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Professor Greenberg has recorded 328 lectures for The Teaching Company, including the forty-eight–lecture super-course How to Listen to and Understand Great Music.
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The Operas of Mozart

Scope:

This course discusses Mozart’s most important operas, which include Apollo and Hyacinthus (1767), La finta semplice (1768), Bastien and Bastienne (1768), Mitridate, King of Pontus (1770), Lucio Silla (1772), La finta giardiniera (1775), Il ré past愚e (1775), Idomeneo, King of Crete (1781), The Abduction from the Harem (1782), The Marriage of Figaro (1786), Don Giovanni (1787), Così fan tutte (1789), and The Magic Flute (1791). Eight lectures each are devoted to the masterpieces Così fan tutte and The Magic Flute, and special emphasis is also given to The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni.

We begin with the most personal and autobiographical of Mozart’s operas, Così fan tutte. This is one of three operas—the others being The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni—that Mozart wrote with the master librettist Lorenzo da Ponte—a collaboration that can rightly be considered one of the greatest such collaborations in the history of opera. Così is a masterpiece of comic opera—opera buffa—and this study of it will establish an operatic vocabulary with which to measure and study Mozart’s other operas.

Part II of this course begins by looking at Mozart’s earliest works and discusses his apprenticeship in the art of opera composition. We will see how he gave an increasingly important role to the orchestra as a genuine partner to the singers, enhancing the dramatic content, and how his dramatic priorities eventually led him to break with formulaic traditions to focus on character development and dramatic momentum. Idomeneo, premiered on January 29, 1781, and generally considered the greatest opera seria (“serious” opera) ever written, marks Mozart’s mastery of the form. Its dramatic momentum sweeps away the traditional rituals of opera seria; the characters are given depth and substance that transcend their archetypes, and Mozart’s compositional technique reaches an unprecedented level of mastery.

Idomeneo, however, was too radical to be accepted by the audiences of Mozart’s day, unlike The Abduction from the Harem, the most popular of Mozart’s operas in his lifetime in terms of performances and general acclaim. But even the Abduction had its critics, because, like Idomeneo, it too pushed the limits of its own form, in this case, German-language singspiel.

Mozart’s next operas, The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni find him at the peak of his operatic career. He had already written, and would continue to write operas that would eclipse virtually all those of his contemporaries, including Antonio Salieri’s. In The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni, we take a look at some of the greatest ensembles and finales ever written. Unfortunately for Mozart, neither The Marriage of Figaro nor Don Giovanni were popular with the majority of contemporary Viennese opera goers, who considered them too “modern” and politically incorrect, and Così fan tutte, which followed them, was deemed immoral.

It was something of a relief for Mozart to score a huge success in September 1791, with the premiere of his singspiel The Magic Flute. This, his last opera, raised the popular genre of German-language singspiel to the level of operatic art enjoyed by Italian-language opera. A paean to the rituals and creeds of Freemasonry, in which Mozart so fervently believed, The Magic Flute expresses the full range of Mozart’s genius no less than do The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte. The latter eventually became as popular as The Magic Flute and is recognized, along with The Magic Flute, as a masterpiece of the operatic repertoire.
Lecture One

1789

Scope: In his early years in Vienna (1783–1785), Mozart enjoyed considerable success as a composer and performer. In 1786, however, his income began to decrease. He began to receive fewer commissions, the demand for his published music was diminishing, and he had fewer opportunities to perform, partly because of the political situation. By the end of June 1788, Mozart and his wife, Constanze, were suffering ill health and marital problems and their infant daughter had just died. Things were no better the following year, when Mozart wrote the music for the opera Così fan tutte (All Women Behave Like This), an opera that mirrored Mozart’s private life in its theme of sexual infidelity. One of three operas on which Mozart collaborated with the librettist Lorenzo da Ponte, Così fan tutte is a masterpiece of comic opera (opera buffa).

Outline

I. Mozart in 1789—at the age of thirty-three—was not a pretty sight. He was short; he had a pasty complexion; bulging, protruding eyes; thin, fine, sandy-colored hair and not much of it; a malformed ear (about which he was very sensitive); a face somewhat disfigured by smallpox scars; a bit of a paunch; and a rather large nose.

A. I provide you with this decidedly unflattering description of Mozart because once observed, we can now forget about it completely. For as we all know, Mozart’s genius was such that his appearance becomes irrelevant the moment we encounter his music.

B. In 1789, Mozart was in particularly bad shape. As was so often the case with Mozart, the root cause of his physical problems was money, or lack of it, and the attendant stress-related ill health and depression that went hand-in-hand with his financial difficulties.

1. The popular image of Wolfgang Mozart as an impoverished artist buried in a pauper’s grave is completely bogus. During his lifetime, Mozart made a lot of money; during the “great years” of his career—1783, 1784, 1785—he was one of the most highly paid musicians on the European continent.

2. During those years Mozart was also considered, despite his appearance, as one of the “beautiful people.” He and his wife, Constanze, were charter members of the Viennese beaux monde; they dined and partied with the highest levels of Austrian society.

3. The Mozarts liked the finer things in life, but unlike his aristocratic associates, whose incomes flowed in steadily from their estates and workshops, Mozart had to earn his money.

4. In those days, before publishing royalties and lucrative recording contracts, the only way Mozart could guarantee himself a steady income stream was to continue producing new works and to continue performing them before live audiences. Mozart’s career and income were dependent on the state of the Austrian economy and the notoriously fickle Viennese public and aristocracy.

5. Mozart lived high, but as long as he could bank off his popularity, as long as the cash kept coming in, he could keep his creditors at bay.

C. Mozart’s finances began to crumble in 1786. One of the reasons for this decline was that in 1786, Mozart composed The Marriage of Figaro, arguably, the greatest opera ever created. But the essential plot device of this opera—the triumph of clever servants over their stupid, arrogant aristocratic masters—bit the aristocratic hand that fed Mozart.

D. After 1786, Mozart’s popularity in Vienna was on the wane—fewer commissions were coming in from his wealthy friends and patrons, and there was a marked decrease in demand for publications of his music. Perhaps most damaging to Mozart’s financial health, there were fewer and fewer opportunities for him to perform. The political situation in Vienna was partially to blame for this fall-off of performance opportunities.

1. Between 1788 and 1791, Austria involved itself in a costly and unpopular war with the Ottoman Turks.

2. Strict austerity measures were imposed by the government on the city of Vienna; for example, the Imperial German Opera Theater was shut down completely and the Imperial Italian Opera Theater’s production schedule was drastically reduced.

3. Clearly, any Vienna-based musician—even one of Mozart’s stature—would have a hard time making a living in this climate.
E. Given their rather sudden financial reversal of fortune, Mozart and Constanze did their best to cope, but their feeble and belated efforts to economize were too little and came too late.

F. In 1788, one year after Mozart had composed *Don Giovanni*, their finances crumbled.

G. Wolfgang and Constanze’s stress and anxiety and fear affected their health. By the summer of 1788, both Mozart and Constanze were ill. Their infant daughter Teresa had died in June. The weather was hot and humid, which apparently exacerbated Mozart’s health problems. Incredibly, during a span of six weeks that summer, Mozart managed to churn out his last three symphonies, all of them masterworks: the Symphony No. 39 in Eb Major, K. 543; the G Minor Symphony, K. 550; and the Symphony in C Major, the so-called “Jupiter” Symphony, K. 551.

H. But even as Mozart composed these three symphonies during the summer of 1788, his marriage began to fall apart.

1. Wolfgang Mozart and Constanze Weber had been married on August 4, 1782. At the time of their marriage, Mozart was twenty-six years old and Constanze was twenty.
2. Constanze grew up in Mannheim. Her father, Fridolin, was a musician and an uncle of the great Carl Maria von Weber. Constanze was one of four sisters.
3. Constanze’s father died in 1779, three years before she married Mozart. Constanze’s mother, Maria Cacilia Weber, was overjoyed with the match and remained a true friend to Mozart to the day he died.
4. We cannot say the same about Mozart’s father, Leopold Mozart. Leopold was against the marriage from the first, behaved poorly toward Constanze and her family, and disinherited Mozart when he married Constanze without Leopold’s “consent.”
5. Without a doubt, Wolfgang and Constanze married for love. It’s also likely, however, that Mozart occasionally indulged in extramarital sexual activity. No one knew better than Constanze that her husband had a healthy sexual appetite and, as a member of a musical/theatrical family herself, she was aware of the temptations her husband faced when he traveled to perform.
6. Constanze tried to travel with Wolfgang when she could, but during the summer of 1789, her own poor health kept her from going with him to Berlin. Mozart wrote Constanze religiously, but his letters carry a defensive undercurrent. He repeatedly assures his wife that he is alone and thinking only of her.
7. Franz Niemetschek’s early biography of Mozart, which was written with Constanze’s cooperation and represents her point of view, claims that Mozart “confided everything to her, even his petty sins, and she forgave him with loving kindness and tenderness.” A later biographer, Otto Jahn, was told by one of Constanze’s sisters that she did not always forgive her husband’s indiscretions and “there were occasional violent outbreaks.” This description has the ring of truth.
8. The spring and summer of 1789 was such a time of “violent outbreak,” a period of tremendous marital stress. Suffering from financial strain, furious over her husband’s affairs, Constanze became ill. On the advice of her physician, she traveled to the spa at Baden to “take the cure.” Mozart, back in Vienna, was deeply concerned about both her health and the possibility that Constanze would retaliate by taking a lover.
9. Constanze may have had an affair, and even a child, with Franz Süssmayr, a pupil of Mozart’s. The two were frequently together at the baths at Baden, and the timing of the birth of Franz Xaver Mozart on July 26, 1791, suggests that Wolfgang, who was away from Constanze in October of 1790, may not have been present at the conception.

I. Against this background of financial stress and real or perceived infidelity, Wolfgang Mozart took on an operatic project that had been rejected by Salieri as being “disgustingly immoral”—an opera about the infidelity of women—*Così fan tutte*, or “Thus do they all.” It is one of those rare instances in Mozart’s work that his art imitated his life.

II. Describing Mozart’s music is difficult in a culture that is saturated with hyperbole.

A. What words can we use in our already overtaxed, hyperbolic lexicon that still have meaning to describe the otherworldly beauty and craft, the transcendental art, of Mozart’s music?

B. There’s no way around the fact that we will have to use a descriptive vocabulary in discussing Mozart’s operas that will border on the idolatrous.

III. We will start our exploration with what is, without a doubt, the most personal and autobiographical of all of Mozart’s twenty-two operas—*Così fan tutte*—an opera about wife-swapping and the supposed “inconstancy” of
women, an opera composed at a time when Mozart was convinced that his adored Constanze was having an affair (and maybe she was).

A. *Così fan tutte* was the third of three operas written in conjunction with the librettist Lorenzo da Ponte and, for all of its risqué situations and sexual licentiousness, it is as brilliant, as funny, as beautiful, as pointed and satirical, and ultimately, as sublime as anything ever written for the stage.

B. *Così* is a marvelous example of what was, in 1789, the still comparatively new genre of Italian-language opera buffa, comic opera.

C. After we have dealt with *Così* and created a proper operatic vocabulary, will we move back in time to examine Mozart’s extraordinary evolution as a composer of operas.

1. To that end, we will examine, in part, Mozart’s first opera, *Apollo et Hyacinthus*, composed in 1767 when he was eleven years old; *La finta semplice* of 1768; *Bastien und Bastienne*, also of 1768; *Lucio Silla* of 1772; *La finta giardiniera* and *Il ré pastore*, both of 1775; *Zaide* of 1779; *Idomeneo* of 1781; *The Abduction from the Harem* of 1782; *The Marriage of Figaro* of 1786; *Don Giovanni* of 1787; and finally, we’ll conclude with a full-scale examination of *The Magic Flute* of 1791.

2. We will also discuss the life and music of Antonio Salieri; it’s one of those amazing quirks of fate that this most libeled man in music history, his name a virtual household word for villainy and mediocrity, is yet so unknown as a composer.

D. By necessity, our focus will be on Mozart’s evolution as an opera composer, paying particular attention to his development as a composer of operatic ensembles and finales.

IV. *Così fan tutte*, subtitled “La Scuola degli Amanti,” or “The School of Lovers,” was composed between September and December 1789.

A. The libretto was written by Lorenzo Da Ponte.

B. The story revolves around two young, aristocratic sisters from Ferrara—a city known, apparently, for its “loose” women—who are on an extended vacation, having rented a palazzo in Naples. Their names are Dorabella and Fiordiligi.

1. Since arriving in Naples, the ladies have taken as their lovers a couple of locals, two young, aristocratic soldiers named Ferrando and Guglielmo. Ferrando and Guglielmo, like any young men, believe completely in their own irresistible machismo and their girlfriends’ fidelity.

2. Don Alfonso, an old self-proclaimed philosopher, is so disgusted by what he considers Ferrando’s and Guglielmo’s naiveté regarding the loyalty of their girlfriends that he offers them a wager: In twenty-four hours, he will create the circumstances by which the girls will switch partners and bed with the other man.

3. Through various intrigues, disguises, and outright lies and with the help of the girls’ devious maid, Despina, the men, much to their astonishment, succeed in seducing each other’s girlfriends.

C. In truth, the title, *Così fan tutte* (*All Women Behave Like This*) could just as accurately and, frankly, more honestly, be changed to *Così fan tutti* (“Thus everybody does”).

1. During the course of the opera, the lack of fidelity that the women exhibit is nothing compared to the deviousness, insensitivity, callousness, and arrogance that the men display to get the women to change partners.

2. Truly, in Da Ponte’s libretto and Mozart’s music, the women are victims of a really rotten intrigue, which only seems to end well because the women beg the men’s pardon and the men forgive them, when it should be the other way around.

3. I know of no other opera that showcases and ridicules romance, arrogance, and the weakness of the flesh in a more entertaining and brilliant manner than *Così fan tutte*.

D. The subject of the opera was suggested to Da Ponte by Emperor Joseph II himself. In the fall of 1789, the theme also struck uncomfortably close to Mozart’s own heart and life.

E. Later generations found the opera shamelessly immoral; it was said that Beethoven “would have nothing to do with the work.” Richard Wagner abhorred the juxtaposition of *Così*’s farcical elements with its serious ones. It was not performed in the nineteenth century and wasn’t revived until the twentieth.
Mozart’s overture begins with a brief introduction that immediately introduces us to five of the six main characters of the opera.

A. First, we meet the lovers: Fiordiligi and Guglielmo, Dorabella and Ferrando. The overture begins with a loud fanfare—martial and masculine in its tone—that is followed immediately by a soft, gentle, entirely “feminine” phrase. This represents couple number one. Then again, we hear two more such phrases—masculine and feminine—representing couple number two. (Musical selection: Overture, measures 1–8.)

B. This introductory passage concludes with two more phrases, the meaning of which is not immediately apparent. (Musical selection: Overture, measures 8–14).

1. Indeed, this same music appears again, as an almost mysterious insertion, near the very end of the overture. (Musical selection: Overture, conclusion.)

2. Who or what might this music represent? What is its significance? We will find out, but not until almost the end of the opera, when Don Alfonso preaches to the now humbled men.

ALFONSO:
All men accuse women, but I excuse them even if they change their affections a thousand times a day. Some call it a vice, others a terrible habit, but to me it seems to be a necessity of the heart. The lover who, in the end, finds himself fooled should not blame anyone but himself, for all women, whether young or old, beautiful or ugly—repeat it with me—all women behave like this!

ALFONSO, FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
All women behave like this!

3. Alfonso forces the men to repeat after him “Così fan tutte!” and those two iterations of the title and moral of the opera, first by Don Alfonso alone, then by all the men, constitute the music that Mozart planted in the overture! (Musical selections: No. 30, “Così fan tutte,” conclusion, and No. 30, in its entirety.)

D. We close with the overture in its entirety. (Musical selection: Overture.)
Lecture Two
Cosi fan tutte, Part One

Scope: Act I of Cosi fan tutte opens in a coffeehouse where Don Alfonso bets with two noblemen, Ferrando and Guglielmo, that their fiancées, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, are capable of infidelity. This opening trio expresses Mozart’s genius for dramatic momentum and realistic interplay in the dialogue. As the act continues, we can also see Mozart’s gift for character portrayals in music. Ferrando and Guglielmo accept Don Alfonso’s wager, and the scene shifts to their fiancées. The ladies are devastated to learn from Don Alfonso that Ferrando and Guglielmo have been drafted into the army to fight against the Turks. This is the first part of Don Alfonso’s wager. The finale ingeniously interweaves the dialogue of all five characters, as Ferrando and Guglielmo take their leave.

Outline

I. Cosi fan tutte is a so-called “numbers opera,” meaning that it alternates between fully sung and orchestrally accompanied musical “numbers”—arias, duets, trios, quartets, ensembles, and choruses, as well as recitatives—the half-sung, half-spoken, harpsichord-accompanied segments that connect the numbers.
   A. The first operas consisted almost entirely of recitative.
   B. Recitative allowed for dialogue and narration to be rapidly and intelligibly expressed. In recitative, words are sung in the same rhythm in which they are spoken, and recitative melodies are meant to exaggerate the natural inflection of the spoken word.
   C. By Mozart’s time, recitative was typically heard over a secco, or dry accompaniment—a chord-producing instrument, typically a harpsichord, though sometimes a piano.
   D. In a “numbers” opera, recitative is the musical “thread” that connects and dramatically binds together the fully sung numbers.
   E. The operas of Mozart’s time had two different sorts of numbers: arias and everything else.
      1. An aria, or “air,” is the operatic equivalent to a soliloquy—a moment when time stops and a single character is given the opportunity to reflect on the course of events, share his or her feelings with the audience, and in general, react and emote in such a way that we can identify with the character.
      2. Arias are about emotion, and in an aria, the music, not the words, creates the emotional reality. Truly, when we look at the “words” of an aria, they usually “say” very little by themselves. It is the composer who interprets the words and the emotions behind the words and invests them with meaning; in an opera, the composer is the dramatist, not the librettist.
      3. The other numbers in an opera—“everything else”—would include anything from a duet to a large ensemble. Like arias, these numbers have a high melodic profile; like arias, these “group sings” are accompanied by the orchestra. However, the presence of multiple singers in such numbers ensures that they have a dramatic tension, perhaps even a degree of conflict, that goes beyond the “stopped time” nature of an aria. As a result, such numbers often push the story forward.
      4. No one in the history of opera could compose such forward-moving numbers better than Mozart. Mozart’s ensembles combine the melodic beauty and emotional depth of aria with the dramatic forward momentum of recitative.
   F. Also typical of the unwritten but pervasive operatic “rule” of the time, all the action of Cosi fan tutte takes place in twenty-four hours.

II. Act I begins in a coffeehouse with an argument already in progress, a trio among Ferrando, Guglielmo, and the self-described “old philosopher,” Don Alfonso.
   A. Don Alfonso, in the manner of older, wiser, and slightly condescending men, has questioned the virtue of all women. Inadvertently or not, Don Alfonso has questioned Dorabella’s and Fiordiligi’s fidelity, and the younger men are mad.
   B. Alphonso cannot resist reminding Guglielmo and Ferrando that experience is the greatest teacher.
   C. Guglielmo and Ferrando ask Don Alfonso to prove that their girlfriends could be unfaithful or engage in a sword fight with them.
Obviously, the challenge is a mock challenge; the two young men have no intention of fighting an old man who thinks with his brain and not his groin. Nevertheless, in their blustering, machismo, and markedly nonintellectual reaction, they reveal themselves to be young, naïve, maybe stupid, and certainly in need of some education. In lieu of his sword, Alfonso will ultimately offer them his education.

Meanwhile, Guglielmo and Ferrando rant on, and as the argument intensifies, the trio reaches its everyone's-talking-at-once climax.

Note how truly brilliant this opening is. The moment the curtain opens, we are thrust into the essence of the plot, presented as an argument-in-progress, without any introduction or explanation. It’s as if we’ve just walked into the door of the café and are witness to the end of what quickly becomes a rather heated exchange! That’s just plain good theater, and it is typical of the sort of dramatic flexibility offered by the genre of opera buffa, a genre of opera evolved from street theater and almost entirely lacking the formulas, rituals, and pretense of aristocratic opera seria.

As we listen to this trio, we must also be aware of Mozart’s incredible compositional craft. The dramatic momentum never flags, and even though the characters are singing carefully notated parts, we hear the same sense of flexibility, of rise and fall of voice and emotion, of spontaneous interaction that we would expect in a spoken argument. (Musical selection: No. 1, trio.)

Immediately after the trio ends, an angry recitative ensues. We will not listen to many of the recitatives in Così, but we will listen to those heard during the opening two scenes because they are essential to the development of the characters as we meet them.

D. Guglielmo:
Draw your sword! Choose whichever one of us you’d prefer to fight!

[Don Alfonso remains seated at the table, holds up a fork and answers calmly:]  
ALFONSO:  
Please. I’m a man of peace, and I don’t brandish cutlery, except at the table.

FERRANDO:  
Either fight, or tell us right now why you think our sweet babies are capable of infidelity!

ALFONSO:  
How simple, how delightful you are!

FERRANDO:  
Stop joking, or by heaven I swear…

ALFONSO:  
And by earth, I—Don Alfonso—swear I’m not joking, my friends. I would only like to know what sort of animals these beautiful creatures of yours might be, whether, like us, they have skin and bones, whether they eat like we do, and so forth: the bottom line, whether they are goddesses or women.

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:  
Yes, they’re women, but such women!

I. The sing-songy tone with which Mozart invests this last bit of recitative shows just how badly the men are infatuated with their girlfriends. (Musical selection: recitative.)  

J. Next comes the thesis, another trio in which Alfonso assumes the rather more severe tone of the schoolmaster. Notice his compact sentences and repetitions as he attempts to drive the lesson home!

ALFONSO:  
Fidelity in women is like the Phoenix of Arabia; everyone says that it exists [“nessun lo sa”], but no one knows where.

FERRANDO:  
The phoenix is Dorabella!

GUGLIELMO:
The phoenix is Fiordiligi!

FERRANDO:
Dorabella!

GUGLIELMO:
Fiordiligi!

ALFONSO:
No, no, it is not this one; it’s not that one; it never existed; it never will.

[The boys are incorrigible; they continue to yell out the names of their sweethearts, even as Alfonso attempts to drive home his point.]

ALFONSO:
Fidelity in women is like the Phoenix of Arabia; everyone says that it exists, but no one knows where [“nessun lo sa!”]!

K. Alfonso presents his thesis, like any good scholar, in the guise of classical metaphor and analogy—the phoenix. (Musical selection: No. 2, trio.)

L. Alfonso’s lesson has made no impression whatsoever on Ferrando and Guglielmo. Alfonso then proposes a wager of 100 gold pieces if he can prove that the girlfriends are capable of infidelity.
1. He lays down the first condition: that the boys swear not to reveal the bet to their “Penelopes.”
2. Alfonso is, of course, being more than a little ironic; Penelope was the wife of Odysseus, who managed to spurn the endless advances of would-be suitors during his twenty-year absence. Alfonso figures to do his work in something under twenty-four hours.
3. The boys agree to that condition, and to the condition that they will do everything that Don Alfonso tells them to do.

M. Another trio ensues as the deal is closed. Ferrando and Guglielmo rather prematurely celebrate their victory:

FERRANDO:
I shall give to my goddess a beautiful serenade.

GUGLIELMO:
In honor of my Venus, I shall give a banquet.

ALFONSO:
Will I be invited too?

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Yes, of course, you’ll be invited!

EVERYONE:
And again and again we will toast the god of love!

N. Mozart sets the last part of this trio (this scene-closing music) as a jaunty, bubbly, drinking song, with each man utterly convinced that he has already won the bet. (Musical selection: From recitative “Gochiam?, Giochiamo” through No. 3.)

O. The men exit. Ferrando and Guglielmo leave in one direction. Don Alfonso exits in the other direction, knowing that he has his work cut out for him. He hurries off to the military barracks near the harbor, where he will dispense a few bribes and hire a few accomplices.

III. The scene shifts to allow us to meet the ladies, the “loose” women of Ferrara. We find them in the garden of their vacation rental overlooking the bay of Naples and the sea. They are staring and cooing at the portraits of their lovers in the lockets that hang around their necks.

A. Fiordiligi sings first as she stares intently at the picture of Guglielmo. Note that “Fiordiligi” means fleur de lys ("lily of the valley"), the white flower of loyalty. Her hymn to her Guglielmo is sweet and lilting and grows out of a gentle, pastoral instrumental introduction:

FIORDILIGI:
Oh look, sister, and tell me if you could ever find a more beautiful mouth, a more noble face!

**B.** Dorabella responds. Her words—and the music Mozart supplies for those words—are much more passionate than her sister’s:

DORABELLA:
Ooh, sister, check him out; see the fire in his eyes! Whoa! It’s as if hot arrows are just shooting from them!

FIORDILIGI:
Here you can see a portrait of both a lover and a soldier.

DORABELLA:
And here you can see a face that delights me and threatens me!

**C.** The tempo picks up and the ladies sing a joyful duet in which they rather prematurely promise to suffer a life of pain and anguish should they ever change their hearts and minds about their boyfriends. Note, when listening to the duet, the gorgeous and rapturous adagio when Fiordiligi and Dorabella sing the word amore (love). (**Musical selection:** No. 4, duet.)

**D.** A spirited recitative ensues between the sisters. No doubt, these young ladies are primed for a fall.

**E.** Dorabella then comments on the fact that the boys are late.

**F.** At that moment, Don Alfonso enters. The girls take one look at Don Alfonso, and they know something is terribly wrong. The Don, shaking his head with despair, can only respond in generalities. In the first aria of the opera, Don Alfonso proves himself to be a superb actor. He offers a short, stuttering non-explanation that is calculated to inspire the maximum panic. Something is terribly wrong, and Don Alfonso won’t say what:

ALFONSO:
[“Barbaro fato!”] Terrible fate! I want to tell you, but I haven’t the heart. My lips can only quiver. The words won’t come; they just stick in my throat. What will happen? What will you do? My God, what a disaster! This is the worst thing that could have happened. I’m so sorry for you. (**Musical selection:** No. 5, aria.)

