

⁵ This applied to Mozart no less than to other composers. The 1789 revival of *Le nozze di Figaro* included substitutions for both of Susanna’s arias, in order to accommodate Adriana Ferrarese (who also created the role of Fiordiligi), while the differences between the 1787 Prague and 1788 Vienna productions of *Don Giovanni* (neither of which corresponds to the current standard version) continue to exercise scholars and critics; see the debate between Wolfgang Rehm and Stefan Kunze as to whether the original (Prague) version should count as the (only) “authentic” one, in “Don Giovanni”: Prag 1787 – Wien 1788–1987,” *MfB*, 1987–88, pp. 195–221; see also the articles by Michael F. Robinson and Jessica Waldo in this volume.

⁶ For a comprehensive methodological discussion see Webster, “Analysis.”
⁷ Admittedly, the import of “ordinary” can be contested; for an expansive view of operatic analysis, notably as regards semiotic and dramaturgical aspects, see Sergio Durant’s important methodological essay in this volume.

⁸ This is not to endorse the older view that an eighteenth-century number-opera can be profitably analyzed as a whole, as in Siegmund Levarie’s notorious representation of an entire work as a single four-chord progression; see his *Mozart’s “Le nozze di Figaro”*, *A Critical Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 233–45.

⁹ John Platoff, *Mozart and Opera Buffa in Vienna, 1783–1791* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming); see also the introduction to this volume.

theatrical events, operas both reflected and created social meanings, more directly than instrumental music ever could.¹⁰

For all these reasons (the consensus runs), the study of operatic music must be *contextualized*. Operas are fundamentally different from works of absolute music, a category dependent on the concepts of the perfect, timeless artwork and the single, visionary author of genius.¹¹ Not only the methods associated with the analysis of absolute music, but the very traditions and ideologies that animate and sustain such analysis – notably their grounding in the search for unity – are seen as suspect in the multifarious and contingent (and therefore contested) worlds of opera.¹² Hence operatic analysts must develop new, “idiomatic” methods; in particular, they must avoid the uncritical use of terms and concepts drawn from traditional instrumental analysis.¹³

However, despite its virtues this new consensus seems to me in some important respects problematical.¹⁴ In this essay I will inter-

rogate it in two ways: by attempting to deconstruct the binary opposition between “instrumental” and “operatic” analysis, and by raising the issue of value.¹⁵

To begin with the latter: recent writings on opera buffa have tended to avoid explicit value-judgments. The reason (I would speculate) is not so much mere cultural correctness, as the inherent tension between their focus on contextualization and the inescapable presence of Mozart. This binary opposition, “Mozart vs. the ‘others,’” is one of the most powerful in musicological culture.¹⁶ Even the most knowledgeable and sympathetic students of this repertory treat Mozart as a special, privileged case.¹⁷ Similarly, the great majority of detailed analyses of later eighteenth-century Italian opera have been devoted, not to Piccini, Salieri, Paisiello, or Cimarosa, but to Mozart and Haydn. (As an operatic “other” to Mozart, Haydn is the exception who proves the rule: although analyses of his operas continue to proliferate,¹⁸ his status as a musical dramatist remains uncertain. Presumably, the analyses have come into being because of both his privileged position in the canon and the sheer availability of his music; however,

10 Martha Feldman, “Magic Mirrors and the Serial Stage: Thoughts towards a Ritual View,” *JAMS* 48 (1995), 423–84; Hunter, *The Poetics of Entertainment*, chs. 1–2.

11 Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). The classic postmodern problematizations of author and artwork are Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image – Music – Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 142–48; “From Work to Text,” *ibid.*, pp. 155–64, and in Josué V. Harari, ed., *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 73–81; Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” *ibid.*, pp. 141–60; see also Jacques Derrida, “Parergon,” in *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 15–147; “Restitutions of the Truth in Pointing [pointure],” *ibid.*, pp. 255–382. For an incisive summary see Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), ch. 2.

12 See Abbate and Parker, *Analyzing Opera* (n. 1).

13 Among eighteenth-century scholars Platoff in particular has repeatedly insisted on the latter difference; see his article in this volume.

14 I say this notwithstanding the unity-bashing in my polemical “Mozart’s Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity,” *COJ* 2 (1990), 197–218, and the fluidity of formal interpretation in my “Analysis” (“Any notion of the ‘analysis’ of a Mozart aria is a chimera”; “In many Mozart arias, the ‘form’ does not exist”; pp. 105, 122). The key word is “uncritical” (at the end of the preceding paragraph); about the continuing centrality of analysis to operatic understanding there can be no doubt.

15 The most penetrating musical discussion of value remains Dahlhaus, *Analysis and Value Judgment*, trans. Siegmund Levarie (New York: Pendragon, 1983).

16 It has been especially characteristic of German-language scholarship (and Anglo-American scholarship dependent on it), which has favored nationalistic and idealistic interpretation of Mozart’s operas as having “transcended” the Italianate “models” that “prepared” them. A variant of this attitude, transferred to the realm of drama in general, can be seen in Paolo Gallarati’s essay elsewhere in this volume, while most of the remaining contributions either problematize, or contextualize, the issue of Mozart vs. the “others.”

17 For example, Platoff, “How Original Was Mozart? Evidence from opera buffa,” *EM* 20 (1992), 105–17.

18 Reinhard Strohm, “Zur Metrik in Haydns und Anfossis ‘La vera costanza,’” in Eva Badura-Skoda, ed., *Joseph Haydn: Bericht über den internationalen Joseph Haydn Kongress Wien . . . 1982* (Munich: Henle, 1986), pp. 279–94; Hunter, “Haydn’s Sonata-Form Arias,” *CM* 37/38 (1984), pp. 19–32; Hunter, “Text, Music and Drama in Haydn’s Italian Opera Arias: Four Case Studies,” *JM* 7 (1989), 29–57; Caryl Leslie Clark, “The Opera Buffa Finales of Joseph Haydn,” PhD diss., Cornell University, 1991; Regina Wochnik, *Die Musiksprache in den opere semiserie Joseph Haydns unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von L’incanto improvviso* (Eisenach-Hamburg: Wagner, 1993); Rebecca Green, “Power and Patriarchy in Haydn’s Goldoni Operas,” PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1995.

these advantages derive not from the prestige of his operas, but from that of his instrumental music, supplemented by the *Creation* and the late masses.) In short, notwithstanding their common opposition to the bad old traditions of opera criticism, the calls for close analysis and those for contextualization have so far been motivated by different concerns and have had little effect on each other.¹⁹

In what follows, I will attempt to bring these two new traditions into a more nearly explicit relation, by undertaking a close analysis of a number by a buffa composer other than Mozart or Haydn: an aria from Salieri's opera buffa *La locandiera* ("The Innkeeper", Vienna, 1773).²⁰ I selected it from no other motive than that it appealed to me greatly during a recent survey of *opere buffe*, based on available recordings, undertaken pursuant to the conference from which the present volume emerged.²¹ The choice seemed propitious in other ways as well. From an institutional point of view, Salieri was the key figure in Viennese opera during Mozart's time: he was active there more or less continuously from the late 1760s into the nineteenth century, and as *Hofkapellmeister* exercised immense influence throughout the period.²² *La locandiera* dates from the first flowering of Viennese opera buffa, a period associated primarily with Florian Leopold

Gassmann and the young Salieri himself; it was contemporaneous with Haydn's *L'infedeltà delusa* and preceded Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* by only two years. It thus exemplifies an important and relatively little studied stage of buffa history in the Habsburg realm.²³

Finally, my aria has numerous points of contact with others, including some by Mozart, so that a comparative discussion will be possible. However, in contrast to the usual practice when comparing Mozart to his contemporaries, I will not assume that the differences necessarily signify Salieri's inferiority. This will entail (among other things) an attempt to separate out those aspects of Mozart's musical virtuosity that can be analyzed – the qualification is essential – from his other, "operatic" virtues. This distinction will clarify some of the (often unconscious) presuppositions that govern the belief in Mozart's operatic superiority, and will thus pose the issue of value in a novel manner. But since most analytical practice relates specifically to traditions of instrumental music, this questioning of the primacy of analysis in an operatic context will also cast doubt on the supposed general distinction between operatic and instrumental analysis.²⁴ What these two issues – the problem of value and operatic vs. instrumental analysis – have in common is that neither can be understood unless one has sorted out the relations between analysis and interpretation. Indeed, I will argue that an understanding of those relations is essential not only in the study of opera, but in musicological discourse generally.

19 The same point is made in Durante's study in this volume, except that the opposite to analysis has become "dramaturgy."

20 As far as I am aware, this is the first such analysis in English. Nor are such analyses common in German; a notable exception (albeit more impressive for length than insight) comprises the Anfossi analyses in Volker Mattern, *Das Drama Giocoso: La finta giardiniera. Ein Vergleich der Vertonungen von Pasquale Anfossi und Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* (Laaber: Laaber, 1989). Platoff discusses Salieri's aria "L'anno mille settecento" from *La ciffa* (1789; libretto by Da Ponte) in "The Buffa Aria in Mozart's Vienna," *COJ* 2 (1990), 105–12, albeit without pretensions to detailed analysis.

21 *La locandiera*: Nuova Era compact discs, cat. 6888–89.

22 On Salieri see Rudolph Angermüller, *Antonio Salieri: Sein Leben und seine weltlichen Werke unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner "großen" Opern*, 3 vols. (Munich: Karzibichler, 1971), as well as John A. Rice's forthcoming monograph (University of Chicago Press).

23 This period is briefly discussed in the articles by Daniel Heartz and Bruce Alan Brown elsewhere in this volume.

24 Although I agree with Platoff that the analytical methods in general use were developed primarily with respect to instrumental music and therefore ought not to be applied to opera uncritically, I cannot accept his premise that instrumental and operatic "thinking" constituted opposed categories of composition in Mozart's time. See his article elsewhere in this volume.

11

The libretto of *La locandiera* was adapted from Goldoni's play of the same name by Domenico Poggi, a bass-turned-impresario. The storyline is simple: Mirandolina, an innkeeper, is courted by two minor noblemen, the rich but foolish Count Alforita ("flowery dawn"), and the grandiloquent but poor and cowardly Marquis Forlimpopoli. However, she sets her sights on yet a third personage, Cavaliere Ripafiatra ("bramble-bank") – not because she is in love with him, but because he is a misogynist, and she wants to demonstrate, to him and to the world, that he is no more immune to feminine charms than any other male. In the end, she spurns all three worthies and marries her faithful employee Fabrizio. (In anticipation of Giuseppe Sarti's popular *Fra i due litiganti il terzo gode* ["Between the two contestants the third wins out"], the opera could just as well have been titled *Fra i tre litiganti il quarto gode*.)²⁵

The opera is remarkable for its positive portrayal of the heroine: intelligent and resourceful, yet sufficiently proud and manipulative to be a credible character rather than a mere stick-figure;²⁶ her virtues shine all the more brightly in comparison to the four fallible male characters. During Act I, Mirandolina begins to apply her blandishments to the Cavaliere; predictably, after an initial period of resistance he becomes intrigued, and is soon hooked. As the curtain rises on Act II we see him alone, pacing back and forth, attempting to make sense of his feelings. The attempt naturally takes the form of an aria, "Vo pensando." This event confirms the

Cavaliere's central status; a soliloquy-aria with no preceding recitative at the beginning of Act II was a privileged moment (think of "Porgi amor"; as we shall see, this comparison is pertinent in other ways as well).