**G.** In the recitative that follows, Don Alfonso finally reveals that although the boys are not yet dead, they are almost as good as dead—they’ve been called up to fight in the war against the Turks.

**H.** On cue, Ferrando and Guglielmo enter, in uniform, to say their good-byes. Walking stiffly, their faces filled with pain and grief, the men slowly approach the ladies but can say nothing.

**I.** It quickly becomes clear that Fiordiligi and Dorabella are not going to handle this goodbye particularly well.

**J.** When we listen to this music, we should note Mozart’s miraculous ability to simultaneously project vastly different emotions, agendas, and worldviews during his ensembles.

1. Mozart has a playwright’s sense of how people talk to and talk at one another, and of course, he has an almost unique ability to set such interactive words to music.

2. And it is music that deepens the moment, music that gives substance to the characters, music that is emotionally compelling and incredibly beautiful, yet always allows the words being sung to be clearly heard and the emotions beneath the words to be understood. (**Musical selection:** No. 6, quintet, first half.)
Lecture Three

_Cosi fan tutte, Part Two_

**Scope:** Don Alfonso congratulates himself on the success of his ruse so far and sings a vehement aria about the fickleness of women. He bribes the ladies’ maid, Despina, to become his accomplice. Despina—as a street-smart, sharp-tongued servant—is an archetype of the *Commedia dell’arte*, from which the stock characters of opera buffa are derived. She shocks Fiordiligi and Dorabella by advising them to find new lovers. In her view, men are never faithful, so women need not be either. Following Don Alfonso’s instructions, Despina admits two new suitors into the ladies’ house—Ferrando and Guglielmo in disguise as Albanians. Despina does not recognize them, and neither do the ladies, who indignantly order them to leave.

**Outline**

I. As a first step in Don Alfonso’s ruse, the men pretend to have been called up by the army to serve in the war against the Ottoman Turks. Guglielmo and Ferrando have come to say goodbye to their now distraught girlfriends, Fiordiligi and Dorabella.

A. Guglielmo and Ferrando do their best to console Fiordiligi and Dorabella, who can only talk of suicide. Don Alfonso, for his part, is having a wonderful time. He turns and says as an aside, “This comedy is delightful, and both of them are playing their parts very well!” ([Musical selection](#): recitative.)

B. Suddenly, a military drum is heard. In performance, a small boat will appear on stage, hired by Don Alfonso to show up at the sound of the drum. Dorabella and Fiordiligi shriek in agony. A rag-tag military band, followed by an equally motley chorus of citizens and soldiers, enters, singing an army recruiting song—“Bella vita military,” “How wonderful is the soldier’s life.” We listen as the band and chorus approach from the distance:

**CHORUS:**
How wonderful is the soldier’s life! Lots of travel, lots of perks, sometimes on land, sometimes on sea. The music of the trumpet and pipes, the bursting of cannon and bombs strengthens your arm and your spirit, urging them to triumph. How wonderful is the soldier’s life. ([Musical selection](#): No. 8.)

C. The men say their goodbyes as the ladies gnash and wail. As far as Guglielmo and Ferrando are concerned, it’s proof of their love and fidelity. It does not seem to occur to any of the men that the pain they are causing Fiordiligi and Dorabella might be wrong.

D. Finally, the men depart. Fiordiligi, Dorabella, and Don Alfonso are left alone on stage, and as the little boat bearing the men recedes in the distance, they sing the trio “Soave sia il vento,” “May the wind be gentle.”

   1. It is a beautiful and touching prayer for a safe journey and constitutes a sublime, even magical moment in what has otherwise been a fast-paced and comic first act:

**FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA, ALFONSO:**
May the wind be gentle, may the sea be calm, and may the elements respond kindly to our wishes.

   2. The words tell us nothing about the deeply felt beauty of this trio, and it is so typical of Mozart’s incredible art that he can transform such frankly plain words into something sublime and extraordinary. Note, in particular, the gently undulating strings in the accompaniment, which describe the gentle wind and sea invoked by the text. ([Musical selection](#): No. 10, trio.)

E. Having completed the trio, Fiordiligi and Dorabella exit, leaving Don Alfonso alone on stage. The sublime mood of the trio is instantly obliterated as the Don most cynically congratulates himself on his acting ability and contemplates the folly he has just witnessed:

**ALFONSO:**
I’m not a bad actor. It’s going very nicely. These two champions of Venus and of Mars will be waiting for me at a prearranged place. I must go to meet them, without delay. Oh, what sighs, what grimaces, what buffoonery! All the better for me—those women will fall that much more easily. The more sighs and tears, the more vulnerable they will be to the comforts of new lovers. Those poor boys—to bet a hundred gold pieces on the fidelity of women!

Don Alfonso now sings a brief but telling little aria. Accompanied by a dark and turgid orchestra, this aria is the polar opposite of the trio we just heard. Here, the sea and wind are violent; they are the heart of a woman, on which, according to Don Alfonso, a man’s hopes are dashed: “Whoever bases his hopes on a woman’s heart might as well try to plow the sea and sow the sand and hope to catch the wanton wind in a net!”

1. The depth of violent emotion with which Mozart invests this tiny arioso has led many critics and writers to claim that Don Alfonso is a closet misogynist.
2. The violent and tumultuous tone of this aria seems to reflect Mozart’s own anger toward Constanze in the fall of 1789. (Musical selection: No. 10a, aria.)

With their young men ostensibly shipped off to war, the distraught Fiordiligi and Dorabella retire to their villa to grieve and pine. Alfonso has decided to hire a co-conspirator; her name is Despina, and her occupation is ladies’ maid to Fiordiligi and Dorabella.

A. Act I, scene 3, begins in a large room in Fiordiligi’s and Dorabella’s villa. Despina enters. She is young and adorable; she is wearing some sort of maid’s outfit that typically accentuates her bosom, imbuing her with a sauciness and sexuality that is the essence of her character. She is carrying a tray with two cups on it, which she puts down on a table. Her opening recitative is standard opera buffa fare: how rotten, demeaning, and boring it is to be a servant. (Musical selection: Act I, scene 3, opening recitative.)

B. For audiences of Mozart’s time, Despina would have been an instantly recognizable character type, an archetype.

1. At the backbone of opera buffa are the stock characters of the traveling theatrical troupes referred to collectively as the Commedia dell’arte. These character archetypes—and the sorts of scenes and actions associated with them—are the backbone of the three Da Ponte libretti Mozart set to music: The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte.
2. From its deepest roots in the Roman comedies of Terence and Platus to the improvised performances of the Commedia dell’arte, opera buffa is, at its core, about comic speed, disguise, the mocking of pretensions, and ridicule of the affectations of aristocrats and would-be fashionable society. It is also about certain types of characters—archetypes—with which we, as an audience, can immediately identify.
3. William Mann describes a number of these characters, including “doctors, especially with surgical instruments and weird remedies; soldiers whether licentious or hot tempered or cowardly; scholars and lawyers and pedantic tutors and fake magicians…Columbina, the pretty young girl loved by all, though feared for her sharp tongue, is the only woman in the standard tradition” (Mann, 358–359).
4. Despina is a “Columbina” archetype. She relies on common sense, wit, a fast tongue, and unexpected opportunity to get through life. She is saucy and sexy and has little respect for people of position and no patience for their pretensions. She is accustomed to being able to fool people and, of course, to getting her own way.
5. Like her sister-in-arms Susanna from The Marriage of Figaro and her brother-in-arms Leporello from Don Giovanni, Despina is a domestic servant and an accomplished impersonator and mimic.

C. Immediately after we meet Despina, Fiordiligi and Dorabella enter. Despina asks what is the matter, which opens the floodgates. Fiordiligi explains that their lovers have left Naples.
D. Despina exhales, shrugs, and looks at the ceiling. “That’s it?” she thinks. “That’s what all the screaming is about? That’s all?” Dorabella explains that the boys have gone “to the battlefield.”
E. Despina remains unconcerned. She responds: “So much the better for them; they’ll return covered in medals.” Fiordiligi is horrified at Despina’s callousness:

FIORDILIGI:
But they could die!

DESPINA:
Well then, so much the better for you.

DORABELLA [to Despina]:
Stupid, stupid girl! Do you know what you’re saying?

DESPINA:
Yeah, the simple truth, my ladies: If you lose those two, well, there are lots more where they came from.

F. This idea is unthinkable for the overwrought ladies. They take turns talking about their suffering. Despina applauds the performance she’s just witnessed and says: “Bravo! Well done! You say that now, but it’s not true; no woman has ever died of love. To die for a man. You must be joking!”

G. Despina continues to lecture the girls. It becomes quite clear that she is, along with Don Alfonso, the other faculty member in this “School for Lovers.”

DESPINA:
Sure, now you love these men, but later you’ll love others. And not one of them is worth a thing. But, all right, you don’t have to worry about these things, because they’re still alive and they’ll be back soon enough. But in the meantime, they are far away, and instead of moping around and making my life miserable, you should figure out how you’re going to amuse yourselves.”

H. The girls are stunned. Dorabella angrily replies: “Don’t you dare insult those splendid souls; those paragons of purest love and fidelity.”

I. Despina can only shake her head and say: “Oh, please! Not even a child would believe that.”

J. We have arrived at what is known in the trade as an “aria opportunity.” Despina does not disappoint; she sings her famous aria “In uomini, in soldati”; “In men, in soldiers.” Despina’s words to Fiordiligi and Dorabella parallel those of Don Alfonso to Guglielmo and Ferrando. Despina’s version of the facts of life is humorous and flirtatious, as befits both her character and station:

DESPINA:
In uomini, in soldati, sperare fedeltà?
You think men and soldiers will be faithful?
In uomini sperare fedeltà?
You think men will be faithful?
In soldati sperare fedeltà?
You think soldiers will be faithful?
Non vi fate sentire per carità!
For goodness sake, don’t let anyone hear you!
Di pasta simile son tutti quanti;
They’re all made of the same worthless stuff;
Le fronde mobili, l’aure incostanti
Fluttering leaves and the irregular
Han più degli uomini stabilità.
Wind are more predictable than men.
Menti lagnirme, fallaci sguardi,
Lying tears, false glances,
Voci ingannevoli, vezzi bugiardì,
Deceitful voices, treacherous caresses,
Son le primarie lor qualità.
These are their primary tricks.
In noi non amano che il cor diletto,
They use us only for their own pleasure,
Poi ci disprezgiano, neganci affetto,
Then they despise us and reject us,
Nè val da’ barbari chieder pietà.
And it’s useless to expect mercy from these barbarians.
Paghiam, o femmine, d’ugual moneta
My ladies, let us pay these rotten,
Questa malefica razza indiscreta;
Evil men back in their own coin.
Amiam per comodo, per vanità.
Let’s make love to anyone we choose,

K. Despina’s lesson falls on deaf ears. Like their boyfriends, Fiordiligi and Dorabella are fated to learn from experience hard earned.
III. It seems that Despina will make the ideal accomplice for Don Alfonso.

A. Don Alfonso decides to bribe Despina into going along with the ruse. He calls for her. She enters and looks Don Alfonso up and down. Clearly she thinks he wants something more than merely her help. She wrinkles her nose and says:

DESPINA: Oh, yuck.

DON ALFONSO: My dear Despina, I need you.

DESPINA: But I don’t need you.

DON ALFONSO: Listen, I can do something for you.

DESPINA: An old man like you can’t do anything for a girl like me.

[Don Alfonso holds something under Despina’s nose:]

DON ALFONSO: Oh, be quiet and look at this.

[It’s a gold coin. Despina warms instantly:]

DESPINA: Is that for me?

DON ALFONSO: Yes, if you’re good to me.

DESPINA: Well, what would you like? You know, gold’s my weakness.

DON ALFONSO: And gold you shall have, but you must do what I tell you to do.

DESPINA: That’s it? I’m all yours!

B. Don Alfonso gives her the gold piece. Explaining his ruse—which Despina is very quick to grasp—Don Alfonso tells Despina that two new suitors are waiting to meet the girls. Despina is intrigued. Ferrando and Guglielmo enter, disguised as Albanians.

C. Alfonso’s game now becomes clear. He figures that if Despina doesn’t recognize the boys, neither will Fiordiligi or Dorabella.

1. Guglielmo and Ferrando enter, wearing colorful and fluffy faux-Turkish outfits and huge fake moustaches; clearly, “Albanian” is a euphemism for strange or exotic.

2. Emperor Joseph II had, during the summer of 1789, returned from a military campaign against Turkey and had traveled through “Albania” on his way to and from Vienna. The use of “Albanians” here constitutes an inside joke, one that undoubtedly would have amused the Emperor, who had himself suggested the topic for this opera in the first place.

D. Alfonso introduces the men to Despina with music that is formal and martial in tone.

E. Despina’s eyes are the size of saucers! She’s never seen such men; she laughs out loud! Running scales and flitting strings add a sort of musical laughter to Despina’s amusement.

F. The boys are thrilled: Despina does not recognize them! (Musical selection: No. 13, beginning.)

G. No. 13 continues: The next test occurs almost immediately; from offstage, we hear Dorabella and Fiordiligi approaching, all the while yelling Despina’s name. Despina addresses them ironically: “My ladies!” Don Alfonso decides to make himself scarce:
FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
Despina! Despina!

DESPINA:
My ladies!

ALFONSO:
It’s the moment of truth! Use your wits; I’ll hide in here.

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
You wretched, shameless girl! What are you doing here with these men? Get rid of them this instant, or you’ll be sorry!

DESPINA, FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Oh ladies, forgive us! See at your beautiful feet two wretches languishing and burning with passion for your charms!

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
Great heavens! What am I hearing? What despicable creature is responsible for this outrage!

DESPINA, FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Whoa! Calm down ladies, calm down!

H. Fiordiligi and Dorabella are outraged. The sextet concludes in a remarkable and extended segment in which three different views of the goings on are expressed simultaneously. First, Fiordiligi and Dorabella are furious at the presence of the two strangers in their home:

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
I will control myself no longer! My entire soul is filled with scorn and terror! Ah, forgive me my darling, my heart is innocent.

[Do the ladies protest too much? Certainly, Despina and Don Alfonso (singing from his hiding place) think so:]

DESPINA, ALFONSO:
I’m just a little suspicious of all this rage and fury!

I. Meanwhile, Guglielmo and Ferrando are having a great time; they are overjoyed by what seems to be the women’s outright rejection of the amorous Albanians. (Musical selection: No. 13, conclusion.)
Lecture Four  
_Cosi fan tutte, Part Three_

**Scope:** Don Alfonso explains to Dorabella and Fiordiligi that the “Albanians” are old friends of his. The “Albanians” profess their “love” for the ladies, who are, once again, outraged. Fiordiligi sings her famous aria “Come scoglio” (“Like a Rock”) expressing her fidelity to her fiancé. The men profess their “love” once more, before the ladies walk out. The finale to Act I is a classic example of the opera buffa finale with its exclusion of recitative and the requirement that all the opera’s characters assemble on stage in a progressive succession: In the garden, the ladies muse on the strange events of the day; the “Albanians” enter, pretending to be dying of self-administered poison; Don Alfonso goes off to find a doctor; and the ladies are left to comfort their stricken suitors.

**Outline**

I. When we left off, the Sextet No. 13 had just ended and Fiordiligi and Dorabella were about to throw the ersatz Albanians out. At this point, Don Alfonso makes his appearance.

   A. Alfonso pretends that Ferrando and Guglielmo are old friends, who have turned up unexpectedly.

   B. Now that the strangers have been formally acknowledged as Don Alfonso’s “dear friends,” Fiordiligi and Dorabella no longer feel empowered to kick them out of the house. Guglielmo and Ferrando see their opening and, claiming to have observed the ladies from afar, swear that they have fallen helplessly and hopelessly in lust with them.

   C. Again, this is all too much for Dorabella, but Fiordiligi rises to the occasion. In the face of adversity, she shows herself to be tough and tells the would-be suitors to leave:

   FIORDILIGI:  
   Reckless, foolish men! Get out! And do not profane this house, our hearts, our ears, and our feelings with your scandalous words! You are wasting your time, trying to seduce us! We shall keep the faith and fidelity we promised our lovers until death, in spite of all the world, in spite of destiny itself!

   D. Note that this is a _recitativo accompagnato_—that is, the entire orchestra accompanies Fiordiligi. Not only does this imbue the recitative with dramatic import and power, but it also imbues the character of Fiordiligi with a heroic persona, because such accompanied recitatives were generally reserved, by operatic tradition, for heroes, gods, and royalty. (Musical selection: recitative.)

   E. The role of Fiordiligi was created for a singer named Adriana Ferrarese del Bene, who was, not coincidentally, Lorenzo Da Ponte’s mistress at the time. According to William Mann, “She was ugly and not a talented singer, but admired by some for her eyes and her pretty mouth” (Mann, 522–523).

      1. Lorenzo Da Ponte’s mistress or not, Mozart had to give his approval for the casting of Adriana Ferrarese del Bene as Fiordiligi, and he did, despite the fact that he didn’t think much of her singing. It seems that Adriana Ferrarese del Bene was as arrogant as she was unattractive; as a result, Mozart came to despise her.

      2. Her great aria in _Cosi fan tutte_—“Come scoglio,” “Like a Rock”—is filled with monstrous vocal leaps. From a purely dramatic point of view, we could rightly say that Fiordiligi’s ability to negotiate these huge leaps was intended, by Mozart, to show a woman in complete control.

      3. But there was something else involved here, something quite malicious. Mozart was banking on Ferrarese’s tendency to lower her chin on low notes and throw back her head for high notes; “Come scoglio”—with its back-and-forth alteration of high and low would have made Ferrarese look just like a chicken.

      4. This is just the sort of thing Mozart would do if he was of such a mind.

   FIORDILIGI:  
   Come scoglio immoto resta  
   Con noi nacque quello face,  
   As a rock stands firm  
   My fidelity consoles my grief,  
   Contra i venti e la tempesta,  
   In faith and in love.  
   Così ognor quest’alma è forte  
   Nella fede e nell’amor.  
   So my soul will always be strong  
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Che ci piace, e ci consola; And gives me joy and peace;
E potrà la morte sola, And only death
Far che cangi affetto il cor. Could change my heart.
Rispettate, anime ingrate, You, you heartless ingrates,
Questo esempio di costanza, Must honor this example of fidelity
E una barbara speranza And let it destroy the audacious
Non vi renda audaci ancor. Hopes that have made you bold!

5. One way or the other, in “Come scoglio,” Mozart created one of the great soprano showpieces in the entire vocal repertoire. (Musical selection: No. 14, aria, “Come scoglio.”)

F. After “Come scoglio” is finished, the girls turn heel and are about to leave. Fiordiligi—the white lily of fidelity and purity—has willed it such.

G. For all intents and purposes, Ferrando and Guglielmo have won the bet. Once the ladies walk out of the room, it is over. But they don’t walk out. Why not? Because the men stop them!
1. Ferrando begs Fiordilig: “Oh, don’t go!” and Guglielmo, blocking Dorabella’s path, implores: “Oh, cruel woman, stay.”
2. Ferrando and Guglielmo keep the women onstage just long enough for Don Alfonso to do some quick talking. Why? Are the men stupid? Do they not want to win the bet?
3. More than anything else, the issue is not the ladies; it is their machismo, something that Don Alfonso seems to have counted on from the beginning. Ferrando and Guglielmo want to seduce each other’s girlfriends; they want to prove their masculine prowess; they want to show each other and the world that they can have any woman they choose to pursue. Whether they realize it yet or not, they’re no longer competing with Don Alfonso but with each other.

H. Guglielmo and Ferrando manage to keep Fiordiligi and Dorabella in the room. With the ladies listening and looking on, Guglielmo sings a marvelous aria—“Non siate ritrosi,” “Don’t be shy”—extolling the men’s physiques:

**GUGLIELMO:**
Non siate ritrosi occhietti vezzosi, Don’t be shy,
Due lampe amorosi Return our loving glances
Vibrate un po’ quà. With your beautiful eyes.
Felici rendeteci Make us happy
Amate con noi, Love us,
E noi felicissimi Make us happy,
Faremo anche voi, And in return
Guardate, toccate, We will make you happy too.
Il tutto osservate; Look, touch, check us out! We
Siam forti e ben fatti, Are a couple of wild and crazy
E come ognun vede, Guys; we are strong and well built,
Sia merto, sia case, And it’s obvious for any one to see,
Abbiamo bel piede, Whether by good luck, or because
Bell’occhio, bel naso, We deserve it, that we have great
Guardate bel piede, Feet, beautiful eyes, wonderful
Osservate bell’occhio, Noses! Look at these feet,
Toccate bel naso, Check out these eyes!
Il tutto osservate: Touch these noses.
E questi mustacchi Observe the whole package,
Chiamare si possono Especially our moustaches
Trionti degli uomini, Which may properly be called
Penacchi d’amor, The triumphs of manhood,
Trionti, Plumes of love,
Penacchi, mustacchi! Triumphs, plumes, moustaches!

I. When the ladies march out in a huff at the end of this aria, their hostility and outrage do not seem nearly as pronounced as they were but moments before. Indeed, Dorabella is already casting little sideways glances at Guglielmo! (Musical selection: No. 15; No. 14, aria.)
J. We should note that this wonderful aria was a replacement for the original aria, entitled “Turn your eyes on him.” It was cut because Da Ponte’s text, full of sophisticated literary allusions, was out of character for the otherwise intellectually challenged Guglielmo. It’s a great and clever aria and is now performed as a self-standing concert work, designated as K. 584. Its text reads as follows:

GUGLIELMO [speaking to Fiordiligi and pointing at Ferrando]:
Turn your eyes on him and see him as he is—freezing, burning, adoring, begging for pity. And you [speaking directly to Dorabella], look for a moment at me and you will find in my eyes what my lips cannot express. Orlando [Roland de Roncevalles] was no lover compared to me, and Medoro’s wounds [from Tasso’s Orlando Furioso] are nothing like my friend’s. My sighs are made of fire, his desires, bronze; our eloquence is unmatched from Vienna to Canada.

We are as rich as Croesus, as beautiful as Narcissus; as lovers we make Mark Antony look like a beginner. We are stronger than Cyclops and as literary as Aesop. When we dance, Picq grants us superiority, so elegant and agile is our footwork [this is a reference to the contemporary dance master Carlo de Picq, who had been the principal male dancer in a number of Mozart operas], and we have other skills that nobody knows!

K. At the conclusion of Guglielmo’s aria, the girls finally do walk out, and the men laugh themselves silly with delight.

L. Despina and Don Alfonso decide that what is needed to push their plans forward is a bold stroke, something calculated to create both pity and affection in the hearts of the girls. Their masterstroke will take place during the wonderful Act I finale.

II. The finale had become an integral part of opera buffa tradition by the mid-eighteenth century. It is one of the essential elements that sets opera buffa apart from opera seria, that is, serious or “heroic” opera.

A. In his memoirs, Lorenzo da Ponte describes the proper recipe for an opera buffa finale: “The finale is a sort of little comedy in itself and requires a fresh plot and special interest of its own. Recitative is excluded from it; everything is sung, and all the singers should appear on the stage, even if there were 300 of them, by ones, twos, threes, sixes, tens, sixties, to sing solos, duets, trios, sextets, septets, and if the plot of the play does not allow it, the poet must find some way of making the plot allow it.”

B. A typical Mozart finale runs around twenty minutes in length; twenty minutes of continuous, aria-like melody and forward dramatic motion.

C. Mozart’s finales are the crown jewels of his operas, which themselves are the gems of the repertoire.

D. The Act I finale of Così consists of seven distinct parts. It is labeled in the score simply as “No. 18”; we will begin our examination of this finale now and conclude it in Lecture Five.

III. The finale begins with a duet between Fiordiligi and Dorabella.

A. They are back in their garden; the warm breezes and fresh air of the afternoon are reflected in the light, almost carefree orchestral introduction, as well as in the women’s outward calm. However, much has changed since we last met the two girls in this garden, and that is what they are reflecting on:

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
Oh, how my life has changed in just an hour! Oh, what a storm of torment my life has suddenly become! As long as my love was near me, I did not know suffering, I did not know sorrow! (Musical selection: No. 18, Act I, finale, part 1, duet.)

B. Fiordiligi’s and Dorabella’s suffering is expressed here rather sweetly by Mozart. Is Mozart suggesting that they are not suffering quite as much as their words indicate? The girls’ idyll is suddenly disturbed by loud, impassioned shouting. It is, of course, Guglielmo and Ferrando. Still in disguise as the rejected Albanian suitors, they pretend to take poison, to the horror of the ladies:

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Let us die, yes, let us die, and so appease those heartless creatures!

ALFONSO:
There’s still hope! Don’t do it, good God, don’t do it.

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
Heavens, what terrible cries!

[Struggling with Don Alfonso, who has grabbed them both, Guglielmo and Ferrando yell:]

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Let me go!

ALFONSO:
Wait!

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Let this arsenic free me from their cruelty!

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
My God! Was that really poison?

ALFONSO:
Poison good and proper. They’ll both be dead in just a few moments.

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
This tragic spectacle freezes my heart!

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Cruel women, come here, and see the terrible results of our desperate passion, and at least have some pity on us.

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA, FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO, ALFONSO:
The sun’s rays are growing dark! I tremble; I feel my nerves and spirit beginning to falter, and neither my lips nor my tongue can form a word!

C. Immediately after finishing the quintet, Guglielmo and Ferrando fall facedown on the grass, their bodies twitching grotesquely. (Musical selection: No. 18, Act I finale, part 2, quintet.)