"Vo pensando" belongs to a loosely definable group (it is not quite a genuine aria type), which Stacy Moore has dubbed the *indcision aria*.²⁷ In these arias "a character, often in distress," manifests "two simultaneous and contradictory states of mind," but cannot resolve this conflict by an act of will. The arias tend either to be *di mezzo carattere* (like "Vo pensando"), or to mix "high" seria style with agonized or incoherent outbreaks (Haydn/Porta, *Orlando Paladino*: Medoro's "Parlo. Ma, oh Dio, non posso" and "Dille che un infelice"). Often the love-conflict involves an inappropriate class-relation (Martín y Soler/Da Ponte, *Una cosa rara*: the Prince's "Seguir degg'io chi fugge?"). A related situation is that of the "seductee" in the opening section of a seduction duet; for example, Zerlina's first line in "La ci darem la mano" is "Vorrei, e non vorrei."²⁸ Indecision arias often seem to be simultaneously "straight" and ironic, comic and serious, in ways that are not easy to pin down. They are often constructed in several contrasting sections, and exhibit an unusual degree of independent orchestral material. Because of this dramatic and musical complexity, indecision arias often seem central to the overall meaning of the operas in which they occur; they permit, indeed encourage, multiple interpretations.

25 Sarti's opera, premiered in Milan in 1782, was produced in Vienna in 1783, during the first season of the new opera buffa troupe founded by Joseph II. It not only supplied one of the dinner-music tunes in the Act II finale of *Don Giovanni* (as is well known) but, as Silke Leopold argues in a study forthcoming in *AmM*, may have been an important source for *Le nozze di Figaro* as well.

26 This notwithstanding Goldoni's (presumably disingenuous) comment in his preface that this play was his most moral and instructive because it denounces female hypocrisy! On gender issues see the papers by Marvin Carlson and Tia DeNora in this volume.

27 Moore, "E risolvermi non so": Representations of Indecision in Opera Buffa Arias," unpublished paper, Cornell University, 1994, p. 5. I am very grateful to Ms. Moore for permission to refer to it here.

On aria types see Webster, "Analysis," §. For detailed treatment of particular types see Plattoff, "The buffa aria"; Helga Lüthning, "Die Rondo-Arie im späten 18. Jahrhundert: Dramatischer Gehalt und musikalischer Bau," *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, 5 (1981), 219–46; Rice, "Rondò vocali di Salieri e Mozart per Adriana Ferrarese," in Muraro, *I vicini*, vol. 1, pp. 185–210.

28 See Richard Stiefel, "Mozart's Seductions," *CM* 36 (1983), 151–66.

Poggi and Salieri, *La locandiera* (Vienna, 1773), II. 1

*Il Cavaliere passeggiando penseroso.** *The Cavaliere pacing pensively.*

[Otonario]

Vo pensando, e ripensando; I'm thinking and reflecting;
Son così fra il sì, e il no. I'm trapped between Yes and No.
Che far debbo a me domando, I wonder what I should do,
E risolvermi non so. But I can't make up my mind.

[Versi sciolti]

Io non so se m'inganno; I don't know if I'm mistaken,
Ma giurerei, che sono innamorato. But I would swear that I'm in love.
Tal caldo inusitato Such an unaccustomed fire
Mi sento insinuar entro le vene, I feel stealing into my veins
Che riposo non ho. That I find no rest.
La pace antica The former tranquility
Del mio cor dove andò? In my heart, where has it gone?
La bella Locandiera The fair innkeeper
M'incantò, mi sedusse . . . Has charmed me, has seduced me . . .
Ma quest'affanno But this turmoil,
Non potrà derivar d'altra Could there be no other reason
cagione? for it?

Un effetto di bile esser potrà; It could be an effect of bile;
Esser potrebbe ancor ipocondria. Or it might be hypochondria.

[Settenario]

Ma se tu fossi, Amore, But if you, Love, are
Cagion del mio penar, The cause of my distress,
Nasconditi nel core, Hide yourself in my heart,
E non ti palesar. And don't reveal yourself.

* Text according to the libretto printed in the recording, Nuova Era 6888-89 (altered in a few details to reflect the spelling and punctuation of the autograph); translation adapted from that by Timothy Alan Shaw.

The text of "Vo pensando" comprises two quatrains at the beginning and end, enclosing a longer middle section in *versi sciolti* (free, seven- and eleven-syllable lines intended to be set as recitative). In the first stanza, the Cavaliere is consumed by self-centered ambivalence: the subject "I" appears in every line, and yet he cannot even name his problem.²⁹ This he does at the beginning of the middle section: "I would swear that I'm in love"; after which he expounds on this at length. In the last stanza, he finally invokes "Love" by name, but by means of a remarkable image: still resisting, he asks Love to "hide" – but where? – "in his heart"! Indeed Love is now the subject of the Cavaliere's discourse; he has abandoned his own agency, indeed has already succumbed. This process is foreshadowed in the middle section, in which the last occurrence of "I" as subject (in the middle) comes only in a dependent clause ("I find no rest"). The subject of the next sentence is already the more abstract "tranquility"; and immediately thereafter comes the decisive shift: "The fair innkeeper" (subject) "has seduced me" (object).

Salieri dramatizes this scene imaginatively and resourcefully (see the score provided in Example 13.1).³⁰ The aria, in the key of E flat, is through-composed, with three sections corresponding to the three textual divisions. Perhaps its most striking event is the concluding line of the first stanza, "E risolvermi non so" (prefigured in the introduction, mm. 7–8). The dominant demonstratively fails to resolve; the leading-tone D (m. 7) slides down chromatically to D_b, producing a B flat minor chord, and on to a deceptive cadence – not,

29 In another sense, as Arthur Groos kindly informs me, the Cavaliere's impasse in the second line, "Son così fra il Sì e il No," can be understood as invoking (or parodying) the scholastic method of argumentation, still common in the eighteenth century, in which one's interlocutor was forced to respond to each in a sequence of propositions by "Yes" or "No," until the desired logical conclusion was achieved.

30 The opera is unpublished; this reduction was made by ear and later checked against Salieri's autograph (A-Wn, Mus. Hs. 16179). I thank John A. Rice for making a microfilm available, as well as for information supplied from his forthcoming biography of Salieri. (Rice had independently concluded that "Vo pensando" is of unusual beauty and interest.)

Example 13.1 Salieri, "Vo pensando": vocal score (for source see n. 30)

Il Cavaliere passeggiando pensieroso.