D. Poor Dorabella and Fiordiligi. They had just managed to restore a measure of peace to their lives, and now they’ve got two poisoned Albanians lying in their garden. Fiordiligi and Dorabella are completely traumatized. Don Alfonso and Despina suggest that the ladies comfort their “poisoned” suitors, while they go for the doctor. (Musical selection: No. 18, Act I finale, part 3, quintet.)

E. Despina and Don Alfonso exit, leaving the ladies alone with the men for the first time. Fiordiligi and Dorabella don’t know what to do with the comatose Albanians. Mozart sets their voices as quiet and hesitant; they’re almost whispering, as if not to bother the groaning men who are, in reality, enjoying themselves immensely:

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
This is a disaster! I couldn’t imagine a more terrible sight!

[To which Ferrando and Guglielmo respond as an aside:]

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
[“Più bella comediola”] A prettier little comedy could hardly be imagined!

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Aarghh!

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
The poor things are making sounds!

FIORDILIGI:
What shall we do?

DORABELLA:
What do you think?

FIORDILIGI:
How could we abandon them at such a critical moment?

DORABELLA:
They are fascinating!

FIORDILIGI:
I suppose we could get a little closer.

[Dorabella touches Guglielmo, who, in real life, is Fiordiligi’s boyfriend:]

DORABELLA:
His head is as cold as ice!

FIORDILIGI:
This one’s cold too, so cold!

DORABELLA:
And his pulse?

FIORDILIGI:
I can’t feel it.

DORABELLA:
This one’s beating slowly, so slowly.

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
If help doesn’t come soon, they’ll die for sure!

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
They’re being so gentle and becoming more amenable, although it remains to be seen if this compassion will turn into love.

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
Poor things! It would be really dreadful if they died!

F. And with that realization—that they care whether the Albanians live or die—Fiordiligi and Dorabella have, unwittingly, taken another step toward their eventual downfall. (**Musical selection**: No. 18, Act I finale, part 4, quintet.)
Lecture Five

Cosi fan tutte, Part Four

Scope: The finale to Act II continues as Despina enters the garden disguised as a doctor, who cures the “Albanians” with a giant magnet—a reference to an invention of Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer, a friend of the Mozarts. The finale to Act II concludes with an extraordinary polyphony of differing emotions and viewpoints, as the “Albanians” continue to press their advances on the indignant ladies, much to the amusement of Despina and Don Alfonso. Act II opens with Despina encouraging her ladies to accept their suitors, who have serenaded the ladies. After the serenade, the couples pair off to walk in the garden.

Outline

I. We return to the Act I finale of Cosi fan tutte.
   A. Part 5 of the finale is a sextet. Don Alfonso enters with Despina, who is disguised as a doctor. She disguises her voice by singing with some weird sort of nasal twang. Mozart lets us know upfront that this strange medical apparition is indeed Despina, because “the doctor’s” entrance is accompanied by a version of the same orchestral introduction that preceded Despina’s aria “In uomini, in soldati,” “In men, in soldiers.”
   B. Despina takes a large magnet out of her bag and begins waving it above the Albanians. She says the magnet is a piece of Dr. Mesmer’s magnetic stone.
      1. This is an inside joke. Friedrich Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) was an Austrian physician who invented the horseshoe magnet and from whose name came the word mesmerize.
      2. He was a close friend and patron of the Mozart family; it was in his house that the twelve-year-old Mozart’s opera Bastien and Bastienne was first performed.
   C. Meanwhile, Despina continues to shake the magnet over Guglielmo’s and Ferrando’s heads and bodies; they twitch and squirm accordingly, until Despina pronounces them saved from death. (Musical selection: No. 18, Act I finale, part 5, sextet.)
   D. Part 6 of the finale is another sextet. The “Albanians” wake up. Mozart’s hesitant music reflects well the men’s “confusion” as they slowly return to consciousness:

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Where am I? What place is this? Who is he? Who are they? Am I in heaven? Are you Pallas, or Venus? [Ferrando addresses Fiordiligi; Guglielmo addresses Dorabella.] No, you are the goddess of my soul. I recognize your sweet face and by your gentle touch I recognize my love.

[They begin to kiss the women’s hands; the women try to pull their hands away, but the men hang on. Despina and Alfonso explain that the men are still under the effects of the poison—”it is nothing to worry about.”]

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
That may be so, but we have our reputations to think about.

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
I want to laugh so badly that I’m afraid my lungs will burst! [Turning to the women] Have pity on me, my beautiful idol! Turn your flashing eyes on me!

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA!
I don’t think I can resist them much longer!

   1. Note that as this section progresses, lines are repeated, groups of singers combine and break apart, the emotions being felt by the characters ebb and flow.
   2. The lines here must be repeated in various orders and in various combinations; Mozart realizes that the men need time to press their case and the ladies need time to be won over. (Musical selection: No. 18, Act I finale, part 6, sextet.)
   E. In the sextet of part 7, Guglielmo and Ferrando, emboldened by the ladies’ faltering resistance, decide to throw caution to the wind. In doing so, they push things a little too far, a little too fast. Leaping up suddenly, they attempt to embrace the respective objects of their desire, but for now, Fiordiligi and
Dorabella draw the line. They express their outrage, while Despina and Alfonso try to explain away the suitors’ enthusiasm as “just spasms.”

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Give me a kiss, oh, my treasure, just one kiss, and then I can die!

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
What? A kiss?

DESPINA, ALFONSO:
Oh, come on, do it as an act of kindness.

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
All right, this is asking way too much of a pure and faithful lover! My heart and soul are outraged by this brazen request!

DESPINA, ALFONSO:
A more amusing scene cannot be found anywhere in all the world, and what makes me laugh the most is all this rage and fury!

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
Desperate, poisoned, go to the devil, all of you! You’ll certainly regret it if I get any madder than I am now!

DESPINA, ALFONSO:
Spasms, just spasms. You’ll see that in no time the magnet will end these spasms, and they’ll be as good as new.

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Truly, one couldn’t find a more amusing scene in all the world. But I’m no longer sure whether all this rage is real or just feigned.

F. The finale concludes in an incredible polyphony of different emotions and viewpoints. (*Musical selection: No. 18, Act I finale, part 7, sextet.*)

II. Just as Act I began with Don Alfonso explaining the facts of life to Ferrando and Guglielmo, so Act II begins with a lecture-in-progress from Despina, who is explaining the facts of life to Fiordiligi and Dorabella. Unlike with Despina’s attempt to do so in Act I, this time, they are listening.

DESPINA:
You should behave like women. Treat love as something of little consequence, never miss a good opportunity, change your mind as often as you like, flirt with grace, foresee the disgrace so common among those women who actually trust men, “mangiar il fico e non gittare il pomo,” have your cake and eat it, too. Your Ganymedes have gone off to war? Until they return, do what soldiers do: go recruiting! Since these strangers adore you, let yourselves be adored! They’re rich, noble, handsome; they had the courage to die for you. Listen, pretty and elegant young ladies like yourselves might survive without love, but not without lovers.

A. So ends the first part of Despina’s lecture. It’s decided that the ladies will formally invite the men to come over for a visit. Despina then sings her second aria—to the now receptive Fiordiligi and Dorabella.

DESPINA:
Una donna a quindici anni
A woman of fifteen
Dee saper ogni gran moda,
Must know all the ways of the world,
Dove il diavolo ha la coda,
She must know where the devil’s tail is,
Cosa è bene, e mal cos’è.
She must know what’s good and what’s bad.
Dee saper le maliziette
She must learn all the little tricks
Che Innamorano gli amanti,
That fascinate lovers, she must be able to
Finger riso, finger piang, 
Fake laughter or tears,
Inventar i bei perché!
And how to invent believable excuses!
Dee in un momento
She must be able to deal with a hundred
Dar retta a cento.
Lovers at the same time.
Colle pupille
She must be able to speak to a thousand
Parlar con mille, 
With her eyes,
Dar speme a tutti, She must give them all hope,
Sien belli o brutti, Whether they are handsome or ugly,
Saper nascondersi, And know how to hide her plans
Senza confondersi, Without getting confused,
Senza arrossire, She must know how to lie
Saper mentire, Without blushing,
E qual regina And like a queen
Dall’ alto soglio On her exalted throne,
Col posso e voglio Make everyone obey her with
Farsi ubbidir. “I can and I will!”

[As an aside:]
Par ch’abbian gusto I think they like
Di tal dottrina! What they hear!
Viva Despina, Long live Despina,
Che sa servir! Who knows how to serve her ladies!

B. And with that, Despina exists. (Musical selection: No. 19, aria.)

C. Fiordiligi and Dorabella are left to stew. It quickly becomes clear that of the two, Dorabella is more than ready to fool around, as opposed to her sister, who is still scandalized at the prospect of getting involved with the “Albanians.”

1. Dorabella accuses her sister of cowardice and wants to know which of the two men Fiordiligi prefers.

2. In the following duet, No. 20, the sisters girlishly fantasize about romance with the two “Albanian” strangers:

DORABELLA: I’ll take the little dark one, who seems like much more fun to me.

[Dorabella has just chosen her sister’s boyfriend, Guglielmo.]

FIORDILIGI: And meanwhile I’ll laugh and joke with the little fair one.

DORABELLA: I’ll tease him when he speaks to me with his sweet words.

FIORDILIGI: Sighing, I’ll imitate the other one’s sighs. (Musical selection: No. 20, duet, opening.)

D. While the girls have been fantasizing, Don Alfonso, Ferrando, and Guglielmo have organized a torch-lit serenade. Just as the ladies finish fantasizing about their respective choices, Don Alfonso breathlessly rushes into their house and says, “Oh my dears, hurry to the garden. What fun! What music, what singing! What a brilliant spectacle! What enchantment! Quickly, hurry up!”

E. The ladies go to the garden, where they see a barge moored at the little dock, from which Ferrando and Guglielmo, accompanied by singers and musicians, are serenading them:

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO: FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Secondate, aurette amiche, Come to my aid, friendly breezes,
Secondate, i miei desiri, Help my desires,
E portate i miei sospiri And carry my sighs
Alla dea di questo cor. To the goddess of my heart.
Voi, che udiste mille volte You breezes who have heard a thousand
Il tenor delle mie pene; Times the reasons for my suffering;
Ripetete al caro bene, Repeat it once again
Tutto qualche udiste allor. To my dear love.

F. This is candy-sweet music. It goes directly to the romantic hearts of Dorabella and Fiordiligi. (Musical selection: No. 21, duet with chorus, opening.)
G. The serenade ends, the women approach the men, and the men completely lose their tongues. They can hardly speak at all. As the ladies get warmer, they start to freeze up; this is not going as planned. After some coaxing by Despina and Don Alfonso (No. 22, quartet), the couples pair off for walks in the garden, Dorabella with Guglielmo and Fiordiligi with Ferrando—each with the other’s lover.

FIORDILIGI:
Oh, what a lovely day!

FERRANDO:
A little on the warm side, I think.

DORABELLA:
What pretty little trees!

GUGLIELMO:
Yes, yes, they’re certainly pretty; they have more leaves than fruit.

FIORDILIGI:
How lovely these paths are! Shall we take a little stroll?

FERRANDO:
I am ready, my dear, to fulfill your any wish.

FIORDILIGI:
You’re too kind!

FERRANDO [in an aside to Guglielmo]:
We’ve reached the moment of truth!

FIORDILIGI:
What did you say to him?

FERRANDO:
Um, ah, I just told him to have a good time.

[Dorabella turns to Guglielmo and asks:]

DORABELLA:
Shall we also go for a walk?

GUGLIELMO:
If you like.

H. Ferrando and Guglielmo could have—indeed, probably should have—called off the bet at this moment. But they’re in too deep, and their machismo is now running in full gear. Instead, they’ve each disappeared down a torch-lit path with the other one’s girlfriend, grimly determined to see this thing through, probably thinking, at some unconscious level, that “if I do lose the bet, I’ve at least proven my manhood and tasted what would otherwise have been the forbidden delights of my best pal’s girlfriend!” (Musical selection: recitative, “Oh, what a lovely day!”)

I. Initially, we follow Dorabella and Guglielmo.

1. At first, Guglielmo’s attention is diverted; he keeps craning his neck in a vain attempt to see what Fiordiligi and Ferrando are up to.

2. After some repartee, during which an extremely flirtatious and suggestive Dorabella proves to be Guglielmo’s complete superior, he decides that it’s now or never. He pulls out a heart-shaped pendant and asks Dorabella to accept his gift:

GUGLIELMO:
Please accept this little gift.

DORABELLA:
A heart?

GUGLIELMO:
A heart: It is a symbol for my heart—one that burns, yearns, and suffers for you.

DORABELLA:
What a precious gift!

GUGLIELMO:
Do you accept it?

DORABELLA:
Cruel man, do not try to seduce a faithful heart!

GUGLIELMO [in an aside]:
The mountain is swaying; I’m sorry, but now my honor as a soldier is at stake! [To Dorabella:] I adore you!

DORABELLA:
For pity’s sake.

GUGLIELMO:
I am yours alone!

DORABELLA:
Oh, my God!

GUGLIELMO:
Give yourself to me, my dearest!

DORABELLA:
You’re killing me!

GUGLIELMO:
Then let us die together, oh, my hope of love, do you accept my gift?

DORABELLA:
I accept it.

GUGLIELMO [in an aside:] 
Poor Ferrando! [To Dorabella:] Oh, what a delight!

3. We listen to this dialogue in recitative before moving on to the duet that follows it. (Musical selection: Act II, recitative.)

J. What follows is one of the little jewels of Così, the duet “Il core vi dono,” “I give you this heart.” In Lecture Six, we’ll hear the duet and be witness to Guglielmo’s success and Ferrando’s ongoing inability to scale the “rock” that is Fiordiligi.
Scope: As Act II continues, Guglielmo succeeds in seducing Dorabella. Ferrando fails to do the same with Fiordiligi, but, unbeknownst to him, her resistance is beginning to break down. Ferrando is devastated to learn that Guglielmo succeeded in seducing his fiancée, Dorabella. At this point, Guglielmo sings one of the great arias of the operatic repertoire: “Donne mie, la fate a tanti” (“Dear ladies, you deceive so many”). This expresses the sentiment behind the opera title that all women are unfaithful. Don Alfonso and Guglielmo encourage Ferrando to make another attempt at seducing Fiordiligi, who admits to her sister that she is struggling to remain faithful to Guglielmo.

Outline

I. To reset the scene at the onset of Act II, Guglielmo and Ferrando—still in disguise as the “Albanians”—have made extraordinary inroads with Dorabella and Fiordiligi, the two sisters from Ferrara. With the assistance of Don Alfonso and Despina, circumstances have allowed for each couple—Guglielmo and Dorabella, Ferrando and Fiordiligi—to wander off into the gardens surrounding the ladies’ house.

A. The audience has followed Guglielmo and Dorabella. Guglielmo has just offered Dorabella the gift of a heart-shaped pendant, and she has accepted it.

B. What follows is the duet “Il core vi dono,” “I give you this heart.” The duet is in three parts: In part 1, the gift of the heart is again offered; in part 2, the gift is given; in part 3, the gifts of hearts are exchanged—Guglielmo’s pendant for Dorabella’s “real” heart—her love and affection. We begin with part 1:

GUGLIELMO: Il core vi dono
Bell’idolo mio; Ma il vostro vo’anch’io,
Via datelo a me.

DORABELLA: Mel date, lo prendo,
Ma il mia non vi rendo,
Invan me’l chiedete,
Piu meco non è.

[Dorabella refers here to the fact that she has already given her heart to her boyfriend, Ferrando.]

GUGLIELMO: Se teco non l’hai,
Perché batte qui?

DORABELLA: Se a me tu la dai,
Che mai balza li?

[Dorabella puts her hand on Guglielmo’s chest and sings:]

GUGLIELMO: If you no longer have it,
Why is it beating here?

DORABELLA: If you gave me your heart,
Whatever is beating in there?

[Guglielmo and Dorabella have their hands on each other’s chests; in the lines that follow, the two actually sing their heartbeats, at first individually, then together, a time-honored operatic device used to indicate the union of two people:]

GUGLIELMO:
Perché batte, batte, batte qui?  
Why is it beating, beating, beating here?

DORABELLA:  
DORABELLA:
Che mai balza, balza, balza li?  
Whatever is pounding, pounding, pounding here?

[And now, for the first time in the opera, Dorabella and Guglielmo sing together!]

DORABELLA, GUGLIELMO:  
DORABELLA, GUGLIELMO:
E il mio coricino,  
It’s my little heart,
Che più non è meco. 
That is mine no longer.
Ei venne a star teco,  
It is now yours,
Ei batte così!  
And that’s what is beating like this!

1. As we listen, note the short-long, short-long heartbeat rhythm of both Guglielmo’s and Dorabella’s opening lines. (Musical selection: No. 23, part 1, duet.)

2. In part 2, the gift is given. This part of the duet is almost recitative-like, as Guglielmo must first remove from Dorabella’s neck the locket with Ferrando’s portrait.

GUGLIELMO:  
GUGLIELMO:
Qui lascia che metta. 
Let me put this heart around your neck.

DORABELLA:  
DORABELLA:
Ei qui non può star. 
You mustn’t put it there.

GUGLIELMO:  
GUGLIELMO:
T’intendo, furbetta! 
I understand, you sly creature, you!

DORABELLA:  
DORABELLA:
Che fai? 
What are you doing?

GUGLIELMO:  
GUGLIELMO:
Non guardi. 
Don’t look.

[Dorabella asks what Guglielmo is doing, even though she knows. He’s taking off the locket with Ferrando’s portrait and putting his heart locket in its place.]

DORABELLA:  
DORABELLA:
Nel petto un Vesuvio 
It feels as if Vesuvius
D’avere mi par! 
Is erupting in my breast!

GUGLIELMO:  
GUGLIELMO [in an aside]:
Ferrando meschino! 
Poor Ferrando!
Possibil non par! 
It doesn’t seem possible!

3. Musically, part 3 is a varied reprise of part 1, although the couple spends most of the time singing together. Having replaced Ferrando’s portrait with his heart locket, Guglielmo sings to Dorabella:

GUGLIELMO:  
GUGLIELMO:
L’occhietta a me gira. 
Now open your eyes.

DORABELLA:  
DORABELLA:
Che brami? 
And what should I look at?

GUGLIELMO:  
GUGLIELMO:
Rimira, rimira, 
Just look, look at my heart;
Se meglio può amdar. 
Could any gift have been better?

DORABELLA, GUGLIELMO:  
DORABELLA, GUGLIELMO:
Oh cambio felice, 
Oh, joyful exchange of
Di cori e d’affetti! 
Hearts and affection!
Che nuovi diletti, What new delight I feel,
Che dolce penar! And what sweet pain!

C. Dorabella and Guglielmo exit. (Musical selection: No. 23, parts 2 and 3, duet.)

D. Even as Guglielmo and Dorabella have strayed from the walking path to find a secluded spot in which to consummate their relationship, Ferrando is finding it impossible to make serious romantic inroads with Fiordiligi.

1. We’ve known since almost the beginning of the opera that Fiordiligi was an entirely different sort of person than her sister.

2. Ferrando makes his move and Fiordiligi throws him out. Ferrando, emotionally wounded, exits, without realizing how close he had come to stealing Fiordiligi’s heart.

3. However, the audience finds out how close Ferrando came to breaking down Fiordiligi’s resistance, because the moment after he exits, Fiordiligi, in recitative, shrieks forth a torrent of guilt, despair, rage, passion, and otherwise confused emotions:

FIORDILIGI:
He is going…listen…Oh no! Let him go, so that I may no longer see the object of my temptation! What anguish this cruel man has inflicted on me! Is this my reward for my sins? How could I even think about listening to the sighs of a new lover at a time like this? This is terrible; what am I to do? I am condemned by my own heart, by my own righteous love! I burn—I burn with passion, and my passion has nothing to do with fidelity and virtuous love; it is frenzy, suffering, remorse, regret, vanity, deceit, and treachery! [And now that last line again, first in English, then in Italian:] I burn with frenzy, suffering, remorse, regret, vanity, deceit, and treachery! E smania, affanno, rimorso, pentimento, leggerezza, perfidia, e tradimento! (Musical selection: recitative conclusion.)

E. This is a key moment in the opera. An essential part of Fiordiligi seems to be waking up for the first time in her life. Genuine passion is sweeping her high and haughty “I’m-always-in-control” self-image away. She is growing up before our very eyes, and she doesn’t quite know how to handle it!

F. Having flayed herself with the recitative and the aria that follows it—No. 25, “Per pieta, ben mio,” “Have pity, my love”—Fiordiligi exits. Ferrando and Guglielmo enter; Ferrando—the one who just failed with Fiordiligi—is in a great mood, and Guglielmo—the one who just succeeded with Dorabella—is very uncomfortable, indeed, irritable. Odd emotions? Not when we consider that Ferrando believes the girls to be chaste and the bet to be won, and Guglielmo knows it to be lost. What transpires is one of Da Ponte’s most brilliant bits of dialogue:

FERRANDO:
My friend, we’ve won!

GUGLIELMO:
Sure. Can we try for double or nothing?

FERRANDO:
How about two for two? Fiordiligi is chastity itself.

GUGLIELMO:
Nothing less?

FERRANDO:
Nothing less. Now pay attention and I’ll tell you what happened.

GUGLIELMO:
Yeah, yeah, I’m all ears.

FERRANDO:
In the garden, as we agreed, we started walking, arm in arm. We talked about a thousand things of no importance and, finally, we began to talk of love.

GUGLIELMO:
Get on with it!

FERRANDO:
Well, I pretended to tremble, I pretended to weep, I pretended to die at her feet!

GUGLIELMO:
Oh, I’m sure you were marvelous. And what did she do?

FERRANDO:
At first she laughed, and joked, and made fun of me…

GUGLIELMO:
And then?

FERRANDO:
And then she pretended to be moved by compassion for me!

GUGLIELMO:
Oh my God!

FERRANDO:
And then—the bomb burst. She is keeping herself pure as a turtledove for her dear Guglielmo. She threw me out in no uncertain terms; she called me names, fled from me, and proved that she is, without any doubt whatsoever, a woman without equal!

GUGLIELMO:
Good for you, good for me, good for my Penelope! [“Bravo tu, bravo io, brava la mia Penelope!”] Let me give you a big hug for bringing me such wonderful news, my faithful pal! (Musical selection: recitative conclusion from “Bravo tu…”)

[Of course, Ferrando fully expects to hear the same thing about his beloved Dorabella. He confidently asks:]

FERRANDO:
And my Dorabella? How did she behave? Oh, I haven’t even the slightest doubt about it. I know the tender soul of that darling girl all too well.

GUGLIELMO:
Look, chum, between you and me, in this world a couple of doubts aren’t necessarily a bad thing.

FERRANDO:
What?! Did she give in to your flattery? Oh, if I even suspected it!

GUGLIELMO:
Listen, my man, between you and me, it’s always better in this world to have a few suspicions.

[Unfortunately, as we might suspect, Guglielmo’s ham-fisted attempts to soften the coming blow have only helped to work Ferrando up into a fury.]

FERRANDO:
Eternal gods! Tell me what happened! You’re killing me! But no, you’re playing a joke on me, right; she loves and adores no one but me, Ferrando…right?

G. Guglielmo knows that, at least, he has lost his portion of the bet.
   1. On one level, then, he is profoundly irked. However, he has just had relations with his best friend’s girlfriend, Dorabella, and perhaps, given her already noted proclivity toward sensuality, he found her more to his liking than his regular sweetheart, the haughty Fiordiligi.
   2. He is, at this moment, sated, and his own preening machismo has been, in his mind, affirmed by his successful seduction of Dorabella, and because of the nature of the bet, he doesn’t even have to feel guilty about it. Despite having lost the bet, Guglielmo is physically feeling pretty good and feeling pretty good about himself.
   3. On top of all this, Guglielmo may be already beginning to feel a little something for Dorabella above and beyond the playacting Don Alfonso has required of him.
   4. The fly in this ointment is the fact that before this last bit of recitative, Guglielmo had naturally assumed that Ferrando had had the same success with Fiordiligi, the thought of which infuriated him but also allowed him to rationalize his seduction of Dorabella.
5. Now, however, Guglielmo has found out that Ferrando has failed; that Fiordiligi would appear to be chaste and that his rationalizations for having scored with Dorabella are partly destroyed; that he still loves Fiordiligi; and that his friend Ferrando is a wimp who tried to seduce his girlfriend! At this point, when Ferrando asks if Guglielmo is playing a joke on him, Guglielmo, filled with guilt, remorse, machismo, satisfaction, and disdain, decides to drive the blade in to the hilt:

GUGLIELMO:
Certo! Anzi in prova di suo
Amor, di sua fede, questo
bel titrattino ella me diede.

GUGLIELMO:
Right, she adores no one but you. And
In order to prove her love and fidelity,
she
Gave me this locket with your portrait
in it!

FERRANDO:
Il mio ritratto! Ah, perfida!

FERRANDO:
AAAEEIII! My portrait! Evil, rotten
girl!

(Musical selection: Recitative conclusion from “Certo” [“Right”].)

[In one last burst of dying manhood, Ferrando attempts to bolt out of the room but is held back by Guglielmo:]

GUGLIELMO:
And where do you think you’re going?

FERRANDO:
To tear the heart out of her wicked strumpet’s breast and avenge my betrayed love!

GUGLIELMO:
Are you nuts? Are you crazy? You’re going to ruin your life for a woman who isn’t worth two cents?

[And with those words, Ferrando collapses. He sinks into a chair and lets his guard completely down; he’s lost and pathetic and becomes, for the first time in the opera, a real and sympathetic person!]

FERRANDO:
My God! So many promises and tears, sighs and vows! How could she have forgotten them so quickly?

GUGLIELMO:
I haven’t a clue!

FERRANDO:
What shall I do? Where shall I go now? Have pity on me, please, tell me what I should do.

GUGLIELMO:
My friend, I don’t know what to tell you.

[And now, two of the great lines from Così fan tutte, as it truly begins to dawn on both men what has happened:]

FERRANDO:
Barbara! Ingrata! In un giorno!