Larghetto

Example 13.1 (cont.)

Example 13.1 (cont.)

Example 13.1 (cont.) is a musical score in G major, 3/4 time, consisting of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 20-22) features a vocal line with lyrics: "- mi non so, E ri - sol - ver - mi non". The piano accompaniment includes a *cresc.* marking and a *p* dynamic. The second system (measures 23-24) shows the vocal line with a *so.* marking and a circled 'X' above measure 23. The piano accompaniment continues with a *p* dynamic. The third system (measures 25-26) features the vocal line with lyrics: "Che far deb-bo,". The piano accompaniment includes a *cresc.* marking and a *f p mp* dynamic marking.

Example 13.1 (cont.)

Example 13.1 (cont.) continues the musical score from the previous page, consisting of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 28-30) features a vocal line with lyrics: "Che far deb-bo? Vo pen - san - do, e ri - pen -". The piano accompaniment includes a *mp* dynamic marking and a *tr* (trill) marking. The second system (measures 31-32) shows the vocal line with lyrics: "- san-do, Son co-sì fra il sì, e il no. Che far deb - bo a me: do -". The piano accompaniment includes a *tr* marking and a *mf* dynamic marking. The third system (measures 33-34) features the vocal line with lyrics: "- man - do, E ri - sol - ver-mi non". The piano accompaniment includes a *p* dynamic marking and a *tr* marking.

Example 13.1 (cont.)

Example 13.1 (cont.) is a musical score in G major, 3/4 time. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 38-40) features a vocal line with lyrics 'so - Vo pen -' and a piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 41-43) continues the vocal line with lyrics '- san - do, che far' and the piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 44-46) shows the vocal line with lyrics 'deb - bo? E ti - sol -' and the piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *cresc.* and *f*.

Example 13.1 (cont.)

Example 13.1 (cont.) continues the musical score from the previous page. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 47-49) features a vocal line with lyrics '- sol - ver - mi non so.' and a piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 50-52) continues the vocal line with lyrics 'tr' and the piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 53-55) shows the vocal line with lyrics 'f' and the piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *cresc.* and *f*.

Example 13.1 (cont.)

51 *Recitativo*

Io non so se m'in-gan-no. Ma giu-re-re-i che so-ro in-na-mo-ra-to.

56

Tal cal-do in-u-si-ta-to mi sen-to in-si-nu-ar; en-tro le

59 *più adagio*

ve-ne, che ri-po-so non ho.

Example 13.1 (cont.)

63

La pa-ce an-ti-ca del mio cor do-ve an-dò?

65

La bel-la lo-can-die-ra m'in-can-

68

-tò, mi se-dus-se... Ma quest'af-fan-no de-ri-var non po-

Example 13.1 (cont.)

71

- tr- a d' al- tra ca- gio- ne? Un ef- fet- to di bi- le es- ser po-

74

- tri- a! Es- ser po- treb- be an- cor i- po- con- dri- a.

Tempo primo

77 *sotto voce*

Ma se tu fos- si, A- mo- re, Ca- gion del mio pe-

Example 13.1 (cont.)

80 *pp*

- nar, Na- scon- di- ti nel co- re, E

83

non ti pa- le- sar, e non ti

86 *forte* *f*

pa- le- sar. Ma se tu fos- si, A-

Example 13.1 (cont.)

Example 13.1 (cont.) shows three systems of musical notation. The first system (measures 89-92) features a vocal line with lyrics: "mo-re Ca-gion del mio pe-nar, Na-scon-di-ti nel". The vocal line is marked *solito voce*. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The second system (measures 93-96) continues the vocal line with lyrics: "co-re, Na-scon-di-ti nel co-re, E". The piano accompaniment continues. The third system (measures 97-100) continues the vocal line with lyrics: "non ti pa-le-sar, e non ti". The piano accompaniment continues.

Example 13.1 (cont.)

Example 13.1 (cont.) shows two systems of musical notation. The first system (measures 99-102) features a vocal line with lyrics: "pa-le-sar, e non ti pa-le-". The vocal line is marked *solito voce*. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The second system (measures 103-106) continues the vocal line with lyrics: "co-re, Na-scon-di-ti nel co-re, E". The piano accompaniment continues.

however, on the relative minor, or even V of V, but on the subdominant, a grammatically "incorrect" chord in this context. We see and hear the Cavaliere swoon, in the sickening realization that he is in danger of succumbing.

Although the vocal form of the first section closes normally (m. 48), the section as a whole does not; the postlude breaks off in the middle and leads chromatically to the middle section, set as accompanied recitative. In the course of this section the strings introduce a new, dotted figure, γ (m. 60), which alternates between drooping *piano* and resolute *forte*, while its persistent descent symbolizes the Cavaliere's "fall" – into love, and out of his cherished independence. The final section shows him in a state of pronounced agitation. It begins as an *arioso*: not in the tonic, but on the dominant of C minor, with syncopated strings, at first in unison but then dissonant, and at first without bass. Moreover, the Cavaliere resumes singing at once,

without orchestral preparation, on a downbeat (the only downbeat line-beginning in the aria), again on a word that crystallizes his state of mind: "But." Not until the last text-line does the music broaden (mm. 83 ff.) and head for a firm cadence in E flat; however, this is undercut by a deceptive cadence, again on C (m. 87). The entire subsection is thus governed as much by C minor and its dominant as by E flat; "E risolvermi non so" still holds, on the largest scale. Owing to this renewed lurch into indecisiveness the Cavaliere must now begin over (m. 88), again in *accompagnato*, on a variant of the recitative motive *y*. This leads to a free repetition of the entire subsection, beginning however on the home dominant (m. 91); the music is scored more brilliantly and with richer harmonies (mm. 94–97), and the number closes with the first and only perfect authentic cadence in the entire final section.

So far, this overview has been couched in a more or less traditional, "mixed" musicological discourse: garden-variety analytical remarks, comparative statements (aria types, etc.), and straightforward interpretation ("of two minds"; "swooning"; "falling"; etc.). How would "Vo pensando" fare if subjected to the full range of "close" analytical techniques?

With respect to the first part: the vocal section exhibits clear binary form (mm. 11–23+30–48, plus the linking 26–29). The introduction presents the primary thematic material, which comprises three visual-rhetorical figures: "walking" (mm. 1–4, as the Cavaliere paces back and forth, halting at each arrival at tonic or dominant); "recollection" (mm. 5–6, the tender motive *x* in strings alone); and "swoon." Moreover, the same sequence of topics defines the course of both the exposition and the reprise as a whole; in particular, the swoon-plus-cadence configuration from mm. 7–10 ends both large subsections (mm. 20–23, 45–48), and the initial orchestral phrase begins the postlude.³¹ Thus the introduction

31 The recapitulation is expanded from one paragraph into two, by the extension of mm. 34 ff. to the cadence in m. 38 and an expanded treatment of the recollection motive *x*.

functions as a ritornello with respect to the section as a whole.³² In addition, it establishes the aria's "rhythmic profile":³³ two-measure phrases beginning with a two-note upbeat, to accommodate the *ottinato* text-lines:

"Vo pen- | san-do e ri-pen- | san-do"; etc.

Indeed almost every vocal phrase in the first section is two or four measures long; the only exceptions are three-measure phrases in mm. 19–21 and 36–38, again on "E risolvermi non so."

In some passages the aria exhibits an independent instrumental "persona."³⁴ The tender sixteenth-motive *x* (mm. 5–6) returns several times, but usually in the orchestra: in mm. 18–19, the violins must induce the Cavaliere to sing it, and in mm. 23–25 and 38–41 he ignores it entirely, in favor of long-note ruminations. Even when he finally sings both measures of *x* (mm. 43–44), thus achieving his only four-measure phrase, a new bass version of the motive is required to spur him on (m. 42). (In the postlude, the same urgent bass motive instigates the recitative, and hence the next phase of the scene.) In the final section, his agitation is conveyed primarily by the orchestra, which creates both the instability at the beginning of each subsection and the increased breadth and richness just before the cadences. By contrast, the Cavaliere still sings mainly in two-measure phrases; the only exceptions are three-measure phrases at each increase in breadth (mm. 83–85, 96–98; they are followed without pause by two-measure confirmations, producing five-measure compound phrases). I interpret this as "protesting too

32 A ritornello-like function for buffa aria introductions is not uncommon, especially before 1780; see Hunter, "Haydn's Aria Forms: A Study of the Arias in the Italian Operas Written at Eszterháza, 1766–1783," PhD diss., Cornell University, 1982, ch. 4; Webster, "Analysis," pp. 124–25, 144, 160–61, 179, 182.

33 Webster, "Are Mozart's Concertos 'Dramatic'?" Concerto Ritornellos and Aria Introductions in the 1780s," in Neal Zaslaw, ed., *Mozart's Concertos: Text, Context, Interpretation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 107–37.

34 On the concept of the rhythmic profile, see Webster, "Analysis," pp. 133–37. Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), especially chs. 1–2; Webster, "Cone's 'Personae' and the Analysis of Opera," *CMS* 29 (1989), 44–65.

much" – as his conscious effort to maintain control while threatened with seduction. But this hope is belied by the syncopations throughout the final section: the violins know perfectly well that he has already succumbed. (This passage thus resembles the famous one in Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*, where Orestes's vain hope, "Le calme rentre dans mon coeur," is belied by the syncopated monotone in the violas.)

Finally, let us examine the vocal line, specifically its structural-tonal voice-leading and "high-note" organization.³⁵ The background headnote is clearly $\hat{3}$, or G. But the Cavaliere has difficulty singing high G (g^1 , notated g^2) in a convincing manner.³⁶ Like so much else in this aria, this difficulty is prefigured in the introduction (see Example 13.2). The first four measures ascend confidently from $\hat{1}$ through $\hat{2}$, to $\hat{3}$, but only in the lower octave; high f^2 (upbeat to m. 3) goes nowhere, and high g^2 appears only in passing (m. 5, where it is structurally subordinate to e_b^2).³⁷ In the Cavaliere's first vocal phrase (structurally identical to mm. 1–4), this problem is posed in a much more obvious manner. In the first measure, he mounts into the upper octave, where he rises from high E_b (m. 11) to F (m. 13), as if heading for a structural high G. Instead, he leaps down to the lower octave and cadences on low G in m. 14. When he does manage high G (mm. 19, 22, 26), it is too late; the music is already in the dominant and thus cannot establish g^2 as a background headnote.³⁸ Indeed, although he finally sings

³⁵ On this methodology, see Webster, "Analysis," pp. 166–69.

³⁶ To be sure, the creator of the role, the tenor Domenico Guardasoni (who later, as *impresario* in Prague, commissioned *Don Giovanni*) had an especially effective lower range. However, this point is of little consequence, because all three of the Cavaliere's other arias not only attain, but surpass, high G (see nn. 4, 49). On the use of *tesitura* for purposes of characterization, see Julian Rushton's article elsewhere in this volume.

³⁷ The problematical status of G also marks the swooning "E risolvimi non so"; although it resolves down to F, the latter cannot descend, for the subverted cadence kicks the line above G, to A_b , from where it eventually descends to E_b .

³⁸ Admittedly, such a phenomenon is theoretically possible (the $\hat{3}$ over V being understood as a middleground suspension of a notional $\hat{3}$ over I in the background), but there is no reason to credit this possibility here.

Example 13.2a Salieri, "Vo pensando": analysis

(a)

Example 13.2b Salieri, "Vo pensando": analysis

(b)

Section 1

EXP. Retr. RECAP.

Orch. 11 13 14 15 17 18 19 20 22 23 26 29 30 33 37 43 45 46 47 48

Cav. $\hat{3} - \hat{2}$ $(=\hat{5} - \hat{4} - \hat{3} - \hat{2} - \hat{1})$ $\hat{3} - \hat{2} - \hat{1}$ $\hat{3} - \hat{2} - \hat{1}$

N

I V I V I

Example 13.2c Salieri, "Vo pensando": analysis

Section 2

Recit.