FERRANDO:
Cruel woman! Heartless ingrate!
Everything
Forgotten in one day! In a few hours!

GUGLIELMO:
Certo un caso quest’è da far stupore.

GUGLIELMO:
It’s certainly an astonishing situation.

(Musical selection: recitative conclusion from “Barbara…”)

H. In an attempt to process current events and come to grips with his own emotions, as well as those of his friend, Guglielmo sings one of the great buffo/comic arias of the operatic repertoire, “Donne mie, la fate a tanti,” “Dear ladies, you deceive so many,” conveniently forgetting that he is still dressed as an “Albanian” in his ongoing attempt to deceive the ladies.

1. During the course of the aria, an alternately indignant, cocky, militant, angry, astonished, condescending, and unhappy Guglielmo huffs and puffs about the fickleness of women.
2. Mozart has composed the aria as a rondo—that is, it keeps returning to the same admonishing refrain: “But the way you deceive so many, so many…”

GUGLIELMO:

Donne mie, la fate a tanti,
Che se il ver vi deggio dir,
Se si lagnano gli amanti
Li commincio a compatir.
Io vo bene al sesso vostro;
Lo sapete, ognun lo sà;
Ogni giorno ve lo mostro,
Vi do segno d’amistà.
Ma quel faria a tanti e tanti
M’avvilisce in verità.
Mille volte il brando presi,
Per salvar il vostro onor
Mille volte vi difesi
Colla bocca, e piú col cor.
Ma quel faria a tanti e tanti
E tanti, E un vizietto seccator.
Siete vaghe, siete amabili,
Più tesori il ciel vi diè
E le grazie vi circondano
Dalla testa sino ai piè;
Ma, ma, ma la fate a tanti e tanti
A tanti e tanti
Che credibile non è.
Io vo bene al sesso vostro,
Ve lo mostro,
Mille volte il brando presi
Vi difesi.
Gran tesori il ciel vi diè,
Sino al piè.
Ma la fate a tanti e tanti
A tanti, a tanti, a tanti
Che se gridano gli amanti
Hanno certo un gran perché
But the way you deceive so many,
That’s really incredible, unbelievable!
I love women and I’ve
Shown you that I do over and over again;
A thousand times I’ve grabbed my sword,
And defended you.
Heaven has blessed you, down to
Your adorable little toes.
That your lovers have good reason
To complain about you!

(Musical selection: No. 26, aria.)

I. Don Alfonso enters and quickly sizes up the situation—the drooping, disconsolate Ferrando and the bristling, fiery Guglielmo tell him all he needs to know. Don Alfonso rubs figurative salt in Ferrando’s wounded ego, hoping to egg him on into making one more attempt to seduce Fiordiligi. Not yet ready to throw in the towel, he sings:

ALFONSO:

Venite! Io spero mostrarvi
Ben che folle è quel cervello,
Che sulla frasca ancor vende l’uccello.

(Musical selection: Recitative from “Venite!…” [“Come with me…”].)

J. Meanwhile, behind the closed doors of the ladies’ house, a very different conversation is taking place. This is the parallel scene to the one just played out by the men, during which the ladies must now become accustomed to a rather new romantic paradigm.
II. Despina, talking to a flushed and excited Dorabella, says: “Now I see that you’re a woman of the world!”

A. Does this mean that Dorabella was not a “woman of the world”—that she was a virgin—until just moments ago? Or does it mean that now that she’s had “multiple partners” she can be considered “worldly”?
Whatever it means, we can see why so many viewers and pundits have, over the years, considered Così to be “immoral.”

B. Dorabella confesses that she could not resist Guglielmo.

C. Despina is thrilled; she begins her post-game pep-talk to Dorabella with some real locker-room language:

DESPINA: 
Corpo di Satanasso! “Body of Satan” [a major expletive]! Now you know a thing or two! It’s so rare for us poor girls to have a bit of fun that we need to go for it when we have the chance. And here’s your sister. Ooooh! What a long face.

D. Dorabella asks Fiordiligi, with perfect innocence, if something is wrong. Fiordiligi replies:

FIORDILIGI:
That something is the devil, and may the devil take you, and Despina, Don Alfonso, those terrible strangers, and all the other madmen in this world!

[And then Fiordiligi blurts out:]
I am in love, and this love of mine is not only for Guglielmo!

E. Fiordiligi is consumed with guilt and self-loathing. Dorabella reminds her sister that their soldier-boyfriends could die in battle—better the bird in hand! Fiordiligi makes one last attempt to fight off her own desires, assuring Dorabella that she will control herself.
Lecture Seven

Cosi fan tutte, Part Six

Scope: Ferrando finally succeeds in seducing Fiordiligi. Don Alfonso suggests that the “Albanians” punish the ladies by marrying them. He reminds them of his cynical view that all women are incapable of fidelity—all women behave this way. His celebrated aria “Cosi fan tutte” (“All women behave like this”) gave its name to the opera. The Act II finale begins with preparations for the wedding banquet. Ferrando, Dorabella, and Fiordiligi toast each other, but Guglielmo is not in a celebratory mood. In this finale, as in all Mozart’s finales, the contrasts in tempo, mood, and key are structured like a symphony. This is one of the reasons that Mozart’s finales have enormous momentum.

Outline

I. We are halfway through the second (and final) act of Così. Dorabella has fallen—figuratively and literally—for her sister’s boyfriend, Guglielmo. Fiordiligi has admitted—at a great price to her self-esteem and personal moral code—that she has fallen in love with Ferrando, although she has not yet been as physically active in her affections as her sister.

A. Dorabella now launches into the aria that balances Guglielmo’s own “Dear ladies, you deceive so many,” heard in Lecture Six. As we noted, this is the real Dorabella, and she is a lusty and not terribly moral party girl. Her aria—“Love’s a little thief”—is light, dancing, and full of sexual energy and mock anger against “remorseless” Cupid. Again, like Guglielmo’s “Dear ladies, you deceive so many,” Dorabella’s aria is set as a rondo, with the refrain consisting of the first four lines:

DORABELLA:
E amore un ladroncello,
Un serpentello e amor
Ei toglie e da la pace,
Come gli occhi al seno appena
Ei toglie e da la pace,
Come gli occhi al seno appena
Per gli occhi al seno appena
Un varco aprir si fa,
Che l’anima incantena
E toglie liberta.
E amore un ladroncello, etc.
Porta dolcezza e gusto,
Se tu lo asci far,
Ma t’empie di disgusto,
Se tenti di pugnar.
E amore un ladroncello, etc.
Se nel tuo seno ei siede
S’egli to becea qui,
Fa tutto quell che ei chiede,
Che anch’io faro così!

(Musical selection: No. 28, aria, “E amore un ladroncello” [“Love is a little thief”].)

B. At aria’s end, Dorabella and Despina exit, leaving Fiordiligi alone in the room. Don Alfonso and Guglielmo silently and secretly enter, there to observe what will become “Fiordiligi’s last stand”!

C. While Dorabella was singing her aria, Fiordiligi formulated a plan. She will dress in disguise—as a man—and join her beloved Guglielmo on the battlefield, there to live or die with him.

1. Fiordiligi is desperate, almost out of control, and she needs to do something positive to fend off her confused and powerful emotions.

2. Ferrando quietly enters the room. As a result of Don Alfonso’s prodding, he’s going give the seduction of Fiordiligi one more try. We, as an audience, know how primed and ready she is for the fall.
3. When Ferrando enters the room, Fiordiligi takes one look at Ferrando and becomes nearly hysterical. She says, “Who do I see? Who let you in here? Leave me; get out!”

4. Ferrando does not leave. He looks Fiordiligi in the eyes and once again threatens suicide; he throws himself at her feet; they sing together for the first time in the opera, and she breaks during the third part of their duet, No. 29:

**FERRANDO:**
Volgi a me pietoso il ciglio. Turn your eyes to me, if only out of pity.
In me sol trovar tu puoi In me you will find
Sposo, amante, e più, se vuoi A husband, a lover and anything else
Idol mio, più non tardar. That you wish.

**FIORDILIGI:**
Giusto ciel! Heaven have mercy!
Cruel! Hai vinto, Cruel man! You have won,
Fa di me quel che ti par! Do with me what you will.

5. A plaintive oboe solo marks Ferrando’s victory over Fiordiligi. The couple proceeds to sing in rhythmic unison, indicating, as always, that their hearts are united. We are left with the question of whether Ferrando is still playacting or if he has really met his match and found his mate in Fiordiligi. They sing together:

**FIORDILIGI, FERRANDO:**
Abbracciamci, o caro bene. Embrace me, oh my dearest love. Let it
E un conforto a tante pene Be our consolation for all our suffering
Sia languir di dolce affetto, To languish in sweet affection,
Di diletto sospirar. And to sigh with delight.

(Musical selection: No. 29 from “Volgi a me pietoso il ciglio” [“Turn your eyes to me, if only out of pity”].)

D. Fiordiligi and Ferrando exit, arm in arm, leaving behind on stage Don Alfonso and a completely flabbergasted Guglielmo, who has just witnessed Fiordiligi’s fall from grace:

**GUGLIELMO:**
Oh, poveretto me! Oh, my God!
Cosa ho veduto! What have I seen!
Cosa ho sentito mai! What have I heard!

**ALFONSO:**
Per carità silenzio! For goodness sake, keep it down!

**GUGLIELMO:**
Mi pelerei la barba! I’ll pluck out my beard!
Mi graffierei la pelle I’ll tear off my skin
E darei colle corna entro le stele! And charge the stars with my horns!
Fu quella Fiordiligi, la Penelope, Was that my Fiordiligi, my Penelope,
L’Artemisia del secolo? My Artemis for the ages?
Briccona, assassina furfante, The cheat, the assassin, the wretch,
Ladra, cagna! The liar, the bitch!

**ALFONSO:**
Lasciamolo sfogar. Okay, okay, get it out of your system.

II. Ferrando enters, grim but confident, with more than a little of the old strut back in his step. His wallet may be lighter, but he’s feeling a lot better about the state of the world and his own masculine powers and, maybe, he’s a little in love with Fiordiligi as well.

A. Guglielmo screams to Ferrando that Dorabella and Fiordiligi need to be punished.

1. Clearly, the situation is leaning dangerously toward domestic violence. Don Alfonso decides to step in before things get out of hand; he suggests that the perfect punishment is marriage!
2. Is Don Alfonso not a master of irony? He has suggested that the most perfect, most terrible punishment for the ladies would be having to marry either one of these guys. Notice, too, that Alfonso has not specified precisely which of the ladies the men should marry! Of course, Don Alfonso’s doubly ironic statement goes right over the rather flat heads of Ferrando and Guglielmo, who instead react with violent incredulity.

B. It’s time for Alfonso to complete the lecture begun way back at the very beginning of the opera; he tells them:

ALFONSO:
Sure, the world is full of women. But do you think that they are any different from these two? Besides, deep down, you still love them, these cornacchie spennacchiate, these plucked crows of yours.

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Oh, unfortunately, unfortunately!

ALFONSO:
Well then, you’ll have to take them as they are; nature couldn’t make an exception for you by customizing two women just for the sake of your handsome faces. You’ve got to be philosophical about this. Come with me, and let’s figure out a way to untangle this mess; I want a double wedding to take place this very evening. But before we do, listen to this little stanza of eight lines: I would suggest you learn it by heart.

[No. 30, aria.]

ALFONSO:

All men accuse women,
But I excuse them
Even if they change their affections
A thousand times a day.

Some call it a vice,
Others a terrible habit, but to me
It seems to be a necessity of the heart.

The lover who, in the end,
Finds himself fooled,
Should not blame anyone
But himself;
For all women, whether young or old,
Beautiful or ugly,
Repeat it with me:
All women behave like this!

ALFONSO, FERRANDO,
GUGLIELMO:

All women behave like this!

(Musical selection: Recitative from “Oh poveretta me! Cosa ho veduto!” [“Oh, my god! What have I seen!”] and aria No. 30, “Tutti accusan le donne” [“All men accuse women”].)

C. The only bird left unplucked is Despina, who will soon get her comeuppance. Indeed, just as the men finish singing “Così fan tutte,” Despina enters. Thrilled at the prospect of earning some gold by helping to marry Fiordiligi and Dorabella off to the Albanians, she announces to the men:

DESPINA:
Victory, my dear masters! Your beloved ladies are willing to marry you. I promised them that in three days, you will leave here on your honeymoon. They’ve ordered me to find a lawyer to draw up the marriage contract, and they’re now waiting for you in their house. Are you satisfied?

D. Of course, the men are not satisfied at all. The tone of voice with which they say “Contentissimi,” (“Yes, perfectly satisfied,”) says it all. (Musical selection: “Contentissimi.”)
E. To which Despina, clearly suffering from the sin of pride, responds, “When Despina gets involved in a project, she always gets results.”

III. We move now to the incredible Act II finale, the denouement: The disguises come off, the women and men are found out, one last birdie is plucked, and some very interesting questions are asked.

A. This finale divides itself into twelve distinct parts. We set the scene: a brightly lit room, festively decorated, with a table set for four people in the center of the room.

1. Part 1 begins with Despina putting the final touches on the wedding banquet; bright, fast music accompanies her excited words and quick actions.

2. Quietly the two co-conspirators—Alfonso and Despina—congratulate each other on their success: “A better little comedy has never been seen!”

DESPINA, ALFONSO: La più bella comediola
Non s’è vista, o si vedrà.

3. They exit and will observe the events that follow well hidden from view. (Musical selection: Act II, scene 4, finale, No. 31, part 1.)

B. The chorus of servants follows Alfonso’s instructions; they know that the more enthusiastic they are, the more they’ll be paid. Brass and drums add pomp and ceremony to their impromptu wedding hymn:

CHORUS: Benedetti i doppi conjugi
E le amabili sposine!
Splenda lor il ciel benefico,
Sien di figli ognor prolifiche
Che le agguagliino in beltà.

CHORUS: May the two loving husbands
And their two loving brides be blessed!
May heaven rain its joys upon them,
Reproduce prolifically a brood of
Children as beautiful as they are.

(Musical selection: finale, No. 31, part 2, Wedding Hymn.)

C. Fiordiligi, Dorabella, Guglielmo, and Ferrando now enter. The ladies are genuinely grateful to Despina for showing them “the true path” to feminine happiness. But the men hold Despina, along with Don Alfonso, responsible for this entire catastrophe; they know full well that without her, Don Alfonso could never have won the bet. They seethe at the mere mention of Despina.

D. The chorus repeats its hackneyed wedding hymn and departs. The two couples take their seats at the table and exchange sweet nothings and pleasantry:

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO: Tutto, tutto, o vita mia,
Al mio foco, o ben risponde!
FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA: Pel mio sangue l’allegria
Cresce, cresce e si diffonde!

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO: Now everything, my beloved,
Is answering to my love!
FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA: Oh, the happiness within me,
Is just growing and growing and spreading!

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO: You are so beautiful!
FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA: You are so charming!
FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO: What lovely eyes!
FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA: What a lovely mouth!
FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO: ©2002 The Teaching Company Limited Partnership
Tocca e bevi! Let’s clink our glasses and drink!

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
Bevi e tocca! Let’s drink and clink!

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA, FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
Tocca, bevi, bevi, tocca! Let’s clink and drink and drink and clink!

(Musical selection: Finale, No. 31, part 2 “Tutto, tutto, o vita mia” [“Now everything, my beloved”].)

E. Part 3 of the finale is a “set piece” in that no forward-moving, dramatic action takes place while it is being sung.
   1. The couples offer to each other a toast, sung as a canon—with each successive voice overlapping with
      the previous one—as a toast would indeed sound as it “moved” around a table, from one person to the
      next. Fiordiligi, Dorabella, and Ferrando lift their glasses and express their wish to forget “the past,”
      each for a different reason.
   2. Guglielmo does not participate in the toast. Just moments ago, he was witness to Fiordiligi’s “fall,” and
      there’s not a chance he’s going to be able to put that “memory of the past” out of his mind just yet. He
      sits there in a sullen stupor, calling the women “volpi”—foxes, or vixen—still trying to figure out
      exactly how all of this happened. Even while the others are singing their toast, Guglielmo is muttering
      obsessively: “Ah! Ah, if only they were drinking poison, poison, if only they were drinking poison,
      these vixens, these shameless vixens!”
   3. Thankfully, the others at the table seem not to hear Guglielmo or to notice the slightly homicidal glint
      in his eyes. But we can hear him, and we shall be aware that at this moment, he is a rather dangerous
      person. (Musical selection: Act II, finale, No. 31, part 3.)

F. In performance, these neatly packaged little sections of the finale flow by at incredible speed.

G. In Mozart’s operatic finales—this one included—the contrasts in tempo, mood, and in particular, key area
   (a topic not covered in this course) are organized along the lines of a large-scale instrumental work, like a
   symphony or a string quartet.
   1. Indeed, among the reasons why Mozart’s finales have such incredible thrust and momentum has much
      to do with the same large-scale manipulation of tempo, mood, and key area that we are witness to in
      his instrumental works.
   2. When Joseph Kerman writes in reference to Mozart that only the greatest of symphonists could write
      the greatest operatic finales, he was directly on point. In his operatic finales, Mozart brings to bear his
      extraordinary technical skills, learned in the realm of instrumental music, just as in his instrumental
      music, he brings to bear his amazing lyricism, elegance, and grace, learned in the field of vocal music.
Lecture Eight

Cosi fan tutte, Part Seven

Scope: Despina, disguised as a lawyer, gets the two couples to sign a marriage contract, which Don Alfonso slips into his pocket. Suddenly, the scene is disrupted by the unexpected return of their former fiancés. During the ensuing panic, Despina hides under a table, and Ferrando and Guglielmo pretend to hide in an adjoining room but return through the front door, now without their Albanian disguises. They discover the “lawyer” and the marriage contract, and they enter the room where the Albanians are supposed to be hiding. When they reappear, they reveal the whole ruse. Dorabella and Fiordiligi are enraged, but Don Alfonso manages to calm them and all ends in forgiveness. Mozart’s insights into the human condition are expressed in music that ingeniously imbues the opera’s characters with such life that the libretto’s shortcomings are rendered irrelevant.

Outline

I. We return to the second act finale of Così fan tutte. At the end of Lecture Seven, we listened to part 3 of the finale, the “toast,” a dramatically static segment that saw Fiordiligi, Dorabella, and Ferrando drink to a future without memories of the past, while a sullen and hostile Guglielmo cursed the present.

A. The momentary reverie of the toast is broken by Don Alfonso, who announces the arrival of the lawyer/notary with the marriage contract.

B. Despina enters, disguised now as a lawyer named Beccavivi. Despina sings with as nasal and grating a voice as she can muster, and gets the two couples to sign the marriage contract.

C. Don Alfonso surreptitiously slips the contract into his pocket.

D. Suddenly, distant voices are heard. Don Alfonso goes to the window and looks out. (Musical selection: finale, No. 31, part 4.)

E. Don Alfonso takes a look, and suddenly, his face assumes an expression of unbelievable horror. It seems that the ladies’ former fiancés are arriving. General panic ensues. The women are once again plunged into hysterics; Ferrando and Guglielmo, still in disguise, are, of course, faking their panic. Fiordiligi and Dorabella tell their “Albanian husbands” to hide in an adjoining room.

F. Ferrando and Guglielmo run from the room. Fiordiligi and Dorabella continue to run around the room in complete distress, while Don Alfonso tells them to calm down.

G. Despina panics; she hides under the table in the middle of the room. (Musical selection: finale, No. 31, part 5.)

H. Ferrando and Guglielmo enter, dressed in military cloaks and hats:

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:
We were called back by royal orders, and full of joy and happiness we have returned to our adored sweethearts, and your friendship.

[The sarcasm of that last line is clear. The women are standing pale and white and stiff as marble statues, though their twitching eyes betray their barely contained panic. Guglielmo addresses his Fiordiligi:]

GUGLIELMO:
You know, dear, you could use some sun. And why so quiet?

[Ferrando turns to Dorabella and says:]

FERRANDO:
My idol, why the long face?

[Alfonso tries to cover for the ladies’ paralysis:]

ALFONSO:
Oh, they’re just so frozen with joy, it has tied their tongues!

[Fiordiligi and Dorabella, mortified beyond description, their lips hardly moving, say to themselves:]

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:
I simply can’t speak. If I don’t drop dead on this spot it will be a miracle.

[Meanwhile, Guglielmo is scanning the room. He’s looking for Despina. Apropos of nothing, he says:]

GUGLIELMO:
Permit me to leave my baggage in the room for a moment.

[He then uses the opportunity of bending over to pick up his duffel bag to look under the table in the middle of the room. He cries in mock astonishment:]

GUGLIELMO:
Eeek! What do I see! There’s a man hidden here! Even worse, it’s a lawyer! What’s he doing here?

(Musical selection: finale, No. 31, part 6.)

II. The men drag Despina out from under the table. She attempts to brazen her way out of what she believes is a potentially fatal situation and reveals her true identity. She says she is in disguise because she has just returned from a masked ball. Don Alfonso decides to seize the moment and “accidentally” drop the signed marriage contract on the floor at Ferrando’s feet. Alfonso points to the floor and says: “I’ve ‘dropped’ the contract! Pick it up!”

A. Ferrando picks it up and feigns surprise. He and Guglielmo stare long and hard at the document. Everyone in the room freezes. Slowly, Guglielmo looks up from the document and says, incredulously: “A marriage contract? A marriage contract!” (Musical selection: finale, No. 31, part 7.)

B. Screaming at the cowering Fiordiligi and Dorabella, Guglielmo and Ferrando explode in self-righteous rage:

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:  
Giusto ciel! Voi qui scriveste,  
Heavens to Betsy! You’ve actually signed  
Contradirci ornai non vale.  
This, don’t even think about denying it!  
Tradimento, tradimento!  
Treachery! Treachery!  
Ah, si faccia il scopimento;  
Just wait until I find out who’s behind this;  
E a torrenti, a fiumi, a mari  
And the blood will flow in torrents, rivers,  
Indi il sangue scorrerà!  
Oceans; Oh yes, blood will flow!

(Musical selection: finale, No. 31, part 8.)

C. In what amounts to a genuinely sincere, if pathetic, mea culpa, the ladies are prepared, for the second time in one day, to have their respective bosoms pierced: “Kill me with your sword.” But Don Alfonso points to the room in which the two Albanians have supposedly hidden. The women—all three of them—are stunned by Alfonso’s betrayal of the Albanians. Ferrando and Guglielmo rush into the room, prepared, so it seems, to spill some blood. (Musical selection: finale, No. 31, part 9.)

D. The moment of truth has arrived. Ferrando and Guglielmo return, wearing the Albanians’ clothes but not their moustaches.

1. Ferrando walks over to Fiordiligi and quotes an earlier tune that was cut from the final version of the opera: “Before you, beautiful lady bows the Albanian cavalier.”

2. Guglielmo now turns to Dorabella and quotes No. 23, “Il coro di vino,” (“I give this heart to you”), as he returns to her the portrait of Ferrando he had taken from around her neck.

3. Ferrando and Guglielmo now turn to—or, should we say, turn on—Despina; they grab her by the ears and quote Despina’s “magnet” music from the Act I finale: “And to the Doctor of Magnetism I render the honor he deserves!”

4. They pull on Despina’s ears, then rather roughly let her go.

5. Alfonso, Ferrando, and Guglielmo—grimly enjoying themselves—say as an aside: “They are stupefied! They’re half crazy!”
E. As it begins to dawn on them that they have been had, Fiordiligi and Dorabella’s anger—and it is righteous anger—begins to rise. Because they are not stupid, they realize that their boyfriends would never have thought this game up on their own, that someone rather more clever had to have put Ferrando and Guglielmo up to the whole business. With almost military precision, they simultaneously raise their arms and point their fingers at Don Alfonso: “You are the monster that did this to us!”

F. Now Don Alfonso has to do some fast talking; he has to rationalize the pain he’s caused everyone in the name of “education.”

ALFONSO:
V’ingannai, ma fu l’inganno
Disinganno ai vostri amanti,
Che più saggi omai saranno
Che faran quel ch’io vorrò.

[Fiordiligi and Dorabella turn to their original boyfriends and sing:]

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA:  
Idol mio, sequestro è vero,
Colla fede e coll’amore
Compensar saprò il tuo core
Adorati ognor saprò.

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO:  
Te lo credo, gioia bella,
Ma la prova io far non vò
Chi’io già risi e riderò.

[Meanwhile, Despina is in a state of shock; she cannot imagine how she could have been so badly fooled:]

DESPINA:  
Io non so se questo è sogno,
Mi confondo, mi vergogno!
Manco mal se a me l’han fatta,
Che a molt’altri anch’io la fò.

[Musical selection: finale, No. 31, parts 10 and 11.]

G. The original couples—Guglielmo and Fiordiligi and Ferrando and Dorabella—pair off. Along with Don Alfonso and a chastened Despina, they sing a marvelous final number extolling Don Alfonso’s moral to laugh at “the storms of life.”

EVERYONE:  
Fortunato l’uom’ che prende
Ogni cosa pel buon verso,
E tra i casi, e le vicende
Da ragion guidar so fà.
Quel che suole altrui far piangere
Fia per lui cagion di riso,
E del mondo in mezzo i turbini

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Bella calma troverà. He will find perfect peace.

(Musical selection: finale, No. 31, part 12.)

III. And so the curtain comes down on Così fan tutte and, thus, does the controversy begin. For many auditors and thinkers alike, with the original couples reunited, the women contrite, the men sadder but wiser, this conclusion is completely unsatisfactory.

A. From the point of view of the libretto, the conventions of the theater have been ably met by Da Ponte; the web of disguise and intrigue has, at the end of Così, been untangled and untied, the men and women have learned their respective lessons, and we can assume, are wiser for them.