Orch. 77 80 83 85 87 88 91 94 98 102

Cav. $\hat{3}$ $(\hat{2} - \hat{1})$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2} - \hat{1}$

N

F Bb V/vi I⁶ I V vi vii/V V I V I V

Regions

one high G in the key of E flat (m. 43), it comes only in the structurally underarticulated context of motive x. And even if we were to grant this g² background status, it could not be the source of any background descent in that register, because he again moves into the lower register for his swoon onto A₁ and the cadence.

In the recitative, the pitch-class G plays no structural melodic role. The final section reasserts its primacy; yet initially it is merely the dominant of C minor, as the Cavaliere blankly intones, "Ma se tu fossi, Amore" on low G; the entire orchestra is low as well. Only in the broadening passage (mm. 83 ff.) does he open up registrally; indeed he actually attains high G – but only on the last sixteenth of m. 83, from where he immediately skips down a major seventh to a₁¹ (part of a larger-scale descending line from high F; see Example 13.2), and on to another low cadence. By contrast, when this passage is repeated (m. 96), it leads to the Cavaliere's only strong high G in the entire aria: in m. 100, he cadences on g¹, and immediately leaps up an octave to g², on the beat, in vigorous "Scotch snap" rhythm. And yet even here, the final descent takes place in the lower register.

There is no question as to the tonal cogency of "Vo pensando." The pitch-class G is strongly and interestingly established as the headnote; it serves as the basis for a firm *Ursatz* structure, enriched by the various deceptive cadences and especially the massive off-tonic prolongation in the first half of the final section. On the other hand, high G never initiates a prominent descent in that register. This does not imply an analytical problem (still less a compositional deficiency); as shown in Example 13.2b, we simply take the lower register as the "obligatory" one, such that g² appears as a "reflection" of the background g¹.³⁹ The question is rather: what does this mean?

39 In Schenkerian practice, the background descent of the *Urlinie* to *i* must take place in a single, specifiable octave, called the "obligatory register."

111

Close study of Salieri's aria thus ineluctably leads back to the general issue of the relation between analysis and interpretation of operatic numbers. Moreover, since interpretation is always at least implicitly comparative, we may also focus on a much-analyzed aria by Mozart that has many points of contact with "Vo pensando": the Countess's "Porgi amor" in *Le nozze di Figaro*.⁴⁰

The first section of "Vo pensando" in particular has a good deal in common with "Porgi amor." As noted above, both are soliloquies that open Act II; both are in E flat (the most common key for *arie d'affetto*);⁴¹ both set a single quatrain of *ottomario* (eight-syllable) verse; both are relatively short and self-contained, with deliberate movement and relatively little coloratura; both combine the "slow march" and *affettuoso* topics;⁴² their "rhythmic gestures" are closely related (*Larghetto, alla breve* in Salieri, 2/4 in Mozart);⁴³ the instrumentation is similar (two oboes in Salieri, two clarinets in Mozart, otherwise horns, bassoons, and strings); and so forth.

40 Obviously, "Vo pensando" could appropriately be compared with many arias, the majority of them by composers other than Mozart. However, because of the familiarity of Mozart's music, as well as his dominance of our reception of opera buffa, any such comparisons will inevitably involve him (again, even if only implicitly), at least until a reasonably large repertory of *opere buffe*, and of analyses of numbers by other composers, have become available.

"Porgi amor" itself has been the focus of comparative treatments; see Heartz's discussion (*Mozart's Operas*, pp. 141–42) of Rosina's "Una voce poco fa" from Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and the "network" of Mozart arias described in Webster, "Analysis," pp. 113–14, 169–70.

41 On the *aria d'affetto* see Wolfgang Osthoff, "Mozarts Cavatenen und ihre Tradition," in Wilhelm Stauder et al., ed., *Festschrift Helmuth Osthoff zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag* (Tutzing: Schneider 1969), pp. 139–77; Heartz, *Mozart's Operas*, pp. 38–40, 141–43, 240–41. Obviously, "Vo pensando" deviates from the type for dramatic reasons (on such deviations generally see Webster, "Analysis," pp. 109–13). "Vo pensando" is *La locandiera*'s first number in E flat (this does not apply to "Porgi amor").

42 For "Porgi amor," see Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture*, pp. 101–04, in "Vo pensando" a similar mixture is represented by the "pacing" music of mm. 1–4 and the tender, reflective motive x.

43 Although the Countess's initial downbeat rhythmic profile differs strongly from the Cavaliere's upbeat one, she later changes to a profile very like his; compare, for example, her mm. 39–40 to his mm. 13–14.

Furthermore, both arias are “about” their characters’ struggle to attain high G (see Example 13.3). Unlike the Cavaliere, however, the Countess will discover that high G is something she must (eventually) sing, that this note is her tonal/vocal destiny.⁴⁴ Although she too at first can rise only as far as f^2 and must cadence in the lower octave (note the similarity between Example 13.3, mm. 18–25, and Example 13.2, mm. 11–14), by the end she has worked through her problem (the psychologizing metaphor is precisely appropriate) in such a way as to be able to articulate high G as climax and to achieve a background descent in that register (compare Example 13.3, mm. 46–47, with Example 13.2, mm. 45–48).

Now the usual comparative move at this point would be to emphasize that “*Vo pensando*” is musically less complex than “*Porgi amor*”: that although its topical variety (particularly in the introduction) is scarcely less than Mozart’s, overall it is motivically less dense and developmental; that its harmonic language is less rich and varied (the final section, which seems so rich in this context, would seem ordinary in a Mozart number); that although the orchestra has much independent material, overall the instrumental writing is less independent, both texturally and in its tendency to fall silent during the vocal pauses at phrase-endings (except, again, in the final section, where the only interstitial silence, at the deceptive cadence in m. 81, is precisely appropriate [compare “*Porgi amor*,” mm. 13, 43]); that the rhythmic profile exhibits less variety, both overall and in the degree of directed change between one paragraph and another; and that notwithstanding the resourceful treatment of G, the voice-leading is less complex. And the reprise (m. 30) seems inadequately prepared: the

44 I do not mean to endorse Edward T. Cone’s controversial view that operatic characters know that they are singing – that they are “composers”; see “The World of Opera and its Inhabitants,” in Cone, *Music: A View from Delft* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 125–38. But insofar as we take musical features of operatic numbers as dramatizing or symbolizing the characters’ feelings and motivations, we may certainly conflate analytical description and psychological interpretation.

Example 13.3 Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*, “*Porgi amor*”: analysis. From James Webster, “The Analysis of Mozart’s Arias,” in Cliff Eisen, ed., *Mozart Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. [167]. Reproduced by permission.

The image displays a musical score for the aria "Porgi amor" from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. It features a vocal line (soprano) and a violin line (Vn I). The score is divided into three sections: Rit. (Ritardando), Exp. (Esposizione), and T.R.S. (Trio/Reprise). The vocal line includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and ornaments. The violin line provides harmonic support. Analytical markings are present throughout, including Roman numerals (I, V) indicating chord functions, and specific rhythmic or melodic patterns (e.g., 3-2-1, 3-2, 8-7). Measure numbers are provided for both parts, with the vocal part starting at measure 3 and the violin part at measure 18. The score ends at measure 51.

putative retransition (mm. 26–29) remains in the key of B flat, rather than transforming it into the home dominant.

Suppose (to repeat) I concluded that, musically, “Vo pensando” is less complex than “Porgi amor,” less interesting, less rewarding to analyze. Would this demonstrate that “Porgi amor” is a better aria? No – and this holds whatever we may mean by “better.” (Of course, this question is not at all the same as posing a straight value-judgment, such as: Is “Porgi amor” a finer aria than “Vo pensando”? Is *La locandiera* a greater opera than *Le nozze di Figaro*?) My point is not that we should avoid value-judgments (we cannot, even when we try), but that analysis is not the means by which we arrive at them, and the results of analysis cannot legitimately be used to support them.⁴⁵ Mozart’s superiority as an operatic composer (if it is that) does not depend primarily on purely musical virtues (more precisely, on virtues that are amenable to analysis),⁴⁶ but on what I previously referred to as “operatic” factors: his librettos (for which he was partly responsible, of course), his theatricality, his sense of plotting, his gift of characterization, his quicksilver psychology, and many other things. More important, in a genre as inherently multivalent and critically contested as opera, one cannot determine any single cause for his putative superiority.⁴⁷

In opera, the analysis is the interpretation. Sometimes this is obvious. In “Vo pensando,” the deceptive cadence onto the subdominant on “E risolvermi non so” cannot be understood in “purely musical” terms; it makes sense only in connection with the text, the Cavaliere’s ambivalent feelings, and the dramatic context.

⁴⁵ For a detailed exposition of this position, see Webster, “Ambivalenzen um Mendelssohn: Zwischen Werk und Rezeption,” in Christian Martin Schmidt, ed., *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Kongreß-Bericht Berlin 1994* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1997), §4.

⁴⁶ Whereby “musical” virtues include those that may emerge over spans larger than a single number: tonal and topical organization, connections in material and instrumentation, and so forth; these cannot be considered here.

⁴⁷ For a formal presentation of this principle of operatic mutability, see Jessica Walloff and James Webster, “Operatic Plotting in *Le nozze di Figaro*,” in Sadie, Wolfgang Amadeo Mozart, pp. 248–93.

(In fact, we almost never encounter passages of such weirdness in instrumental works of the 1770s – not even in Haydn – and when we do, as for example in the “Farewell” and “Distratto” Symphonies, we seek, and usually find, “extramusical” explanations.)⁴⁸ But although “E risolvermi non so” may be an exceptionally clear example of the impossibility of analyzing without interpreting, the principle applies generally. It was not merely my garden-variety summary of “Vo pensando” that conflated analytical and interpretative modes of discourse; my detailed analytical discussion did so as well: the new, bass form of motive x “spurs the Cavaliere on” and “instigates” the recitative, in the final section he “protests too much,” and so forth.

In particular, my treatment of that problematic high G was explicitly interpretative, and necessarily so. The orchestra’s initial ascent to G is “confident,” but the Cavaliere only “manages” to sing high G “too late,” in the dominant; his only high G in the tonic is “underarticulated”; in the final section, he “blankly intones” low G and “opens up” only later; and so forth. In fact, high G becomes a problem for interpretation by its very existence. Why, given that the Cavaliere sets it up as a potential background goal and fleetingly sings it several times, does he never use it for a complete tonal structure? It’s not that Guardasoni’s voice wasn’t up to it (see n. 36), or that Salieri wasn’t capable of composing out a registrally complex background. Rather, it must be a question of the Cavaliere’s character and motivation, and the dramatic situation. As he says, he is “trapped between Yes and No”; the reason he can’t belt out $\hat{3}\text{--}\hat{2}\text{--}\hat{1}$ in the high register is that to do so would be to admit, indeed to welcome, the fact that he was falling in love. (By comparison, Tamino, in “Dies Bildnis,” does belt out $\hat{3}\text{--}\hat{2}\text{--}\hat{1}$ in

⁴⁸ See Elaine R. Sisman, “Haydn’s Theater Symphonies,” *JAMS* 43 (1990), 311–20; Webster, Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: *Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in his Instrumental Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), chs. 4, 7; Gretchen A. Wheelock, *Haydn’s Ingenious Jesting with Art: Contexts of Musical Wit and Humor* (New York: Schirmer, 1992), pp. 154–71; Richard James Will, “Programmatic Symphonies of the Classical Period,” PhD diss., Cornell University, 1994.

the high register, in the very first bars and repeatedly thereafter, because he welcomes the fact of having fallen in love with every fiber of his being.)⁴⁹

The fact that an operatic analysis automatically entails interpretation does not imply a marginalization of analysis. On the contrary, a good analysis often suggests points of interpretation that would never be dreamed of by conventionally postmodern critics or genre-oriented historians. "Vo pensando" is such a case: the Cavaliere's failure to sing a complete background progression in the high register – something we know he would ordinarily be capable of doing (he has already done so in Act I) – dramatizes his ambivalence about falling in love. On the other hand, we can determine the value of "Vo pensando" only on the basis of our assessment of its degree of success in articulating that dramatic action, in the context of a staged performance of the entire opera. What could any conclusion that it was analytically less interesting than "Porgi amor" contribute to such a value-judgment? The hope would be as vain as the attempt to argue that the greater analytical interest of the music in *Fidelio*, compared to that in *Der Freischütz*, could tell us which was the better opera.