B. But along the way, Mozart’s music imbued these characters with such depth and pathos that the pat ending of Da Ponte’s libretto is rendered irrelevant at best and unbelievable at worst.
   1. Because of Mozart and his music, the ultimate lessons learned during the bet, during this day of disguise and seduction, had little to do with “the inconstancy of women” and everything to do with self-knowledge and self-awareness.
   2. Like the breath of God, Mozart breathes life and truth into his characters; they are not cardboard cutouts or archetypes that can return to the pre-bet status quo, but rather, they are dynamic and metamorphic, they have changed, and cannot possibly “go back” to being who and what they were a few hours before. Ferrando is no longer a strutting popinjay; Dorabella is a sexy and powerful woman who will never be intimidated by her sister again; and then there’s Fiordiligi.
   3. Fiordiligi especially will be faced with an entirely new self-image and an entirely new paradigm in reference to her own emotions and passions. Joseph Kerman is, I think, incredibly insightful when he writes about her surrender, late in the opera, to Ferrando; he says: “With Fiordiligi, indeed, it [was] not a matter of changing love, but of finding love. Our main impression of the duet she sings with Ferrando after her surrender [No. 29] is of her new capacity for genuine feeling... Ferrando, after all, is obviously the better man” (Kerman, 97). Fiordiligi is “Like a rock” no more; after her surrender, she is like a person.

C. In dealing with Così fan tutte, then, we must indulge in some post-opera speculation; that is, what really happens in the lives of the four lovers in the twenty-four hours after the opera ends.
   1. I would suggest that to make up for their actions, the women are, at first, incredibly contrite and eager, perhaps even desperate, to please their men. Without a doubt, Fiordiligi and Dorabella will wait on Guglielmo and Ferrando hand and foot for the rest of the evening and will enthusiastically serve their needs during the night as well.
   2. Sometime during the wee hours of the morning, however, both women will lie awake in their respective beds, thinking. Fiordiligi, in particular, will be aware of the snoring, smelly, hairy lump of Guglielmo flesh lying next to her, sleeping soundly and oblivious to the world around him. And that’s when the anger will come. These might be eighteenth-century women, but they are Italian women, Italian women from Ferrara, and their rage will be epic.
   3. Will the sisters dump the men? I think it’s a very good possibility. Even more intriguing is the possibility that the couples will switch again. Frankly, given the personalities, egos, and intellects involved, the ideal pairing was not the original one, but the swapped version: Fiordiligi and Ferrando and Dorabella and Guglielmo.
   4. As for Despina, she’s out of a job. And I think Don Alfonso will give the 100 gold pieces back to the boys as a wedding present, if and when they ever marry.

IV. Così fan tutte was performed ten times between January and August of 1790 and would have continued to be performed had not its essential benefactor, Emperor Joseph II, died in 1790. Così almost instantly vanished from the stage, and after Mozart’s death in December of 1791, it was almost universally rejected for its licentious content.

A. During the early nineteenth century, at a time when Mozart’s music was being deified, objections to Così fan tutte continued to accumulate.
   1. Franz Xaver Niemetschek, a friend of both Haydn’s and Mozart’s, published one of the first biographies of Mozart in Prague, in 1808.
   2. According to Niemetschek, the devil (Da Ponte) and dire financial straights forced Mozart to write Così.
3. That bit of nineteenth-century propaganda is entirely untrue; as we discussed in Lecture One, not only was Mozart not coerced into composing *Così*, but given the events in his life in 1789, he actually found the story to his liking.

B. Mozart’s insights into the human condition, into the relationships between men and women, are astonishing. And good as Da Ponte’s libretto is, the drama in *Così fan tutte* belongs to Mozart—it is his music that gives substance and personality to the characters.
Timeline

1756 ................................................ Born in Salzburg, Austria, January 27.
1761 ................................................ Musical tour of Vienna.
1763 ................................................ Mozart family begins Grand Tour of Europe and London.
1767 ................................................ *Apollo et Hyacinthus*, K. 38.
1768 ................................................ *Bastien und Bastienne*, K. 50/46b.
1769 ................................................ *La finta semplice*, K. 51/46a.
1769–1773 ...................................... Three tours of Italy.
1770 ................................................ *Mithridate, rè di Ponto*, K. 87/74a.
1771 ................................................ *Ascanio in Alba*, K. 111.
1772 ................................................ *Lucio Silla*, K. 135.
1775 ................................................ *La finta giardiniera*, K. 196; *Il rè pastore*, K. 208.
1778 ................................................ Second visit to Paris; Mozart’s mother dies.
1779 ................................................ *Zaide*, K. 344/336b.
1781 ................................................ *Idomeneo, rè di Creta*, K. 366.
1782 ................................................ Moves to Vienna; *The Abduction from the Harem*, K. 384; marries Constanze Weber.
1786 ................................................ *The Marriage of Figaro*, K. 492; *Der Schauspieldirektor*, K. 486.
1787 ................................................ Leopold Mozart dies; *Don Giovanni*, K. 527.
1789 ................................................ *Così fan tutte*, K. 588.
**Glossary**

**Baroque**: In music history, the period from about 1600 to 1750, divisible into three parts: early Baroque (1600–1650), mid-Baroque (1650–1700), and High Baroque (1700–1750). Music of the High Baroque is characterized by emotional exuberance tempered by intellectual control—very elaborate melodies controlled by harmonies that change in an orderly, predictable manner.

**Cadenza**: Virtuoso solo music designed to show off a singer’s or instrumentalist’s technical ability.

**Classical musical style**: Designation given to works of the later eighteenth century, characterized by clear melodic lines, balanced form, and emotional restraint. The style is brilliantly exemplified by the music Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Mozart.

**Commedia dell’arte**: Traveling Italian theatrical troupes and the improvised performances they staged based on character archetypes, satire, and farce.

**Concerto**: Musical composition for orchestra and soloist(s), typically in three movements.

**Consonance**: Two or more notes sounded together that do not require resolution.

**Continuo**: Abbreviated for *basso continuo*, the Italian term for the keyboard part in most Baroque music that provides harmonic and rhythmic support, usually reinforced with a bass instrument, such as a ‘cello or viola da gamba.

**Crescendo**: Gradually increasing or decreasing volume.

**Dissonance**: Two or more notes sounded together that require resolution.

**Enlightenment**: Eighteenth-century philosophical movement characterized by rationalism and positing that individuals are responsible for their own destinies and that all men are born equal.

**Fugue**: Important Baroque musical procedure, in which a theme (or subject) is developed by means of various contrapuntal techniques.

**K. numbers**: Koechel numbers; named after Ludwig von Koechel, who catalogued Mozart’s works during the mid-nineteenth century.

**Mannheim School**: Important group of German composers of the mid-eighteenth century, centered at Mannheim and associated with the orchestra of Elector Karl Theodor. Johann Stamitz (1717–1757) developed the orchestra’s distinctive pre-Classical style, which included the abandonment of the Baroque contrapuntal techniques in favor of a homophonic style and the creation of novel dynamic devices, such as the famous *Mannheim crescendo*.

**Musical form**: Overall formulaic structure of a composition, such as sonata form; also, the smaller divisions of the overall structure, such as the development section.

**Number**: An aria, ensemble, or finale from an opera.

**Opera buffa**: Comic opera, a genre of opera evolved from street theater and the conventions and characters of the Italian *Commedia dell’arte*.

**Opera seria**: “Serious” or heroic opera, an operatic genre cultivated by the aristocracy during the eighteenth century.

**Overture**: Music that precedes an opera or play, often played as an independent concert piece.

**Pedal note**: Pitch sustained for a long period of time against which other changing material is played. A pedal harmony is a sustained chord serving the same purpose.

**Recitative**: Operatic convention in which the lines are half sung, half spoken.

**Singspiel**: German-language musical comedy—usually romantic or farcical in nature—with spoken dialogue; popular in the eighteenth century.

**Voice**: Range or register, commonly used to refer to the four melodic ranges: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.
Biographical Notes

Colleredo, Hieronymous Count von: Last of the Salzburg prince-archbishops, Count von Colleredo became archbishop of Salzburg (Mozart’s hometown) in 1772. Although hated as an imperious philistine by Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart, Colleredo was reputedly an enlightened and conscientious ruler. He disliked musical extravagance, including operatic displays by soloists, and preferred his music to be brief.

Da Ponte, Lorenzo: Famous Italian poet, man of letters and librettist (1749–1838), Da Ponte settled in Vienna in 1782 and became official poet to the Imperial Theater. He was a close friend of Mozart and was the librettist for Mozart’s most famous Italian-language operas, The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte.

Habsburg: Austrian royal family, one of the oldest and most prominent dynasties. From 1452, the Habsburg family retained its rule (with the exception of one brief period) of the Holy Roman Empire until 1806. By 1732 (the year of Haydn’s birth), the Habsburg/Austrian Empire was peaceful, flourishing, and headquartered in Vienna. It was a Catholic, German-language, multinational empire consisting of greater Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary.

Joseph II: Holy Roman Emperor (1741–1790), eldest son of the Habsburg Emperor Francis I and Empress Maria Theresa, Joseph II carried out progressive reforms of church and state in the Austrian Habsburg domains in accordance with the rationalistic principles of the Enlightenment. He was a champion of Mozart but thought Haydn’s music to be “tricks and nonsense.”

Maria Theresa: Wife of Holy Roman Emperor Francis I, Archduchess of Austria and Queen of Hungary and Bohemia (1717–1780), Maria Theresa strengthened and unified the Austrian monarchy in the eighteenth century. Pious and unfriendly to the principles of the Enlightenment, she was pragmatic, a shrewd judge of her ministers, and often contemptuous of artists and musicians, such as Mozart.

Metastasio, Pietro: Italian poet and librettist (1698–1782), Metastasio’s twenty-seven libretti were set more than 800 times by various composers during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. More than any other single poet, Metastasio, in his libretti, created the standard template for what we now understand to be Baroque and Classical-era opera seria.

Mozart (Johann Georg), Leopold: Wolfgang Mozart’s father, Leopold (1719–1787) was a German-born Austrian composer, violinist, and music theorist. He received a bachelor of philosophy degree in 1737 at the Benedictine University in Salzburg, Austria, where he settled. In 1743, he became a violinist at the court of the prince-archbishop of Salzburg. In 1762, he was appointed vice conductor of the court orchestra. In 1747, he married Anna Maria Pertl. Of their seven children, only Maria Anna (Marianne/Nannerl) and Wolfgang survived infancy. Leopold dedicated his life to the musical education and professional promotion of his children and of Wolfgang in particular.

Puchberg, Michael: Textile merchant, amateur cellist, friend of Mozart and fellow Freemason, the indulgent and uncomplaining Puchberg made several loans of money to the financially distressed Mozart. The composer dedicated his String Trio in E flat, K. 563 (1788), to Puchberg.

Salieri, Antonio: Italian composer based in Vienna (1750–1825), Salieri composed more than forty operas and rose to the preeminent musical position of Viennese Court Kapellmeister, a position he held from 1788 to 1824. As composer, administrator, and teacher, his influence was felt at virtually every level of cultured musical life in Vienna.

Schikaneder, Johann Emanuel: Austrian actor, singer, playwright, impresario, and Freemason (1748–1812), Schikaneder settled in Vienna in 1784. He commissioned Mozart to write The Magic Flute opera for his Theater-auf-der-Wieden in Vienna. He supplied the libretto and created the role of Papageno for himself. He later opened another house, the Theater-an-der-Wien, for which he commissioned Beethoven’s opera Fidelio.

Varesco, Abbe Gianbattista: Salzburg chaplain and librettist. Varesco wrote the libretto for Mozart’s Idomeneo, K. 366 (1780), and adapted Metastasio’s libretto Il ré pastore, “The Shepherd King,” K. 208 (1775), for Mozart’s use.

Weber-Hofer, Josepha: Soprano and eldest sister of Constanze Weber-Mozart (1758–1819), Josepha was known for her high vocal range and colorature singing. As a member of Schikaneder’s company, Mozart created for her the role of the Queen of the Night.
**Weber-Lange, Aloysia**: Soprano and elder sister of Constanze Weber-Mozart (1759–1839). After a brief relationship, Mozart proposed marriage to Aloysia, only to be rejected. She married the painter Joseph Lange whose incomplete portrait of Mozart (1789) is generally considered the best and most accurate ever painted.

**Weber-Mozart, Constanze**: Soprano and wife of Wolfgang Mozart (1762–1842), Constanze was one of four daughters born to Fridolin Weber, a German singer and violinist. Constanze’s sisters—Josepha, Sophie, and Aloysia—were all sopranos. Mozart had been in love with Aloysia before courting and marrying Constanze.
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Robert Greenberg has composed over forty-five works for a wide variety of instrumental and vocal ensembles. Recent performances of Greenberg’s work have taken place in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, England, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and The Netherlands, where his Child’s Play for string quartet was performed at the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam.

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The Operas of Mozart

Scope:

This course discusses Mozart’s most important operas, which include Apollo and Hyacinthus (1767), La finta semplice (1768), Bastien and Bastienne (1768), Mitridate, King of Pontus (1770), Lucio Silla (1772), La finta giardiniera (1775), Il rè pastore (1775), Idomeneo, King of Crete (1781), The Abduction from the Harem (1782), The Marriage of Figaro (1786), Don Giovanni (1787), Così fan tutte (1789), and The Magic Flute (1791). Eight lectures each are devoted to the masterpieces Così fan tutte and The Magic Flute, and special emphasis is also given to The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni.

We begin with the most personal and autobiographical of Mozart’s operas, Così fan tutte. This is one of three operas—the others being The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni—that Mozart wrote with the master librettist Lorenzo da Ponte—a collaboration that can rightly be considered one of the greatest such collaborations in the history of opera. Così is a masterpiece of comic opera—opera buffa—and this study of it will establish an operatic vocabulary with which to measure and study Mozart’s other operas.

Part II of this course begins by looking at Mozart’s earliest works and discusses his apprenticeship in the art of opera composition. We will see how he gave an increasingly important role to the orchestra as a genuine partner to the singers, enhancing the dramatic content, and how his dramatic priorities eventually led him to break with formulaic traditions to focus on character development and dramatic momentum. Idomeneo, premiered on January 29, 1781, and generally considered the greatest opera seria (“serious” opera) ever written, marks Mozart’s mastery of the form. Its dramatic momentum sweeps away the traditional rituals of opera seria; the characters are given depth and substance that transcend their archetypes, and Mozart’s compositional technique reaches an unprecedented level of mastery.

Idomeneo, however, was too radical to be accepted by the audiences of Mozart’s day, unlike The Abduction from the Harem, the most popular of Mozart’s operas in his lifetime in terms of performances and general acclaim. But even the Abduction had its critics, because, like Idomeneo, it too pushed the limits of its own form, in this case, German-language singspiel.

Mozart’s next operas, The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni find him at the peak of his operatic career. He had already written, and would continue to write operas that would eclipse virtually all those of his contemporaries, including Antonio Salieri’s. In The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni, we take a look at some of the greatest ensembles and finales ever written. Unfortunately for Mozart, neither The Marriage of Figaro nor Don Giovanni were popular with the majority of contemporary Viennese opera goers, who considered them too “modern” and politically incorrect, and Così fan tutte, which followed them, was deemed immoral.

It was something of a relief for Mozart to score a huge success in September 1791, with the premiere of his singspiel The Magic Flute. This, his last opera, raised the popular genre of German-language singspiel to the level of operatic art enjoyed by Italian-language opera. A paean to the rituals and creeds of Freemasonry, in which Mozart so fervently believed, The Magic Flute expresses the full range of Mozart’s genius no less than do The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte. The latter eventually became as popular as The Magic Flute and is recognized, along with The Magic Flute, as a masterpiece of the operatic repertoire.
Lecture Nine
The First Works

Scope: In Mozart’s day, the opera theater combined virtually every aspect of the arts to create a unique experience. Mozart had a lifelong love of the opera that began very early in his life. By the age of ten, he had written his first opera-like composition. By the age of eleven, he composed the music for his first opera, Apollo and Hyacinth. The following year (1768), he was commissioned by Emperor Joseph II to write the music for the opera La finta semplice with the goal of eliminating skepticism about his compositional abilities. After that, Mozart wrote Bastien and Bastienne, a thoroughly “Mozartean” work. These three early and very different operas reflect Mozart’s ability to absorb the musical influences to which he was exposed on his trips across Europe.

Outline

I. Mozart once wrote: “I have only to hear an opera discussed, I have only to sit in a theater, hear the orchestra tuning their instruments—oh, I am quite beside myself at once” (Anderson, Letter No. 219).

A. In Mozart’s day, the opera house was a combination theater; Super Bowl half-time show; major league ballpark; rock concert; carnival midway; high-end fashion show; high-tech, IMAX-style movie palace; theme park; and special-effects extravaganza: in sum, a total sensory-immersion facility.
   1. In a pre-electronic, pre-mass media age, the opera theater was the ultimate virtual reality, where things could happen, be seen, and be heard that simply could not happen and could not be seen or heard anywhere else.
   2. Opera lighting and stage machinery represented cutting-edge technology in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Production crews at the major European opera houses were the Industrial Light and Magic, the Pixar of their time.
   3. In a pre-electronic, pre-mass media age, the only way to experience an opera was to go downtown, sit down among an audience, and become a participant in the sort of communal experience that focuses and magnifies our impressions and feelings.

B. For Mozart and his time, the opera theater was not just a place you went to see people sing and act; it was a place where virtually every aspect of the arts—literature, singing, dancing, acting, instrumental music, costuming, stage design, and technology—combined to create an experience like nothing else on earth.

C. For Mozart, the backstage experience of the opera house was almost as intoxicating as a performance itself.
   1. A powerful camaraderie exists among performing artists who spend their lives on the road playing and singing before audiences. Mozart liked hanging out with singers and was intrigued by and enamored with the generally loose morals of theatrical women. Almost without a doubt, Mozart had affairs after he was married in 1782, most likely with singers.
   2. Mozart seemed also to thrive on preparing a performance: attending rehearsals and coaching the singers and the orchestra; observing the construction of the sets and machinery; choosing costumes, makeup, and lighting.
   3. Most of all, Mozart loved to watch these “children of his imagination”—his operas—come to life before his eyes and ears. The theater satisfied his primal instincts for play and fantasy.

II. Mozart’s love of the opera stage and everything it represented began early in his life.

A. By the time he was nine years old—in the midst of his four-year “Grand Tour” and living in London with his mother, father, and sister—he had already composed, according to his father, fifteen concert arias in Italian (of which, sadly, only two survive) and had attended opera performances across the European continent and England.

B. By the time he returned to his hometown of Salzburg, on November 30, 1766, Mozart was a fledgling composer of extraordinary promise. His father, Leopold Mozart, was on the lookout for any compositional opportunity that might advance his son’s education and his career as a composer.

C. Such an opportunity presented itself in 1767, when Mozart wrote his first opera-like composition, at the age of eleven, the first part of a three-part oratorio entitled The Obligation of the First Commandment. Based on the extraordinary competence—if not the originality—of this, Mozart’s first attempt to write dramatic vocal
music, he was commissioned in the spring of 1767—at the age of eleven—to compose the music for what became his first opera, a work known as *Apollo and Hyacinthus*.

**D.** An annual tradition at Salzburg University was the creation and production of a Latin-language play to mark the end of the school year. Between the acts of this play, music was to be provided, in the manner of the so-called *intermezzi* that were performed between the acts of heroic operas in the secular theater.

1. The play marking the end of the 1767 school year was a tragedy entitled *Clementia Croesi*. It was written by Father Rufinus Widl, Professor of Syntax at the university, and was performed by a cast almost entirely drawn from his students. The musical interludes performed between the acts of the play together constituted a short opera entitled *Apollo and Hyacinthus*, its Latin-language libretto written by the same Reverend Professor Widl and its music composed by “Wolfgangus” Mozart.

2. The original story of *Apollo and Hyacinthus* is a homosexual love triangle, drawn from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Hyacinthus, the Prince of Sparta, is a gorgeous young man with whom the god Apollo is in love. However, Zephyrus (as in *zephyr*), the West Wind, is also in love with Hyacinthus and is jealous of Apollo’s relationship with the prince. One day, when Apollo is teaching Hyacinthus how to throw a discus, Zephyrus blows on a discus thrown by Apollo, causing it to change its course and plant itself in the skull of Hyacinthus. Apollo, in his grief, changed the dead boy into a flower, the hyacinth.

3. Obviously, Father Widl in Salzburg would have to eliminate the homoeroticism of the original story; thus, he added various female interests in his version. Widl’s libretto offered Mozart the opportunity to imitate much of what he had heard in the opera theaters of Europe and, at the same time, experiment a bit with his own nascent instincts for musical drama and psychological insight.

**E.** The overture (labeled *Intrada*, or “Introduction,” in the score) is a brief and vigorous allegro in D Major. Please note the brief, almost spiky nature of Mozart’s melodic ideas, so typical of his early music. ([Musical selection: Apollo and Hyacinthus, Intrada.](#))

### III. We move forward now to Act III, No. 7.

**A.** Act III begins with Oebalus, King of Sparta, standing beside the bed on which lies his son Hyacinth, mortally wounded by a rogue discus. Hyacinth briefly regains consciousness, informs his father in broken phrases that it was Zephyrus, not Apollo, who was responsible for his death, says farewell to his dad, then dies. Oebalus’s grief and rage are well described in an accompanied recitative.

**OEBALUS:**

Hyacinth! My son! He is no more. He is dead! “Apollo is innocent, father,” he said. “Believe me, It was not Apollo, but Zephyrus who killed me.” Is this then how you treat me, Zephyr, you lying scum? You’re not afraid to blame a God for your crime, and then you lie to your King? Monster. You will pay for your crime with your own blood! Did you really believe I would not avenge the death of my son? ([Musical selection: Apollo and Hyacinthus, recitative “Hyacinthe!”](#))

**B.** The aria that immediately follows this recitative is one of the most striking numbers in the opera.

1. It is a so-called “tempest” aria, in which a storm at sea is equated with the storm of emotions in the singer’s own heart. Such tempest arias were one of the most time-honored traditions in all of Baroque opera.

2. In terms of form, Mozart’s is a so-called *da capo* aria, a standard Baroque procedure in which an opening stanza is followed by a contrasting one, which is followed by a return to an embellished version of the opening stanza, thus, “back to the top,” or in Italian, *da capo*.

3. Mozart’s aria is entirely effective in portraying the stormy emotions of Oebalus and it fulfills the time-honored expectations of what a tempest aria is supposed to sound like:

**OEBALUS:**

As a ship in a surging sea is tossed over mountains and valleys of waves, one moment pushed up against the clouds, the next close to the gates of Hell: so the bile from my enraged bosom courses like flame through my body, my veins, and my limbs.

4. This aria is no better or worse than a thousand other like arias, except for the fact that Mozart was eleven years old when he wrote it. ([Musical selection: Apollo and Hyacinthus, No. 7, aria, “As a ship in a surging sea.”](#))
IV. The story behind the commission and eventual production of Mozart’s first true, self-standing opera—La finta semplice, or The Pretended Simpleton—is a lengthy one.

A. Four months after the premiere of Apollo and Hyacinthus—in September of 1767—the Mozart family hit the road again. By January 1768, the family was ensconced in Vienna. On January 11, 1768, Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart were received by the new emperor, Joseph II, and his mother, Empress Maria Theresa.

1. According to Leopold, during the course of the interview, Joseph proposed that for Wolfgang to eliminate any skepticism regarding his miraculous abilities, he should write and conduct an opera. The opera was to be produced by an impresario named Giuseppe d’Affligio, who was the director of both the Burg and Karntnertor theaters in Vienna.

2. A fee of 100 ducats was promised for the composition of a comic opera. The libretto chosen was one by the master poet Carlo Goldoni, entitled La finta semplice; the libretto was adapted for Mozart by Marco Coltellini, who would eventually succeed Pietro Metastasio as the Viennese Imperial Librettist. The opera was to be ready for performance by Easter of 1768, roughly three months after the audience with Emperor Joseph II.

3. Mozart completed the first act with extraordinary speed; it was copied and the parts were sent to the singers, who expressed their delight and admiration for the music. However, changes were requested by the singers, and Marco Coltellini, in charge of adapting the libretto for Mozart, was so slow in delivering the changes that the premiere had to be postponed.

4. Mozart completed the 558-page score in June of 1768, by which time the intrigue and backstabbing had already begun. Rumor had it that the opera had not been composed by the twelve-year-old Wolfgang but by his forty-nine-year-old father, Leopold.

5. Meanwhile, more delays provided more grist for Leopold Mozart’s rampant paranoia. He told at least one friend that he believed “an entire hell of musicians has risen up to prevent [the production of] this proof of the child’s ability” (Osborne, 38). Leopold ultimately received another audience with the emperor, who promised him that he would see to the production. Even so, La finta semplice wasn’t produced until the following year, on May 1, 1769, in Salzburg.

B. The plot of La finta semplice is one of those typically complicated buffa stories, a love septangle in which one of the characters will be left out in the cold at the end.

1. The story revolves around Fracasso, a Hungarian captain, and his lieutenant, Simone. Fracasso and Simone have been billeted in a castle owned by two rich bachelor brothers named Don Cassandro and Don Polidoro. The rich bachelors have a younger sister named Donna Giacinta, who has a maid named Ninetta.

2. The two Hungarian officers become more than a little friendly with Donna Giacinta and her maid, much to the unhappiness of the bachelors, Don Cassandro and Don Polidoro.

3. To distract the bachelors, Fracasso invites his sister, the Hungarian Baroness Rosina, to come for a visit. The Baroness is cute and smart as a whip, but to intrigue the bachelor brothers, she pretends to be a dumb blonde—thus, the title of the opera—The Pretended Simpleton—and the premise that allows for 101 amorous and comic situations to take place over the span of the opera.

C. We will listen to what is the most dramatically effective and certainly the most advanced number in the opera, No. 24, Donna Giacinta’s aria “Che scompiglio,” (“What confusion”).