IV

No less than musicology in general, the analytical and theoretical community has learned in recent years to see itself as moving within an unstable field, created by the tension between a modernist, work-immanent, absolute-musical aesthetics and various newer, contextualized, postmodernist ones. And yet this must be a false dichotomy; so crude a binary opposition ought to self-decon-

struct before even being thought through.⁵⁰ But then are not all the other binary oppositions so characteristic of recent operatic discourse – analysis vs. interpretation, Mozart vs. the "others"; operatic vs. instrumental composition (or analysis) – equally suspect?

Whereas five years ago I too emphasized operatic analysis's differences from the unity-valORIZING analysis of instrumental music, now I would say simply that the possibility of meaning is open with respect to all music – whether we locate that meaning in the individual work (hermeneutics), in performance, in musical tradition (intertextuality), in genre, in reception, or in "music as cultural practice."⁵¹ Moreover, as even many theorists now acknowledge, no analysis, not even one devoted exclusively to the musical structure of an "absolute" instrumental work, is innocent or objective. Every analysis tells a story, in its mode of presentation, narrative style, and so on;⁵² every analysis implicitly (when not explicitly) conveys its author's motives and "covert values";⁵³ authors of analyses are no less subject to "anxieties of influence" and the vicissitudes of status and reputation than famous poets. (It follows that there can be no opposite to an analysis "in context." What could that be – an analysis "out of context"? As Derrida would say if this issue came to his attention, the analysis and interpretation of music are "always already," always have been, one and the same.)⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Not that most "new" musicologists evince much awareness of the dialectical complexities of the relations between "modernism" and "postmodernism"; for a brief but cogent survey of this issue, see Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), ch. 2.

⁵¹ The title of Lawrence Kramer's frequently cited volume (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁵² V. Kofi Agawu, "Schenkerian Notation in Theory and Practice," *MA* 8 (1989), 275–301.

⁵³ Janet M. Levy, "Covert and Casual Values in Recent Writings about Music," *JM* 6 (1987), 3–27.

⁵⁴ This point is not entirely new, even in the context of instrumental analysis; see Dahlhaus, *Absolute Music*, pp. 27–41.

⁴⁹ To judge from the tessitura, Benedikt Schack, the first Tamino, must have had a wonderful high G (and the ability to maintain it throughout the evening), and this presumed fact helps to explain how Tamino's tessitura came to be what it is. But such facts neither prescribe, nor proscribe, any specific interpretations, in particular, we would not be satisfied with an explanation of Tamino's character that was restricted to a description of Schack's vocal characteristics. See also *mn.* 4, 36.

Even from this perspective, however, operatic analysis might seem to have a special role to play. From a previously marginal position, it may be moving, not merely to its "rightful" place in musicological discourse, but to a privileged one. The prestige and influence of operatic studies are at present arguably higher than those of any other musicological subdiscipline. And of all musical genres, opera is best situated to teach us how to deal with music in context (in the traditional sense of that concept). Whereas instrumental analyses "in context" currently do no more than contest absolute-musical ones, in operatic analysis no such contestation can even arise: the absolute-musical view is irrelevant.

On the other hand, the majority of the recent studies responsible for opera's prestige are not primarily analytical in nature.⁵⁵ Indeed, the "new" musicology has in general focused largely on the nineteenth century, secondarily on the twentieth and on popular music, very little on the art-music of the eighteenth century, and least of all on eighteenth-century opera, about which (always excepting Mozart) most musicologists remain blissfully ignorant. It is in part for this reason that I argue for a more ecumenical approach to both analysis and interpretation, in both operatic and instrumental studies: the new musicologists need analysis at least as much as Mozartians need "context."

Ten years ago, I predicted that in order "to attain maturity and autonomy, operatic analysis will have to develop its own (partly new) explanatory models, idiomatic to the genre." So far, so good. But I continued by speculating that these new models "will [become] fully effective only when they have become sufficiently powerful and . . . general to induce people to apply them to other

repertoires . . . when I [can] learn about Haydn's string quartets by reading [an] analysis of *Otello* – and . . . about *Rigoletto* by analyzing Haydn's string quartets."⁵⁶ Such a prospect has not yet been realized; I myself then called it "farfetched," and concluded with a more conventional plea that Mozartians and nineteenth-century operatic scholars should talk to each other. Today, however, any supposed dichotomy of principle between operatic and instrumental analysis seems increasingly irrelevant. For if all music, including instrumental music, is seen as potentially productive of meaning, the notion that interpretations of opera might prove fruitful for our understanding of instrumental music no longer seems farfetched at all. But if this is so, it follows that studies of instrumental music will doubtless continue to provide useful stimuli for the understanding of opera as well.

⁵⁵ "To Understand . . . Mozart," pp. 192–93. In the quoted passage I was referring to Harold S. Powers's adumbration, in a 1984 study of *Otello* (still unpublished), of "multivalent" operatic analysis – a concept to which I am obviously much indebted.

⁵⁶ To cite one prominent case: the musical examples in Abbate's *Unsung Voices:*

Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), as indeed in most of her writings, comprise solely quotations from scores, without analytical intervention save for occasional and elementary motivic bracketings or chord-labels. For a prominent (and not hidebound) theorist's reservations about such analytical reticence, see Arnold Whittall, "'Forceful Muting' or 'Phatic Dithering'? Some Recent Writing on Opera," *MeL*, 71 (1990), 67–69.