1. For various reasons, Donna Giacinta—the sister of the two bachelors—has run off with her brothers’ money, without which neither of them can marry, and they both want to marry the “Pretended Simpleton,” Countess Rosina.

2. Donna Giacinta did not take the money because she is a thief; she took it to force the issue of marriage—hers, her brothers’, everyone’s. But now, hiding in the garden with the loot, she is seized by guilt, remorse, and mortal panic that, if her brother Cassandro finds her, he will be homicidal.

3. Mozart’s setting of Giancita’s panic attack is marvelous. It is filled with dissonance, dramatic string tremolos, and pregnant pauses. Note how Giancita’s voice wavers and shivers back and forth at the end of the first two lines of the aria. The tremble in her voice is an imitation of the string tremolos, which themselves are meant to evoke Giancita’s shivering panic.

DONNA GIACINTA:
What a mess, what a disaster, if my brother were to find me! Oh, he’d slice and dice me, for sure! No, he’d have no pity at all. I’m trembling with fear; I can hardly stand up, I cannot breathe. My blood has turned to ice, and I feel my spirit departing!
4. Mozart’s writing for the voice, with its sudden hesitations, jumpiness, and misaccented syllables perfectly demonstrates Donna Giacinta’s panic without going so far as to render her tragic or hysterical, which she is not. (Musical selection: La finta semplice, No. 24.)

V. We conclude this examination of Mozart’s earliest operatic works with a brief look at a piece of extremely modest pretensions—Bastien and Bastienne, K. 50. It is a brief, breezy, delightful little piece with a fascinating history.

A. While Wolfgang and Leopold were waiting vainly for the promised production of La finta semplice during the summer of 1768, Mozart was commissioned to write a one-act opera by Franz Anton Mesmer, the inventor of the hypnotic method called Mesmerism. Mesmer, an accomplished musical amateur, commissioned Mozart to write a short opera for performance at his house sometime in October or November.

B. For a libretto, they chose a Germanicized version of a French libretto by Jean Jacques Rousseau, which Rousseau himself had set to music in 1752 under the title Le Devin du Village (The Village Soothsayer). It’s a charming if lightweight peasant story about a shepherdess named Colette who is assured by a soothsayer than her boyfriend, Colin, has only temporarily abandoned her for the lady of the manor. Colette and Colin are eventually reconciled, the soothsayer collects his coin, and they all live happily ever after. The only real difference in the German-language version that Mozart set to music is that the lovers are renamed as Bastien and Bastienne.

C. Bastien and Bastienne is a singspiel, meaning that it combines spoken dialogue with sung numbers—what in England is called an operetta and in the United States, a musical comedy. There is no record that Mesmer ever had it performed as had been planned. In fact, there is no record of any performance until its Berlin premiere on October 20, 1890, 122 years after it had been written.

D. The opera begins with a brief, vigorous, and thoroughly charming Overture/Intrada that, if we did not know better, we would swear Beethoven had stolen to create the opening theme of his Eroica Symphony! (Musical selection: Bastien and Bastienne, Intrada.)

E. We meet Colas, the soothsayer, in a wonderful little aria, No. 4.

COLAS:
When a sweet girl asks me to tell her fortune, I can quickly read her fate in her lovelorn face. I see that only her lover’s affection will in the end satisfy her. How easy it is for me to work my magic when I see two lovelorn eyes!

F. Note the rustic orchestral introduction that brilliantly imitates the sounds of bagpipes and Austrian country music. Colas is a man of the earth, and Mozart’s setting of his words—with their slightly spoken character, repetitions of phrases, and general joie de vivre—project a kindly and charming guy who genuinely loves his work. (Musical selection: Bastien and Bastienne, No. 4.)

G. Finally, let’s hear the celebratory trio that concludes this singspiel opera:

BASTIEN, BASTIENNE:
We praise with joy the magic of the wise Colas! He has worked wonders today, and freed us from our unhappiness. Up! Up! Sing his praises! Thanks to him we are married! All in all, he is one most excellent fellow!

COLAS, BASTIEN, BASTIENNE:
Up! Up! Sing his praises!

(Musical selection: Bastien and Bastienne, No. 16, trio, part 2.)

H. Bastien and Bastienne is a totally charming, genuinely “Mozartean” work. It is the first of Mozart’s stage works that I can recommend to you wholeheartedly, the earliest of his stage works that all Mozart fans should have in their libraries.

VI. Three early stage works, three different languages, three different sorts of pieces. In Apollo and Hyacinthus, La finta semplice, and Bastien and Bastienne, we are aware of a young composer taking wing, slowly putting together under the umbrella of his own extraordinary genius the myriad operatic influences and impressions he absorbed like a sponge during his youthful trips across Europe. What Mozart now required as an opera composer was practice and life experience, both of which he would acquire over the next few years.
Lecture Ten
The Italian Apprenticeship

Scope: In Mozart's day, the opera houses that were supported by the aristocracy favored a type of opera called “heroic” or “serious” opera (opera seria). Between 1769 and 1773, Mozart and his father undertook three trips to Italy, which produced three “serious” operas: *Mitridate, re di Ponte* (1770), *Ascanio in Alba* (1771), and *Lucio Silla* (1772). Each opera reflects Mozart’s development as a composer and dramatist. This includes Mozart’s increasing use of the orchestra as a partner to the singers, not just an accessory.

Outline

I. Mozart’s father, Leopold, was many things, good and bad, and among them, he was an astute businessperson. At the time that Leopold began to promote his son as a gifted composer, his greatest opportunity for international success was through court opera—that is, the opera houses controlled by the courts and aristocracy.
   A. The sort of opera favored by these houses was called “heroic opera,” what we today would refer to as *opera seria*, or “serious opera.”
   B. Opera seria was a highly codified art form, the essential patrons of which were the courts and ruling class of Europe. The overblown plots of such operas were typically based on ancient history or myth and were dominated by overwrought characters of great magnificence—gods, emperors, kings, and heroes.
   C. Opera seria, with music as complicated and virtuosic as its complex story lines, was an operatic tradition perfectly suited to the magnificence, complexity, exuberance, and rule-by-divine-right autocracies of the high Baroque. By the 1760s, the philosophical impact of the Enlightenment and the inroads made by comic opera, or *opera buffa*—an operatic tradition ascended from street theater—had seriously undermined the dominance of opera seria across Europe. Nevertheless, opera seria continued to be held by the members of European courts as “sophisticated opera for sophisticated people.”
   D. As a child traveling around Europe with his father, most of the opera Mozart would have heard would have been opera seria.
   E. Leopold Mozart wanted fame and fortune for himself and his son, which meant establishing Wolfgang as a composer of Italian-language opera seria. On December 13, 1769, a month shy of his fourteenth birthday, Mozart and his father traveled to Italy with the express purposes of absorbing the Italian compositional style, studying Italian opera seria, and composing Italian opera seria for money.
   F. Ultimately, Wolfgang and Leopold stayed in Italy for fifteen months, until March 28, 1771. Mozart would make two more trips to Italy: in 1772 and 1773.
      1. The enduring legacy of Mozart’s Italian adventures was the commissioning, composition, and premieres of three operas: the opera seria *Mitridate, rē di Ponte* (“Mithridate, King of Pontus”), 1770; *Ascanio in Alba*, 1771; and the opera seria *Lucio Silla*, 1772.
      2. Each of these works was first performed at the Regio Ducal Theater in Milan, today known as La Scala, and each marked, for Mozart, another giant step forward in his development as both composer and dramatist.
   G. *Mithridate, King of Pontus*, was composed during the fall of 1770. Typical of contemporary practice, Mozart wrote the recitatives first; he would not compose the arias until the opera was fully cast and he’d become familiar with the particular voices he was writing for.
      1. In composing *Mithridate*, a complication arose that threatened to delay its completion and premiere. In October of 1770, Mozart’s fourteen-year-old voice broke, and for the remainder of the fall, he had a vocal range of only five or six pitches, making it impossible for him to sing his own vocal music as he composed, which had to that point been his standard operating procedure.
      2. *Mithridate, King of Pontus* was premiered at the opening of the Carnival season, on December 26, 1770. It was enthusiastically received, which was unusual for the traditionally demanding Milanese audience, especially when the composer was an unknown; even more so, a foreigner; and even more so, a child of fourteen! *Mitridate* received twenty-two consecutive performances before the second opera of the season took its place in the theater.
3. “Amadeo” Mozart was embraced by the Milanese as one of their own. Ten months later, in October of 1771, after the premiere in Milan of Mozart’s Ascanio in Alba, the distinguished and popular opera composer Johann Adolph Hasse complained, “This boy will cause us all to be forgotten.”

II. We will spend the remainder of this lecture on Lucio Silla, the last of Mozart’s three Milanese commissions.

A. The overture is a conventional, Italian-style sinfonia—that is, an orchestral composition in three separate movements, fast-slow-fast. The piece has little to do with the opera that follows beyond the fact that it sets a tone of brilliance and energy for what comes next.

1. Typical of his early operas, Mozart composed the overture to Lucio Silla first, before setting a single word to music.
2. This was the last time he would do so; in every opera that follows, he would compose the overture only after the rest of the opera was completed, knowing that he could then plant themes and anticipate events to come.
3. By the time Mozart wrote this overture, he was also aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the Milan orchestra, which included trumpets and horns of considerable power and virtuosity. (Musical selection: Lucio Silla, Overture, part 3.)

B. Mozart’s Lucio Silla is based on a libretto by Giovanni de Gamerra. The person “Lucio Silla” is known in the English-speaking world as Lucius Cornelius Sulla (138 B.C.E.–78 B.C.E.), one of the villains of the ancient Roman world.

1. Sulla was born into poverty and became a Roman soldier. He rose through the ranks by distinguishing himself in wars between Rome and various Italian tribes. To secure the command of an expeditionary force created to fight Mithridates VI in Asia Minor, Sulla marched his troops on Rome in 88 B.C.E. He got his command but also instigated a civil war in the process.
2. Mithridates was defeated in 84 B.C.E., and Sulla returned to Rome a year later, only to discover that he had to eliminate his enemies all over again. The following civil war lasted for a year, during which time, Sulla’s main opponent was Gnaeus Papirius Carbo.
3. Sulla emerged victorious in 82 B.C.E., slaughtering more than 8,000 prisoners in the process. He appointed himself dictator of Rome and began to systematically eliminate his opponents.
4. Incredibly, Sulla then restored the Roman Republic, retired from public life in 80 B.C.E., completed twenty-two volumes of his memoirs, and died in 78 B.C.E.
5. Sulla was a megalomaniacal, vicious, amoral, lawless, underhanded tyrant who came close to destroying the fabric of his country. Of course, in Giovanni de Gamerra’s libretto, none of the historical events of Sulla’s life comes to the fore; instead, Sulla is depicted as a man in love with the wife of one of the senators he has sentenced to die.

C. Silla (Sulla) is in love with Giunia. Giunia hates Silla and for good reason: Silla has proscribed Giunia’s husband, the Senator Cecilio. Giunia believes her husband to be dead, but he is actually alive and in hiding.

1. Giunia rejects Silla’s brazen advances, which infuriates him. Meanwhile, Cecilio, the husband, sneaks back into Rome; he is joyfully and secretly reunited with his wife, Giunia, and decides to kill Silla.
2. The action all comes to a head at the end of Act II in the Capitol. Silla demands that the Senate award him the hand of Giunia in marriage; Giunia hysterically rejects Silla; and at that moment, her husband, Cecilio, enters the Senate chamber, his sword drawn. He is overpowered, and Silla commands that both Cecilio and Giunia be arrested. The act concludes with Silla’s furious reaction to their love for each other.
3. Act III begins with the obligatory prison scene, where a distraught Giunia says farewell to her enchained husband, Cecilio. The act concludes at the Capitol, before the Senate and the people of Rome, where a chastened Silla—inspired, we may assume, by the love he so recently belittled at the end of Act II—sets Cecilio and Giunia free, having learned, so he says, “That the soul prefers innocence and virtue to deceitful splendor.” The opera ends with the Senate and people of Rome united in a chorus of praise and adulation for Silla.
4. Ultimately, Silla’s magnanimity has nothing to do with Roman history and everything to do with glorifying the aristocracy in general and Archduke Ferdinand of Milan in particular.

D. We will sample what has to be the best stretch of music in the opera, comprising the final four and a half scenes of the first act. This slice of the opera begins with Giunia’s outright rejection of Silla’s advances and Silla’s subsequent rage over that rejection, then moves on to Giunia and Cecilio’s reunion in a dark cemetery somewhere on the outskirts of Rome.
E. Scene 4 takes place in Silla’s palace and begins with a recitative between a haughty and angry Giunia and, in the face of her rage, a surprisingly wimpy Silla:

SILLA:
Why are you always so unhappy?

GIUNIA:
Bastard, it’s because I hate you! As much as I loved my husband, so that much more is my hate for Silla!

SILLA:
What have I done to so offend you, what have I done to make you hate me so much?

GIUNIA:
Oh, I’m supposed to embrace the enemy of my father? And I don’t care how unhappy it makes you, I swear that I still love Cecilio!

SILLA:
Fine, let him have your love, and hate me as an enemy and a tyrant. Consider well the danger to you, Giunia, and then make up your mind. I still feel some mercy toward you, but only because I love you. However, for your continued good health, I suggest you rethink your position.

GIUNIA:
I have already rethought my position! I will always follow my dead father’s command: I will always hate Silla, I will always honor my husband unto my death!

[Giunia’s grand and imperious aria, No. 4, alternates between a measured adagio, during which she remembers and honors her husband and her father, and an agitated allegro, in which she heaps scorn and abuse on Silla.]

GIUNIA:
From the place of darkness, my father and my husband, receive the last breath of your daughter and your wife. You, you barbarian, within your heart you rage and storm with contempt, but even that, you creep, is not your worst pain. I shall be rewarded by not having you anywhere near me. And you will remain alone, with a heart full of pain and remorse.

1. Her head high, Giunia marches out, leaving a flabbergasted Silla behind. (Musical selection: Lucio Silla, recitative and No. 4, first two stanzas.)

2. Silla stews, and when Silla gets mad, he wants to get even. Alone with his increasingly black thoughts, Silla sings in recitative:

SILLA:
How can I tolerate such outrageous insults? That a dictator should be so insulted and spurned by such an audacious woman! And yet, I blush! And yet, she pleases me!

[The strings enter; the remainder of the recitative will be accompanied. Note the dramatic string tremolos that mirror Silla’s own growing rage:]

Pleases me? Doesn’t my heart still blush at my own weakness? My feelings don’t matter; this proud woman must die! If she does not want me as her lover—she will fear instead my wrath! She calls me cruel, so let her feel my cruelty. She rejects my hand, my heart, and my devotion; fine, from today, there will be no more “Mister Nice-guy!” (Musical selection: Lucio Silla, recitative.)

3. Next comes Silla’s first aria in the opera; it was postponed for as long as possible to create maximum dramatic effect. Despite its royal and magnificent orchestral introduction, this aria portrays Silla more as an angry and spurned lover than as a head of state:

SILLA:
The need for revenge and death so inflames me and stirs my heart that every rejected feeling of tenderness is transformed into rage in my heart. Perhaps at the last moment you will beg me for your life, but your tears will be in vain and your sorrow absolutely useless! (Musical selection: Lucio Silla, No. 5, first stanza.)

4. Cecilio, Giunia’s husband, is alone, hiding out in a dark cemetery on the outskirts of Rome; it is decorated with huge burial urns and statues of dead Roman heroes. The orchestra continues to play
without pause after Silla’s aria, and after painting a bleak and deathly portrait of the graveyard, it accompanies Cecilio’s dark and ruminative recitative:

CECILIO:
Death, inexorable death, here is the proof of your handiwork in these cold tombs. Heroes, leaders, and rulers who once laid waste to the world are covered with cold marble.

5. Mozart composed the role of Cecilio for the castrato Venanzio Rauzzini. In modern performances and recordings, the part of Cecilio is sung by a soprano, in what we today call a “trouser role,” that is, a woman portraying a man. Such a role is the opposite of a “travesty role,” in which a man portrays a woman, rare today, but not so rare in those days of the castrati. (Musical selection: Lucio Silla, Cecilio’s recitative, first four lines, from “Morte, morte,” [“Death, inexorable death”].)

6. Cecilio continues his contemplation of death, when suddenly, Giunia and her entourage approach. He is at once overjoyed to see her and terrified that he’ll be spotted and arrested. He hides behind a large burial urn.

7. The urn Cecilio has chosen to hide behind is the one that marks the grave of Giunia’s father, Marius, hero of Rome and enemy of Silla. Giunia approaches her father’s grave, followed by her escort of young women and nobles. They sing a mournful chorus, accompanied by the orchestra, which has been playing continuously since Silla’s recitative (and will not stop until the end of the act, still about fifteen minutes away).

CHORUS:
From these sad urns come forth, honored souls, and in anger avenge the despoiler of Rome!

[Giunia responds to the chorus with an achingly beautiful and haunting bit of aria; this is extraordinary, character-defining music.]

GIUNIA:
Oh, spirit of my beloved father, if you can hear me, let my tears and sighs move you to pity. (Musical selection: Lucio Silla, No. 6, Giunia’s first stanza.)

8. Cecilio comes out of hiding and Giunia comes to realize that this is no ghost. The scene is set for a duet between the lovers, and the act ends with a joyful and brilliant conclusion:

GIUNIA, CECILIO:
Now that you are in my arms, my love, my weeping eyes teach me that joy also brings with it tears. (Musical selection: Lucio Silla, No. 7, conclusion.)

F. Lucio Silla was performed twenty-six times between December 26, 1772, and January 25, 1773. It was next performed in Prague, in German translation, on December 14, 1929. The opera went 156 years between performances!

1. What would have struck Mozart as incredible, however, was the notion that the opera would be performed again at all. In 1773, even reasonably successful operas were rarely restaged after the first production.

2. The public had an insatiable appetite for new operas, and the only enduring elements in the world of opera were the libretti themselves, which were constantly being set to new music.

G. From a technical point of view, what makes Mozart’s Lucio Silla different from the operas of his colleagues is his use of the orchestra. Of course, Mozart’s contemporaries would have only briefly noted this; they had no understanding of his trajectory as a dramatist and no reason to suspect that his “overuse” of the orchestra in Lucio Silla was anything more than an isolated occurrence in opera seria.

1. But we are aware of Mozart’s trajectory and, therefore, we’re aware of that fact that the three Milanese operas, of which Lucio Silla was the last, marked an important, if early, point on that trajectory.

2. Increasingly, the orchestra was for Mozart no mere “accompaniment” to the voices; it was a character unto itself, capable of deepening expressive expressive nuance when used in conjunction with the singers and of tone painting and mood setting when used by itself.

3. For Mozart, increasingly, the orchestra was a partner to the singers, not just an accessory. The large number of vivid and dramatic accompanied recitatives in Lucio Silla was not an isolated occurrence, but an indication of where Mozart’s dramatic priorities would eventually lead him—toward ever more
continuous, non-formulaic operatic music, where storyline, character development, and dramatic momentum always trump the conventions and rituals of opera as it existed to his time.
Lecture Eleven
The Professional, Part One

Scope: By the age of sixteen, Mozart was a full-fledged opera composer whose works ranked with the best operas of his day. Between Lucio Silla (1772) and Idomeneo (1781), Mozart continued to develop his skills as an opera composer who would soon leave his contemporaries far behind. These years included the production of the comic opera La finta giardiniera (1775), which indicated, for the more prescient of Mozart’s contemporaries, the emergence of a superior compositional talent.

Outline

I. Mozart received the commission for Lucio Silla on March 4, 1771, a full twenty-one months before its premiere.
   
   A. The contract for the opera was typical for its time: Mozart was to be provided with a furnished apartment for the duration of his stay in Milan. A fee of 100 gulden was to be paid both for the composition and Mozart’s overall musical direction of the opera. Mozart was to deliver the recitatives by early October 1772 and deliver himself to Milan by November to compose the arias in consultation with the singers and assist with the rehearsals. The opera was to be premiered on the first day of Carnival season, December 26, 1772.
   
   B. Things did not go entirely as planned. Mozart showed up on time, but the singers did not, seriously delaying Mozart’s composition schedule.
      1. Many of the arias were not completed until rehearsals had already begun in December, and in early December, the title role, that of Silla himself, had to be recast (and his arias, rewritten) because the original Silla had taken ill.
      2. These conditions were typical of the operatic world of the time, although we must marvel at the fact that Mozart—at sixteen—handled the pressures with what were to become his trademark professionalism and compositional speed.
   
   C. Once Silla was finished, it was time to move on and write another opera, and another and another, with each successive opera adding to Mozart’s understanding of the human voice and his growing abilities as a dramatist and orchestrator.
      1. By sixteen, Mozart’s operatic apprenticeship was over. No longer can we say that his operas were no better or worse than those of a hundred of his colleagues. By Lucio Silla, we could comfortably say that his work could be ranked among that of the very best of living opera composers.
      2. Within eight years, he would put so much distance between himself and his colleagues as to be, virtually, on his own, competing only with himself.
      3. The great majority of Mozart’s contemporaries would never have thought that to be true; among others, they would have rated the operas of Christoph Gluck, Giovanni Paisiello, Antonio Salieri, Giuseppe Sarti, Vicente Martin y Soler, and Domenico Cimarosa far above those of Mozart. But time and history have clearly decided otherwise.
   
   D. The eight years between the opera seria Lucio Silla and Idomeneo were Mozart’s professional years, those years when he was still working in an operatic template common to his colleagues.
   
   E. Lectures Eleven and Twelve will take us through this period of growing professionalism, from La finta giardiniera (“The Pretended Garden-Maid”) through the transcendent Idomeneo, rè di Creta (“Idomeneo, King of Crete”).

II. After Lucio Silla, Mozart’s next opera commission was, in some respects, a breakthrough work. The comic opera La finta giardiniera (“The Pretended Garden-Maid”) was commissioned by the city of Munich for its Carnival season of 1774–1775.
   
   A. La finta giardiniera was a breakthrough work for two reasons:
      1. First, Munich was, unlike Milan, a major opera center, comparable to Naples, Venice, Vienna, and Prague.
      2. Second, with La finta giardiniera, important contemporaries of Mozart truly began to realize that he was something much more than a prodigious compositional flash-in-the-pan.
B. The story of *La finta giardiniera* is ridiculous, and the libretto, attributed to Raniero de Calzabigi and revised by Marco Coltellini (*of La finta semplice* fame) is moronic even by the loose literary standards of opera buffa.

1. The plot features so many false pretenses, disguises, and mistaken identities that it’s enough to drive you crazy, which is exactly what happens to the two main characters—Count Belfiore and the marchioness Violante Onesti, also known as Sandrina—who become so confused that they go temporarily insane during the second-act finale.

2. The story: In a nasty bit of jealousy-inspired domestic violence, the marchioness Violante Onesti was stabbed by her lover, Count Belfiore. Believing that he has killed her, the count runs for his life. Having recovered from her wounds, the marchioness, accompanied by her faithful servant, Roberto, sets out to track down the count. She does not seek revenge but wants to reclaim his love once he reveals himself to be properly penitent.

3. The marchioness and Roberto locate the count in the town of Lagonero, where they go under cover. They don disguises and get themselves hired on as gardeners by the mayor of the town, one Don Anchise. The marchioness assumes the name of Sandrina, and Roberto takes the name of Nardo, which is how we will know them in the opera.

4. As Act I begins, we find out that the mayor’s niece, Arminda, has become engaged to Count Belfiore. Arminda’s former lover, Ramiro, is furious at her perfidy at having left him for the count. Meanwhile, the mayor has taken a shine to his new maid of the garden, who is, in reality, the Marchioness Onesti, disguised as Sandrina. The marchioness’s servant, Roberto, disguised as Nardo, has taken a shine to the mayor’s chambermaid, Serpetta. Serpetta, meanwhile, is jealous of Sandrina (the marchioness) for having stolen the mayor’s affections.

5. The most important thing that happens over the course of Act I is that Sandrina and Count Belfiore recognize each other; he begs her forgiveness, she forgives him, they start kissing, they are caught kissing, and they arouse the ire of everyone.

C. In Act II, as a result of circumstances we need not be concerned with, Sandrina runs off into the nearby forest, a dense, dark thicket of vines and thorns. One and two at a time, the other six characters go in after her. Night falls, and no one can see anything. Sandrina, now totally lost and exhausted, wanders about, growing more upset and frightened.

1. And so begins the second-act finale, during which time, the stage is full of people, not one of whom can see more than a couple of feet in front of himself or herself, wandering about aimlessly; with people popping up out of nowhere, then disappearing again; with identities mistaken; with wary, frightened individuals backing into each other and frightening each other; until, finally, someone thinks to bring a light and everyone can begin to untangle themselves.

2. The first people on the scene are Count Belfiore and Nardo, the latter, in reality, the marchioness’s servant, Roberto.

3. The frightened and disoriented marchioness/Sandrina hears the count and Nardo approach, although she cannot make out who, or even what, they are. Trembling strings depict her shivering fear.

SANDRINA:
I hear something, someone, a confused murmur, nearby. Oh God, only death can bring an end to my suffering!

4. Meanwhile, from the other side of the stage, Arminda, the count’s fiancé, emerges. Everyone is slowly beginning to move toward center stage; there’s a lot of noise, but no one can see anything. All the noise prompts Sandrina to look around. Count Belfiore and Sandrina blindly approach each other through the underbrush. Ultimately, everyone thinks that they’re going to be able to eavesdrop on everyone else.

5. When listening, note the quiet, cautious, almost creeping nature of the music Mozart provides for this opening part of the finale. The voices are kept well separated from each other, as reflects their physical separation on stage.

6. Enter now the mayor and Serpetta:

MAYOR:
Even though I’m moving slowly, I’m sure I’m going to end up flat on my face walking around like this in the dark!

SERPETTA:
By myself, quietly, softly, I’m here as well, to see what I’ve done and what I can do.

COUNT BELFIORE:
Who’s there?

SANDRINA:
Alas, I’m suffering!

MAYOR:
Who’s coming?

SERPETTA:
I am so miserable.

NARDO:
Let me though!

ARMINDA:
Oh, what terror!

SANDRINA, SERPETTA, ARMINDA, COUNT BELFIORE, NARDO, MAYOR:
What whispers, what noises, and no way for me to escape!

7. As the stage becomes more crowded, the pace of Mozart’s music will pick up; as the characters become more physically compressed, their lines will become shorter and the turnover from one singer to the next will become more rapid (Musical selection: La finta giardiniera, No. 23, Act II, finale, part 1.)

8. With all these people on stage, and no one able to see a thing, mistaken identities are almost inevitable, and the confusion really begins. The mayor bumps into his niece, Arminda, who he believes to be his beloved Sandrina:

MAYOR:
Are you my Sandrina?

[Arminda, for her part, fails to recognize her uncle and thinks the mayor is actually her double-crossing fiancé, Count Belfiore; she decides that she will pretend to be Sandrina just to give him a hard time:]

ARMINDA:
Yes, it’s me.

[She sings as an aside:]
(It’s the count.)

[More mistaken identity; Count Belfiore mistakes Serpetta for Sandrina:]

COUNT BELFIORE:
Are you my Sandrina?

[Serpetta, thinking that it is her former boyfriend, the mayor, whom she believes Sandrina has stolen from her, also identifies herself as Sandrina:]

SERPETTA:
Yes, it is I.

[Now Serpetta sings an aside:]
(It is the mayor.)

[Only Nardo/Roberto gets it right; he approaches the real Sandrina and asks:]

NARDO:
Are you my mistress?

SANDRINA:
Okay, that’s Nardo, nothing to be afraid of.

[Another chorus celebrates the mistaken belief that everyone has found Sandrina:]

SANDRINA, SERPETTA, ARMINDA, COUNT BELFIORE, NARDO, MAYOR:
What a pleasure, I’m so pleased, I’ve found her! (Musical selection: *La finta giardiniera*, No. 23, Act II, finale, part 2.)

9. Meanwhile, we hear Ramiro’s voice from offstage. Ramiro, Arminda’s former fiancé, has brought with him a number of servants bearing torches—soon light, and illumination, will fall on this confused scene.

10. Finally, as the characters start recognizing one another, they are taken aback to find themselves incorrectly paired. With the couples realigned, the count, the mayor, and Nardo proclaim “Good job! Now, no more changes!” (Musical selection: *La finta giardiniera*, No. 23, Act II, finale, part 4.)

D. The vaguely humorous mood created by this last passage is brought up short, as one character after another begins to castigate others for their perceived “infamy.” First, Arminda decides that now is as good a time as any to give Count Belfiore, her fiancé, a major piece of her mind. Note that the sort of harmonic dissonance and drama we hear in this music is much more typical of opera seria than it is opera buffa, as is the rather stiff and stagy way the voices continue to follow one after the other, with very little overlap between them.

E. Poor Marchioness Onesti (Sandrina); it has been a tough few weeks. She’s physically exhausted and emotionally spent, and now the mayor has called her a cruel, ungrateful woman. It’s all too much.

F. Both Sandrina and the count are having trouble breathing; we are about to be witness to a double panic attack! Mozart expresses their disorientation and approaching delirium in a dark and plaintive C Minor:

SANDRINA, COUNT BELFIORE:
Okay, it’s getting darker, the air is getting really heavy, I’m sweating and panting, I’m getting cold and shaky, and on top of it all, I’m beginning to get delirious!

G. But no one seems to be listening to them; the others are all too caught up in their own rage and unhappiness, expressed in a brittle and energetic C Major. (Musical selection: *La finta giardiniera*, No. 23, Act II, finale, part 5.)

H. What this finale lacks, relative to Mozart’s mature finales, is the sort of genuine dramatic give-and-take that he will master to a degree never seen or heard before him.

I. Part of the problem here is the libretto, but the mature Mozart was never stopped by a lousy libretto, as we will observe when we get to *The Magic Flute*.

J. Almost nowhere in this finale do the characters peel off and sing in duets, trios, quartets, and quintets; except for the predictable choruses occurring at the end of each large section of the finale, singers rarely sing together or overlap with each other. As a result, different emotional points of view are not projected simultaneously but consecutively; the music is more theatrical than operatic.

K. This is not intended as a criticism so much as an observation; Mozart is still mastering his craft, and writing a great finale is by far the most difficult aspect of the operatic craft as it existed in his time.

L. Sandrina and Count Belfiore crack completely under the stress. They suddenly believe themselves to be pastoral mythical entities, the nymph Cloris and the shepherd Thyrsus, respectively. Addressing each other in reference to the screaming and angry people around them, Sandrina and the count sing a gentle serenade to each other; note the pastoral oboes:

SANDRINA:
My Thyrsus, listen to these sweet sirens, peacefully and magically singing to us, allowing us to relax and enjoy sweet repose.

COUNT BELFIORE:
Hear, my Cloris, the lyre of Orpheus, which charmed wild beasts and flowers, and changed the face of nature herself.

SANDRINA, COUNT BELFIORE:
What happy contentment, what welcome pleasure!

M. Arminda and her uncle, the mayor, who is clearly not very smart, turn to Sandrina and the count and ask, “What’s this all about? Are you supposed to be delirious?” Sandrina and the count push everyone aside and together they sing: “Dear people, you are so unhappy, control yourselves.” Serpetta, Arminda, the mayor, and Nardo together observe the obvious: “They’ve gone crazy.”

N. As we listen to Part 6 of the finale, be aware of the amazingly rapid changes of mood, mode (that is, back and forth from major to minor, from bright to dark), and tempo (the actual speed of the music), as Mozart shifts constantly between the different moods and worldviews of the characters: Sandrina and the count’s lunacy, Arminda’s nastiness and haughtiness, the mayor and Nardo’s rage, Serpetta’s sarcasm, and so forth. It is a musical kaleidoscope, a rapid progression of contrasting musical moods, a brave attempt by Mozart to keep the dramatic momentum moving forward despite a horrific libretto and a situation so confused that two of the characters have gone mad! (Musical selection: La finta giardiniera, No. 23, Act II, finale, part 6.)

O. Part 7 brings the Finale to its conclusion:

[Ramiro, furious with his ex-fiancé, Arminda, yells at her:]
RAMIRO:
All of this is your fault!

[Sandrina and the count, upset at all the yelling, put their hands to their ears and sing together:]
SANDRINA, COUNT BELFIORE:
When, oh Gods, will this cruelty end?

SERPETTA, ARMINDA, RAMIRO, MAYOR, NARDO:
This is amazing, incredible, who could imagine a more bizarre situation?!

[The finale and the act end with Sandrina and the count merrily dancing about, completely off the deep end, singing:]
SANDRINA, COUNT BELFIORE:
What joy, what delightful harmony, what happiness, let’s dance! (Musical selection: La finta giardiniera, No. 23, Act II, finale, part 7.)

III. On December 6, 1774, Wolfgang, with Leopold in tow, arrived in Munich to complete La finta giardiniera and begin rehearsals.

A. The dress rehearsal took place on January 12, and the premiere performance on January 13, at the Salvatortheate. At the time of the premiere, Mozart was two weeks shy of his nineteenth birthday.

B. The poet Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart prophetically wrote in the April 17, 1775, edition of the newspaper The German Chronicle, “Mozart…is sure to become one of the greatest composers who has ever lived” (Kunze, Teldec 9031-72309-2).
Lecture Twelve
The Professional, Part Two

Scope: Between 1775 and 1780, Mozart proved himself to be a formidable opera composer. Yet, for four years after Il rê pastore (1775), Mozart received no commissions to write operas. He began, but did not finish, the opera Zaide (1779), designed to attract a commission to write a singspiel for the Imperial German Opera. Finally, in 1780, Mozart received a commission from the Elector Karl Theodor and the city of Munich to write the opera seria Idomeneo, King of Crete. This opera, deemed too radical to enjoy permanent popularity in Mozart’s day, is now universally recognized as the greatest of all opera seria.

Outline

I. Mozart’s next three operas, Il rê pastore, Zaide, and Idomeneo, mark what was, for him, “the great leap forward.” Composed between 1775 and 1780, these three operas mark the transition between Mozart the professional opera composer and Mozart the master opera composer.
   A. The years between 1775 and 1780 were, from a personal point of view, difficult ones for Mozart. In October 1777, Mozart, three months shy of his twenty-second birthday, left Salzburg to make his fortune. Because his father, Leopold, could not obtain leave from his job, Mozart was accompanied by his mother.
   B. Their first extended stop was in the city of Mannheim, where Mozart found steady work, steady money, and perhaps most important, love. The object of his affections was a sixteen-year-old singer named Aloysia Weber, the daughter of a Mannheim musician named Fridolin Weber.
      1. Mozart might have stayed in Mannheim and might well have won his Aloysia, had not his father, in letter after letter, harangued and threatened and nagged his son to get on with his trip.
   C. On July 3, 1778, after a three-week illness, Mozart’s mother died in their Paris apartment.
      1. Wolfgang was with his mother when she died and was traumatized by the experience. Leopold behaved as if his wife’s death was his son’s fault and demanded that Wolfgang return to Salzburg and go back to work for the court, which Wolfgang did not want to do.
      2. Mozart’s determination not to return to Salzburg was crushed by an endless onslaught of letters from his father that shamelessly played off Mozart’s guilt over his mother’s death.
   D. Mozart set out to return to Salzburg. Before doing so, he stopped at Mannheim to see Aloysia Weber and to ask her hand in marriage. She rejected both Mozart and his proposal out of hand. In response, Mozart sat down at a piano and, with Aloysia still in the room, sang a bawdy old song, “Leck mir das Mensch im Arsch, das mich nicht will,” “The one who doesn’t want me can lick my ass.”
   E. On January 15, 1779, Mozart returned home to Salzburg. His trip, which had taken him primarily to Mannheim and Paris, had been a disaster. He had left Salzburg with his mother eighteen months before, filled with high hopes and dreams of success. He returned without his mother, without a position, without any money, and without Aloysia Weber, who had rejected his marriage proposal.

II. Il rê pastore (“The Shepherd King”) was composed in 1775, roughly two years before Mozart’s departure for Mannheim, Paris, and disaster.
   A. The opera was commissioned by the city of Salzburg as part of the celebrations surrounding a visit from the Archduke Maximilian, the youngest son of Empress Maria Theresa and brother of Emperor Joseph II of Austria and Queen Marie Antoinette of France.
   B. Mozart had only six weeks to compose the opera, which sets a libretto written by Pietro Metastasio, and was chosen by the archbishop or one of his advisors. The libretto had been set by at least thirteen other composers before Mozart, none of whom could have written an overture as royal and engaging as Mozart’s.
      (Musical selection: Il rê pastore, Overture opening.)
   C. After the plot convolutions of La finta giardiniera, the story of Il rê pastore seems downright simple.
      1. In brief, the city of Sidon has been conquered by Alexander the Great (Alessandro) and his Macedonian host. The evil tyrant Strato is dead, and Alexander is determined to place the son of the last rightful king on the throne. The plot device is that the prince—to keep him safe and hidden from the recently deceased tyrant—was raised as a shepherd, under the name Aminta.
2. The action of the opera revolves around Alexander’s attempts to locate Aminta and convince him to take the throne. Two common themes emerge: First, Alexander is shown to be a megalomaniacal control freak. He is well-meaning but incapable of understanding that not all people hunger for power; some, like Aminta, would be quite satisfied with love.

3. The second theme to emerge is one that crystallizes the essential difference in ruling concepts between Alexander and Aminta. Aminta is a shepherd and, ultimately, a “pastoral” king; like the ancient King David, Aminta embodies the biblical concept of “king as shepherd,” as opposed to Alexander, who embodies the modern European view of “king as benevolent, enlightened despot.”

4. Anyone present at the premiere performance in Salzburg in April 1775 would have no trouble understanding that Alexander was a symbol for the enlightened rule of the Habsburgs, Maria Theresa in general, and Archduke Maximilian—that evening’s honored guest—specifically.

D. We will listen to Aminta’s Aria “L’amero,” “I Shall Love Her,” No. 10. Mozart created the role of Aminta for the Munich-based male soprano/castrato Tommaso Consoli; modern performances of the work feature a female in the part (another so-called “trouser role”).

1. By the time we get to No. 10, which lies about halfway through the second (and final) act, Aminta has been faced with what, for him, is a terrible choice: Does he accept his responsibility to rule as king of Sidon and, in doing so, forsake his beloved, Elisa, a beautiful, smart, but unfortunately, common-born woman, or does he forsake his duty, his birthright, and his responsibility and, instead, stay in the countryside?

2. When Aminta sings this aria, he has come to believe—wrongly—that he’ll be allowed to marry Elisa and become the king, which of course, is what will ultimately happen, but first there will be some major stress and plot twists.

AMINTA:
I shall love her, I shall be loyal: a faithful husband and a faithful lover.
I shall yearn for her alone. In this dear and sweet woman I will find my joy, my delight, and my peace.

3. The aria is scored for flutes, bassoons, horns, muted strings, a solo English horn, and a solo violin. The solo English horn is meant to evoke the so-called “shepherd’s horn”; its reedy and plaintive tone describes perfectly Aminta’s simplicity, purity, and pastoral background. The solo violin accompaniment is a time-honored device meant to evoke the lover’s serenade. But what is genuinely Mozartian here are the unbelievable lyricism of the vocal line and the incredible—and complex—use of harmony to create subtle shades of coloring and emotional nuance. (Musical selection: Il rè pastore, No. 10.)

III. The German-language singspiel Zaide was composed in 1779, four years after Il rè pastore, during the unhappy time after Mozart’s return to Salzburg from Paris. It is not an overstatement to say that the years between Il rè pastore and Zaide—between 1775 and 1779—saw Mozart “grow up.” Certainly, by 1779, at the age of twenty-three, his own life experiences had begun to catch up with his compositional craft.

A. Zaide, or “The Harem,” as Mozart called it, was left unfinished, and many Mozart authorities prefer to consider it an incomplete sketch for the superb Die Entführung aus dem Serail, (“The Abduction from the Harem”) of 1781.

B. The singspiel Zaide was composed in 1779, four years after Il rè pastore. Wolfgang Mozart—approaching his prime, with an excellent track record behind him, a dazzling future before him, and a burning desire to compose operas—did not write an opera for four years. And it wasn’t for lack of trying; one of the reasons Mozart traveled to Mannheim and Paris between 1777 and 1779 was to drum up opera commissions.

1. Why did Mozart not get any commissions? We do not know. Bad luck and bad timing were part of it; the fact that Mozart was essentially a freelance composer in a composer-rich environment also had something to do with it.

2. Whatever the reasons, Mozart was increasingly desperate to get back to his beloved theater. When he heard through the grapevine that the new Imperial German Opera Theater in Vienna was looking to hire a composer of singspiels, Mozart decided to write one on spec, as a sort of resume for the Vienna job.

3. Mozart’s old friend Johann Andreas Streicher provided him with a libretto based on a theme that was popular at the time, that of an escape of Europeans from the “clutches” of the Ottoman Turks.
4. Mozart worked intensely on *Zaide* only to lose interest in it almost entirely when a real commission came through in early 1780—a commission for a serious opera to be performed in Munich during the 1780–1781 Carnival season. That opera was to be *Idomeneo*, and it is Mozart’s first genuine operatic masterwork.

IV. In 1780, Mozart, then twenty-four, was living and working and complaining and suffocating, both personally and professionally, in Salzburg. He desperately wanted out; he despaired that his talents were being wasted, that life was passing him by. And Mozart wanted to write another opera.

A. With a little help from his friends, Mozart did manage to secure an operatic commission from the Elector Karl Theodor and the city of Munich. The commission, for the opera *Idomeneo, King of Crete*, was announced in the late summer of 1780. Having secured a six-week leave of absence from his job at Salzburg, Mozart left for Munich on November 5, 1780.

B. Having been informed that there was a shortage of decent librettists in Munich, the librettist chosen was Mozart’s fellow Salzburger and a family friend, the Salzburg chaplain Abbe Gianbattista Varesco. We are told that Varesco was “unskilled as a dramatic poet” and that he created some problems for Mozart, who wanted “to keep the drama moving forward” at all times (Mann, 253).

C. Whatever flaws there are in the libretto, Mozart’s *Idomeneo* is generally considered the greatest opera seria ever written. The tiresome and predictable rituals of traditional opera seria are, in *Idomeneo*, almost entirely swept away by Mozart’s incredible dramatic momentum; the characters are given a depth, substance, and individuality that complete transcend their archetypes. In *Idomeneo*, Mozart’s operatic compositional technique—his skills as a melodist, harmonist, and dramatist—reached a point beyond even that of his greatest living contemporary, Joseph Haydn.

D. The plot of *Idomeneo* is a basic love triangle but with a major twist. The action takes place in ancient Crete, ten years after the conclusion of the Trojan War.

1. The first woman in the love triangle is Ilia, a prisoner of war and the daughter of King Priam of Troy. On arriving in Crete, she was shipwrecked and rescued by Idamante, the man in the triangle.

2. Idamante, prince and heir to the throne of Crete, is deeply in love with Ilia, who despite her hatred for the Greeks, is in love with him as well.

3. The third member of the love triangle is Electra. Electra has been living in Crete to try to put some distance between the deaths of her father, Agamemnon; her brother, Orestes; and her mother, Clytemnestra, whom she herself had killed! Electra is a ticking time bomb: filled with grief and angst, vindictive, hysterical, suicidal, homicidal, and in love with Idamante!

E. The part of Ilia, the Trojan princess, was written for a lyric soprano named Dorothea Wendling; the part of Electra was written for her sister, the dramatic soprano Elisabeth Wendling. The part of Idamante, the prince of Crete, was created for the male soprano/castrato Vincenzo del Prato. Many modern performances substitute a tenor, singing an octave down, for the part of Idamante, but just as many use a female soprano in trousers, as does our recording. We must remember, then, that although we’re hearing three women sing, one of them is supposed to be a man.

F. After being away for twenty years—ten years of war and ten years of wandering around the Mediterranean—Idomeneo, the king of Crete (a dramatic tenor), finally, is returning home. As his ship approaches the harbor, the gods blow up a major storm, and the ship is dashed on the rocks. Everyone on Crete assumes that Idomeneo is dead.

1. But, of course, he is not dead; just before the ship was destroyed, he made a bargain with Neptune, promising that if he is spared, he will sacrifice the first person he sees once he crawls onto the shore of Crete.

2. Of course, the first person he sees on the beach as he emerges from the surf is the crown prince Idamante, his own son.

3. At first, neither recognizes the other, but soon enough, there on the beach, they identify themselves. Idamante tearfully attempts to embrace his father; Idomeneo, horrified, runs away, realizing that he must sacrifice his own son to appease Neptune.

4. Does Idomeneo tell anyone about his bargain? No. And does he fulfill his promise to sacrifice the first person he sees? Of course not. He ultimately decides to renge on the deal. As a gentle reminder of their arrangement, Neptune sends a terrible sea monster to ravage the countryside, eat the peasants, and destroy the crops.
5. Idomeneo can no longer keep the secret of his bargain; Idamante finds out and determines to act, something his father is no longer capable of doing. Proving himself to be by far the more regal and responsible, early in the third and final act of the opera, Idamante declares that he will sacrifice himself for the greater good of what would have become, eventually, his kingdom.

6. Ilia (the Trojan princess in love with Idamante) proclaims her desire to die with him; Electra fumes and fusses; and Idomeneo writhes in a hellfire of guilt and self-loathing.

G. All of this comes to head during the third-act quartet entitled “Andro, ramingo e solo,” (“I shall go wandering all alone”).

1. The text, provided by Abbe Gianbattista Varesco, gives no indication of the drama, power, and lyric glory Mozart creates in this quartet. We begin with Idamante and Ilia’s declaration of purpose, which Mozart sets as accompanied recitative.

**IDAMANTE:**
Well then, I shall go! But where? O Ilia! O father!

[Ilia grasps Idamante’s hand and sings:]

**ILIA:**
I will follow you or die, my beloved.

[As we would expect, Idamante does not want Ilia along for what must become a fatal ride. He responds:]

**IDAMANTE:**
Stay here, my love, and live in peace. Farewell!

[Now the quartet begins in earnest. Idamante sings first:]

**IDAMANTE:**
I shall go on wandering alone, seeking death, until I find it.

**ILIA:**
You will have me as your companion wherever you go, and where you die, I will also die.

**IDOMENEO:**
Heartless Neptune! Who, for the sake of mercy, will kill me?

[Just before the beginning of the quartet, a despairing Ilia rather tactlessly begged Electra to console her over Idamante’s impending self-sacrifice. This, for Electra, who lost Idamante to Ilia (“that slave girl”), was the crowning insult; during the quartet, she sings viciously to herself “When shall I have my revenge?”]

[Both Idamante and Ilia turn to Idomeneo and sing as a duo:]

**IDAMANTE, ILIA:**
Don’t be upset; please try to calm down.

**IDOMENEO, IDAMANTE, ILIA:**
Oh, my heart is breaking!

**IDOMENEO, IDAMANTE, ILIA, ELECTRA:**
It’s not possible to suffer more; grief like this is worse than death. No one has ever experienced a more cruel fate or greater punishment.

**IDAMANTE:**
I shall go on wandering alone…

2. Of this extraordinary quartet, the musicologist William Mann has written that it conveys and develops the emotions of its characters “farther than any composer had yet done.”

3. As we listen to this quartet, note the absolute conviction in Idamante’s voice at the outset of the quartet, depicted, by Mozart, with a bold and almost martial descent in dotted (long-short) rhythms.

4. Notice how Mozart slowly adds the voices, layering them in until all four are singing of their “grief.”

5. Likewise, notice how Mozart slowly adds more and more instruments and increases the level of harmonic dissonance over the course of the quartet, subtly but powerfully creating a sense of dramatic growth and emotional intensification.
6. Finally, be aware of the incredible effect when suddenly, all the voices cut out and Idamante repeats his opening line, “Andrò ramingo e solo… I shall go on wandering alone…”; after all the commotion, the singularity of his voice redoubles the sense of lonely conviction that lies at the heart of his self-sacrifice. (Musical selection: Idomeneo, recitative and No. 21.)

H. Neither Idamante nor Iliana dies in the opera. Neptune is so impressed by their fortitude that he forgives Idomeneo his bargain, provided that Idomeneo “retire” and turn the rule of Crete over to his son and his bride-to-be, the Trojan princess Iliana. Just before the final celebratory chorus, Electra, the loser in this scenario, goes completely over the edge and sings one of the great “madwoman” arias in the repertoire, entitled “Of Orestes and Ajax.”

I. Idomeneo was premiered in Munich’s Court Theater on January 29, 1781, two days after Mozart’s twenty-fifth birthday. It was well received and performed again on February 3 and March 3. A single private performance was also held at Prince Auersperg’s palace in Vienna in 1786. It was not performed again in Mozart’s lifetime, an incredible fact when we consider that it is, by every estimation, the single greatest opera seria ever written.

1. Mozart’s Idomeneo, with its “Germanic” reliance on the orchestra and its “French” use of the chorus, was simply too radical for the conservative opera seria crowd, who preferred heroic operas to be constructed along traditional and predictable lines.

2. It wasn’t until 1931—when a number of productions were mounted to celebrate its 150th anniversary—that Idomeneo began to be considered among Mozart’s operatic masterworks.
Lecture Thirteen
Vienna and Abduction

Scope: In 1781, Mozart’s unhappiness in the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg brought about his dismissal. He now took the daunting step of becoming a freelance composer in a society where aristocratic patronage of composers was a time-honored tradition. His musical genius, however, quickly found an appreciative audience. He was invited to write an opera for the new Imperial German Theater. The result was The Abduction from the Harem of 1782, an opera that pushed the limits of the singspiel genre as it was then understood.

Outline

I. Following the final performance of Idomeneo in Munich on March 3, 1781, Mozart dallied; he did not want to return to Salzburg, the archbishop, and his father.
   A. On March 12, while he was still in Munich, Mozart was told to report to Vienna, where the archbishop was visiting his own sick father, the Imperial Vice Chancellor.
   B. As one of the archbishop’s musicians, Mozart was required to accompany him to the homes of the nobility, then wait in whatever antechamber or back bedroom was available until his services were required. To say that all of this was galling is an understatement. The archbishop also forbade Mozart to concertize for anyone other than himself, claiming that it would “dilute the effect of his appearances in Salzburg” (Solomon, 242). Mozart was incensed.
   C. Mozart’s outrage and humiliation at having to sit around and wait on the archbishop led, ultimately, to outright defiance and insubordination on his part.
   D. Mozart petitioned for his dismissal from the archbishop’s service. For one month, the petition was rejected. Leopold alternately begged and demanded that Wolfgang withdraw his resignation, and the archbishop’s chief chamberlain, Count Karl Joseph Felix Arco, tried to mediate the dispute. Finally, toward the end of May 1781, Mozart’s demands so infuriated Count Arco that he called Mozart a “clown” and a “knave” and physically booted him out of the room.
   E. As William Stafford points out: “This was a landmark, not only in the life of Mozart, but in musical history, for it marked the first open rebellion of a musician against feudal society” (Stafford, 184).
   F. Mozart was no stranger to Vienna, and he made himself comfortable almost immediately. His celebrity, his youthful energy, and his miraculous talent opened almost every door he approached. If Mozart failed to find a single essential patron, which is often referred to as a flaw in his career, it’s because he did not want a single essential patron. He’d had enough of being an indentured servant in Salzburg; he knew his worth, he knew he was the most talented musician in Europe, and he saw no reason why he shouldn’t be able to successfully freelance, without having to make any permanent commitments.
      1. Remember, too, that the image of a poverty-stricken, neglected Mozart is absolutely fraudulent. He was fabulously successful in Vienna; for the next six years, he was one of the city’s “beautiful people,” and his comings and goings and music were discussed in the tabloids and over supper tables across Vienna.
      2. Further, had Mozart been prepared to move to Prague or London or Berlin after 1787, he would have been successful in those cities, as well; would likely have lived a long, fruitful life; and might even have composed that serious German-language opera he’d been contemplating based on Goethe’s Faust.
      3. If Mozart suffered from anything, it was that he was a bit naïve about the motives of the people around him; he was too talented for his own good and unaware of the rancor and jealousy his talent could inspire; he spent his money a little too easily; and he assumed that he had lots of time. He did not expect to die at thirty-five years of age.

II. From an operatic point of view, Mozart’s “arrival” in Vienna in June 1781 could not have been better timed.
   A. For a couple of years, Emperor Joseph II—an enlightened man and a genuine Austrian patriot—had been attempting to create an Imperial German Opera Theater that would be the equal to the long-established Imperial Italian Opera Theater. In the hopes of becoming involved with this fledgling theater, Mozart had
composed the torso of the singspiel *Zaide* back in 1779, before he had been distracted by the commission for *Idomeneo*.

**B.** Based largely on the success of *Idomeneo*, Count Rosenberg, the director of the new Imperial German Theater, approached Mozart with a request for an opera. Building on the theme of the rescue from a Turkish harem of the unfinished *Zaide*, Count Rosenberg had delivered to Mozart a libretto entitled *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, or “The Abduction from the Harem,” written by Christoph Friedrich Bretzner.

**C.** Ultimately, it took Mozart ten months to complete the score for *The Abduction*; it was the longest period of time he would ever spend on a stage work. Without a doubt, the opera was, for Mozart, the fulfillment of a long-standing ambition: to write an opera with both serious and comic elements in his native language, German. In *The Abduction*, Mozart did his best to include everything he knew about opera, with the result being, for many of his contemporaries, an opera that was a bit too long, complicated, and stylistically diverse.

**D.** Let’s sample the opening of the overture. Be aware of the ringing triangle and cymbals, the pounding bass drum, and phrase endings that feature repeated chords; these were the surest ways to stereotypically evoke “Turkish” music in the late eighteenth century! (*Musical selection: The Abduction from the Harem, Overture.*)

**E.** The problem Mozart’s critics really had with *The Abduction* was that it did not fit into any of the existing operatic templates with which they were familiar. *The Abduction* was not really a serious, heroic opera, nor was it a comic opera, and it was too complicated to be considered just another singspiel.

**F.** Just as *Idomeneo* became the greatest opera seria of all time by transcending the rituals and limits of traditional opera seria, so *The Abduction* pushed the limits of what was considered a singspiel.

**G.** *The Abduction* takes place in sixteenth-century Turkey, in and around the palace of one Pasha Selim.

1. At the onset of Act I, we meet Belmonte, a young Spanish nobleman, lurking outside the pasha’s palace. Belmonte’s bride-to-be, Constanze; Constanze’s English maid, Blondchen (“Blondie”); and Belmonte’s own valet (and Blondchen’s boy-toy), Pedrillo were captured by pirates and delivered as slaves to Pasha Selim. Belmonte has come to free his people and rout the Turks.

2. Meanwhile, much has happened to the captives since their arrival at the palace. Pasha Selim has fallen in love with Constanze, whom he has been wooing most unsuccessfully. The pasha has “given” Constanze’s maid, Blondchen, to his evil overseer, Osmin, whose romantic methodology is more primitive than the pasha’s and equally unsuccessful. Pedrillo, Belmonte’s valet, has been made custodian of the Pasha’s garden.

3. Pedrillo and Belmonte are joyfully reunited in the garden in the first act. Pedrillo presents Belmonte to the pasha, claiming that he is a famous architect prepared to put his services at the pasha’s disposal. Once inside the palace, Belmonte is reunited with Constanze, and the four lovers—Belmonte and Constanze and Blondchen and Pedrillo—plot their escape. They almost get away, but the evil Osmin—drugged with wine—is awakened just in time to catch them. He squirms with pleasure at the thought of the tortures to which they will be subjected.

4. But, of course, no tortures take place. After some rather tense moments, Pasha Selim ultimately sets them all free. When Osmin complains about losing his slave Blondchen, Pasha Selim tells him that if one cannot win a woman by being kind to her, it’s better to just let her go. The opera ends with the assembled cast, except Osmin, united in singing their praises of the wise and merciful Pasha Selim.

**III.** In our brief examination of *The Abduction*, we will focus on the character and actions of Osmin, the evil overseer. He is, along with Blondchen, by far the most interesting character in the opera, as villains usually are.

**A.** Osmin—fat, older, greasy, mean-spirited—is a great villain. He is also the proud new owner of a beautiful young Englishwoman, Blondchen. He is keeping her under lock and key as if she were a prize animal, and he’s on heightened alert for any male that gets even remotely close to her.

1. Osmin is aware, either consciously or unconsciously, that his manhood is not likely to be equal to Blondchen’s “requirements”; certainly, his cruelty, fear, and jealousy of other men reveal his profound sense of inadequacy.

2. More than anyone else, Osmin hates Pedrillo. Aside from the fact that Pedrillo is young, handsome, and filled with manly vigor, Osmin is also aware that Pedrillo and Blondchen were, before their capture and incarceration, in love.
B. Early in the first act, Osmin encounters Belmonte in the garden of Pasha Selim’s palace and chases him off, convinced that he must be “sniffing” around after Blondchen. We pick up with the dialogue that precedes Osmin’s first aria, No. 3. Osmin is talking to himself about the stranger (Belmonte) he just shooed away.

OSMIN: That’s all I need, another rascal like Pedrillo, another good-for-nothing who spends all day and night sniffing around my woman. Sooner or later I’ll catch Pedrillo at it, and I hope he enjoys the beating I’ll give him when I get a hold of him! If only he’d not gotten into the pasha’s good graces; I’d have strung him up long ago!

[Enter Pedrillo, who is now the master of the garden; he asks the fuming Osmin:]

PEDRILLO: Is the pasha back yet?

[Osmin fixes him with a scrunch-eyed glower and hisses:]

OSMIN: Find out for yourself, if you want to know.

[Pedrillo is neither intimidated nor angered. He’s been down this road with Osmin before and responds:]

PEDRILLO: Is the barometer pointing to “stormy weather” again? Why cannot we all just get along?

OSMIN: Get along with you? With a slimy, trouble-making rogue who just cannot wait to mess with me? I’d like to wring your neck!

C. Osmin huffs and puffs his way through a marvelous, patter-style aria that immediately identifies his essential character traits: He is a bully, a lout, a lump, and ultimately, supremely insecure.

1. Note, in particular, the barking French horns that seem to mock Osmin when he refers to knowing “all the tricks.”

2. The Italian word for the French horn is the same as the Italian for “to be cuckolded”: corno. Thus, operatic iconography used French horns to indicate a man who is or is about to be cuckolded. The barking horns in this aria would have been instantly recognized by Mozart’s audience as a clear indication that the object of Osmin’s affection—Blondchen—will most certainly end up in the arms of another man.

OSMIN: Solche hergelauf’ne Laffen,
    Strutting young lechers spring up from nowhere,
    Die nur nach den Weibern gaffen, Who do nothing but lust after women,
    Ich hab’ auch Verstand.
    Drum beim Barte des Propheten! Be warned: I swear by the Prophet’s beard
    Ich studiere Tag und Nacht, That night and day I’ll wrack my brains,
    Mich zu hintergehen, If you’re going to get the better of me,
    Ich hab’ auch Verstand. I’ve got some brains as well!
    Ruh mich bis ich dich seh’ toten,

3. The aria seems to come to a conclusion right here, on a very low “F” in Osmin’s voice. He will pause, the orchestra will stop, the audience will applaud, and the moment they stop applauding, he will resume the aria, with the following words, seemingly at almost twice the speed:

OSMIN: Drum beim Barte des Propheten!
    Ich studiere Tag und Nacht,
    Ruh mich bis ich dich seh’ toten,
    Be warned: I swear by the Prophet’s beard
    That night and day I’ll wrack my brains,
    And I won’t rest until I see you killed,
4. This “coda” to the aria is a masterstroke on Mozart’s part. During the applause preceding the coda, Osmin can be seen growing angrier and angrier, as if the audience’s applause is just another example of the world mocking him. Of this “coda,” Mozart wrote his father: “[The coda] is actually in the previous tempo, but with [faster] note-values, and as Osmin’s rage goes on increasing, therefore by the time one thinks the Aria must be coming to an end, the [coda] must surely make its best effect. For a man in such a towering rage exceeds all control; he does not know what he is doing—and just so, the music mustn’t know, either” (Mann, 294). (Musical selection: The Abduction from the Harem, No. 3, aria.)

5. Now it appears that the aria is over. Pedrillo, the butt of all this rage, responds in dialogue:

PEDRILLO:
You have some serious hostility issues, old man;
I’ve done nothing to you at all.

OSMIN:
The guilt is written all across your face [literally, “you’ve got the face of a “gallows bird”], and that’s more than enough for me!

6. And suddenly the aria resumes, even faster and wilder than before! Osmin goes berserk and sings a vicious, sadistic, gleeful little children’s song describing Pedrillo’s annihilation, replete with piccolo, cymbals, and bass drum for proper Turkish coloration!

OSMIN:
Erst gekopt;  
First you’ll be beheaded;
Dann gehangen;  
Then you’ll be hanged;
Dann gespiesst auf heiss’ Stangen;  
Then impaled on red-hot skewers;
Dann verbrannt;  
Then burned to a crisp,
Dann gebunden und getaucht;  
Then manacled and drowned;
Zuletzt geschunden!  
And finally you’ll be skinned alive!
(Musical selection: The Abduction from the Harem, No. 3, aria.)

IV. Act II opens with Blondchen/Blonda informing Osmin in no uncertain terms that he needs to change his attitude toward her.

A. In her aria, No. 8, Blondchen does her best to explain to Osmin how a gentleman should treat a lady. We hear the opening section of this marvelous, coloratura aria:

BLONDA:
Durch zartlichkeit und Schmeicheln,  
With tenderness and sweet words,
Gefälligkeit und Scherzen,  
Kindness and pleasantries,
Erobert mann die Herzen  
It’s easy to win the hearts
Der guten Mädchen leicht.  
Of good little girls,
Doch mürrisches Befehlen  
But surly commands,
Und Poltern, Zanken, Plagen  
Shouting, nagging, tormenting,
Macht, dass in wenig Tagen  
Will only result, in a few days,
So Lieb’ als Treu’ entweicht.  
In love lost and fidelity out the window.
(Musical selection: The Abduction from the Harem, Act II, No. 8, aria.)

B. In dialogue, Osmin does not respond well to Blondchen’s advice. He reminds her that he is her master and she, his slave. Blondchen threatens to claw out his eyes and refuses to obey his orders. Osmin virtually shrinks before our very eyes:

BLONDA:
Get out of here, and don’t give me orders; you know I just won’t tolerate it.

OSMIN:
Okay, then, promise me...

BLONDA:

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How dare you!

OSMIN:
Oh, c’mon!

BLONDA:
Go away, leave me alone!

OSMIN:
No, I won’t move an inch unless you swear to obey me!

C. Finally, Osmin repeats that last line “Unless you swear to obey me!” with all the power of masculine
commend he can still muster—in a slowly descending line down to the very bottom of his vocal range.
Mozart has decided that Blondchen is genuinely enjoying this little conversation: She taunts Osmin by
imitating his low, descending voice in her next line: “Not a chance, you old fool. Not even if you were the
Great Mogul in person!”

D. The music slows as Osmin, entirely taken aback, contemplates his predicament. He is accompanied by a
rueful solo oboe:

OSMIN:
O Englishmen, what fools you are to let your women have their own way!
What a pain and a nuisance it is to have to deal with such a creature!

BLONDA:
Listen, a heart born free will never submit to slavery, and even if my liberty is lost, my heart is still proud and free,
and laughs at the world! Now go away!

OSMIN:
How dare you speak to me like that?

BLONDA:
Because I feel like it.

OSMIN:
I’m staying right here!

BLONDA:
Some other time. Now get lost.

[Osmin asks, what is for him, the ultimate rhetorical question:]

OSMIN:
Was there ever such impudence?!

[Blondchen decides the discussion has come to its end. Like a very large and dangerous cat, she “bears her claws”
and, pretending to scratch Osmin’s eyes out, sings:]

BLONDA:
Your eyes are in great danger if you stay here any longer.

[Osmin is beaten, and he knows it; he backpedals nervously and sings:]

OSMIN:
All right, be quiet, I’m going. I’m going before you start using your claws.

E. The duet ends brilliantly, with barking horns and Osmin’s hurried exit. We can safely assume that by the
time the opera ends, Osmin will forswear European women in general and Englishwomen in
particular—forever! (Musical selection: The Abduction from the Harem, No. 9, duet.)
V. In terms of numbers of performances and general acclaim, *The Abduction* was the most popular of Mozart’s operas in his own lifetime. Of course, at the time of its premiere, he had only nine more years to live, though nine years in which he would forever change the nature of opera and musical drama, nine years that would see, among many other works, four of the greatest operas ever composed: *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Cosi fan tutte*, and *The Magic Flute*. 
Lecture Fourteen
Salieri, Da Ponte, and The Marriage of Figaro

Scope: In his first years in Vienna, Mozart enjoyed a highly successful career as a performer and a prolific and versatile composer. But opportunities for Mozart to express his great love of opera did not often come his way; it was difficult for Mozart to break into the circle of favored opera composers (including Salieri) in Vienna. After The Abduction from the Harem of 1782, Mozart did not complete and produce an opera until 1786—The Marriage of Figaro. The libretto was written by Lorenzo Da Ponte, who would collaborate with Mozart on two more of the greatest operas in history, Don Giovanni and Cost fan tutte. The Marriage of Figaro marks Mozart’s complete mastery of the form.

Outline

I. Nineteen days after the premiere of The Abduction from the Harem, Mozart married Constanze Weber. The impact of his wedding on his relationship with his father was tremendous; Leopold Mozart began the process of disinheriting his own son and, in doing so, denied Wolfgang a legacy consisting largely of money he himself had earned as a performing musician and composer.

A. Despite his problems with his father, Wolfgang Mozart was, from 1781 to 1785, busy and happy. In those first years, Vienna and Mozart seemed made for each other. Mozart’s “star” as a composer rose rapidly, partly because of his own cleverness and industry.
   1. He wrote music to satisfy virtually every layer of Viennese society—from the imperial court to the middle-class dance halls.
   2. Between 1782 and 1785, he composed more than 150 pieces, in every conceivable genre and style, from solo keyboard music and concerti to duos, trios, quartets, quintets, songs, arias, operas, dance music, wind ensembles, and symphonies.

B. Mozart also proved to be a savvy and creative businessman. He began giving concerts in unusual venues, such as in restaurants and apartment buildings. Audience members would subscribe to a number of such concerts, featuring Mozart and a small orchestra, ahead of time. Because Mozart produced the concerts himself, the profits were his own.

C. What Mozart really wanted to do, however, was write opera, for which the opportunities were rare. And Mozart really wanted to write German-language opera, for which the opportunities were even rarer.

D. Despite Emperor Joseph II’s desire to see the German Opera Theater grow and flourish, the prevailing taste among the Austrian aristocracy was for Italian opera.
   1. To that end, Mozart began composing an opera entitled L’Oca del Cairo (“The Cairo Goose”), K. 422, in 1783. L’Oca del Cairo was based on a libretto by Mozart’s old colleague the Abbe Gianbattista Varesco of Idomeneo fame, but Mozart put it aside in 1784, never to return to it.
   2. In 1784, he began work an opera entitled Lo sposo deluso (“The Deluded Bridegroom”), K. 430/424a. Again, this opera was never completed, although its libretto might well have been written by the new court dramatist, a Jewish-born ex-priest named Emanuele Conegliano who went by the name of Lorenzo da Ponte.

E. Lorenzo da Ponte would write three libretti for Mozart—The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte.
   1. Individually, these are three of the greatest operas ever written and, collectively, they represent the single greatest collaboration in the history of opera.
   2. Like Mozart, Da Ponte arrived in Vienna in 1781. In December of 1782, Wolfgang and Constanze Mozart moved into a flat owned by Baron Raimond Wetzlar von Plankenstern, who introduced them to Da Ponte in early 1783.

II. One of Vienna’s most favored and politically powerful opera composers, when Mozart arrived there in 1781, was Antonio Salieri. Born in 1750 (and died in 1825), Salieri was six years older than Mozart and he outlived Mozart by almost thirty-four years.

A. Salieri served the Viennese court for fifty years, thirty-six of them—from March 1, 1788, to March 1, 1824—as kapellmeister, chief of music to the imperial court. When he met Mozart, probably in 1781, he
B. Was Salieri jealous of Mozart, perhaps even a little threatened by Mozart? Did he murder Mozart? Of course not. Salieri was a gifted and often inspired composer of Italian-language opera.

C. If there truly were no “anti-Mozart” conspiracy, why did Mozart not have the opportunity to write as many operas as he pleased once he arrived in Vienna? Because politics are politics.

D. Having arrived in Vienna filled with a heady sense of freedom and complete confidence in his own incredible abilities, Mozart couldn’t understand why everyone did not just jump when he said he wanted to write opera. Although we, today, know about all of Mozart’s early operas, the folks in Vienna knew about only two of them—Idomeneo, long and difficult, produced a total of three times in Munich, and The Abduction from the Harem, great and popular German stuff, being produced everywhere. In Vienna, Mozart was initially known primarily as a piano player and a composer of instrumental music who had one hit German-language singspiel to his credit.

E. When the twenty-six-year-old Mozart first went knocking on the doors at the Imperial Italian Opera Theater in 1782 and was told, “thanks kid, we’ll keep you in mind,” it was not “intrigue” that put him on ice but typical industry politics.

F. Ultimately, of course, the opera commissions did come, once Mozart was fully established. Between 1786 and his death in 1791, he composed and had produced five operas: The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, Così fan tutte, The Mercy of Titus, and The Magic Flute. Among the many terrible ironies surrounding Mozart’s premature death is the realization that by late 1791, he had truly “made it”; his international reputation was established and he would likely have had the opportunity to compose as many operas as he wanted for as long as he wanted.

G. Salieri wrote more than forty operas, among other works, and any number of them might still be in the repertoire if Mozart hadn’t eclipsed virtually all of his contemporaries.

1. We turn to Salieri’s Falstaff (1799), based on Shakespeare’s The Merry Wives of Windsor. Falstaff is an opera buffa, and it is one of Salieri’s last and best operas. We’ll listen to Falstaff’s big aria, “Nell’impero di Cupido,” (“In Cupid’s Realm”).

2. There’s no need to set the scene here, except to observe that Salieri’s Sir John Falstaff, true to form, is a gluttonous, avaricious, over-sexed blowhard who lives in a fantasy-construct of his own egotistical makings. In this buffa, patter-style aria, Falstaff is assuring a gentleman—who claims to be willing to pay Falstaff to seduce his own girlfriend in order to “break her in”—that no woman can resist him.

3. Musically, Salieri draws his inspiration from Falstaff’s military similes, and he sets the aria martially, with blaring, fanfarish brass and pompous dotted rhythms. It is a wonderfully comic and dramatically revealing aria. (Musical selection: Salieri, Falstaff, “Nell’impero di Cupido.”)

III. Let us now turn to an example of Mozart’s incredible ensembles, the brilliant Act III courtroom scene from The Marriage of Figaro.

A. To encapsulate the essential action of The Marriage of Figaro up through the Act III courtroom scene: The action of the opera takes place on the estate of Count Almaviva, a wealthy and powerful Spanish aristocrat. Three years before the story of this opera begins, the count won and wed the lovely Rosina (now the countess). In a moment of marriage-inspired largesse—a moment Count Almaviva now regrets mightily—he renounced his feudal “right,” as lord of the manor, to deflower any maiden in his service on her wedding night.

B. Count Almaviva’s valet is a clever, quick-witted man in his late twenties named Figaro. Figaro’s bride-to-be, the Countess Rosina’s chambermaid, is an even cleverer young woman named Susanna. The essential plot of the opera revolves around the count’s desire to bed Susanna before she and Figaro can be married, and Figaro and Susanna’s attempts to marry before the count can have his way with her.

C. One more couple must be introduced, Dr. Bartolo and Marcellina. Dr. Bartolo was once the guardian of Rosina. He had his own designs on Rosina, as well as her considerable inheritance. His own evil plans for Rosina were dashed when Figaro, as the “Barber of Seville,” helped Almaviva steal Rosina away from Bartolo. There is definitely bad blood between Dr. Bartolo and Figaro.

D. Marcellina had once been Dr. Bartolo’s housekeeper and, later, Rosina’s governess. Marcellina is a fading beauty in her late forties, and she is desperately in love with the young and strapping Figaro. At some point
before the beginning of the opera, Figaro borrowed a substantial amount of money from Marcellina, offering his body as collateral; he pledged to marry her if he couldn’t pay back the loan. But Figaro and his bride-to-be Susanna are not worried about his pledge, because the Countess Rosina has promised to pay off the loan as a wedding gift.

E. Count Almaviva, with the conniving and legal assistance of Dr. Bartolo, has initiated a suit to bring the loan to term now, before Figaro’s marriage, which would force Figaro to default and marry Marcellina, provide Bartolo his revenge, and allow Count Almaviva unlimited time to bed Susanna. To grease the skids of justice, the count has paid off the judge who will hear the case, a slimy, stuttering old man named Don Curzio.

F. In his recitative and aria, No. 18, Count Almaviva’s hostility toward Figaro bursts forth unrestrained. During the course of his aria, Count Almaviva sings:

COUNT ALMAVIVA:
Am I to see a lackey of mine happy while I suffer? Is he to possess the object of my desire while I writhe in frustration? Shall I see the woman I love marry a clodhopper? Am I supposed to stand by and see a servant happy? Not a chance. You were not born, you lowly upstart, to torment or mock me or make me miserable. Already my expectation of revenge is filling my heart with consolation and exultation.

G. The count is not a nice man.

H. In the following courtroom scene, a strange and wonderful series of events will forever put Figaro and Susanna beyond his reach.

1. We begin at Scene V. The bulk of the testimony has passed offstage. The courtroom scene actually begins with Don Curzio rendering his verdict in recitative “The case is settled. Either pay her, or marry her; now all keep silent.”

2. Marcellina is relieved, but Figaro cannot believe the verdict. To his credit, Figaro will not be intimidated and claims noble birth: “I am a gentleman, and without the consent of my noble relatives…” This line usually provokes an extended fit of laughter from the assembled host. Noble relatives, indeed! Dr. Bartolo asks Figaro:

BARTOLO:
Oh, so you were a foundling baby?

FIGARO:
No, lost, doctor, or rather stolen.

ALMAVIVA:
Come? What?

MARCELLINA:
How?

BARTOLO:
Your proof?

DON CURZIO:
Your papers?

FIGARO:
The gold, the jewels, and the embroidered clothes, which even in those tender years were found with me, these are the marks of my high birth; and above all, here on my arm, a birthmark…

[Now, while this little interrogation has been going on, Marcellina has begun to twitch, as if every new piece of information has struck her physically; before Figaro can describe his birthmark, she shouts out:]

MARCELLINA:
A spatula-shaped mark on your left arm?

FIGARO:
Who told you that?

[Marcellina lets out a little scream and turns white; she is about to faint; she sits down and says weakly:]
MARCELLINA:
Oh God, it is him…

FIGARO:
That’s true, I’m me…

DON CURZIO, ALMAVIVA, BARTOLO:
It is who?

MARCELLINA:
Raffaello!

[Now Dr. Bartolo suddenly turns white; he asks Figaro:]

BARTOLO:
And the robbers stole you…

FIGARO:
Near a castle.

[Bartolo squares his shoulders, walks over to the silently weeping Marcellina, puts his hands on her shoulders, and says:]

BARTOLO:
This is your mother.

FIGARO:
You mean my wet nurse?

BARTOLO:
No, your mother.

[Almaviva and Don Curzio cannot believe it:]

ALMAVIVA, DON CURZIO:
His mother?!

FIGARO:
Unbelievable!

[But the revelations are not quite over yet; Marcellina puts her hand over Dr. Bartolo’s and says:]

MARCELLINA:
Here is your father!.

3. Before moving on, let us hear this part of what is one of the greatest courtroom scenes in all of literature. (Musical selection: The Marriage of Figaro, scene 5, recitative.)

I. The No. 19 Sextet is among the greatest of all operatic ensembles. The vastly different thoughts and feelings of the six characters involved are perfectly and simultaneously portrayed. According to Michael Kelly, a twenty-three-year-old Irish singer, who sang the roles of both Don Basilio and Don Curzio in the premiere (and who claimed to have thought up the idea of having Don Curzio stutter), this sextet was Mozart’s favorite music in the opera:

MARCELLINA:
Riconosci in questo amplesso
Una madre, amato figlio!

FIGARO:
Padre mio, fate lo stesso
Non mi fate più arrossir.

BARTOLO:
Resistenza la coscienza
Far non lascia al tua desir.

MARCELLINA:
Give your mother a big hug, My son!

FIGARO:
My father, let us do the same.
We can no longer be enemies.

BARTOLO:
I cannot resist, I will not resist!
DON CURZIO:
Ei suo padre, ella sua madre,
L’imeneo non può seguir.

ALMAVIVA:
Son smarrito, son stordita,
Meglio è assai di qua partir.

[Marcellina and Bartolo hug Figaro and sing:]

MARCELLINA, BARTOLO:
Figlio amato!
Parenti amati!

FIGARO:
Beloved son!
Beloved parents!

[Susanna enters carrying a basket full of money; Rosina, the countess, has given her the money to pay off Figaro’s debt to Marcellina.]

SUSANNA:
Alto, alto, signor Conte,
Mille doppie son qui pronte,
A pagar vengo per Figaro,
Ed a porlo in libertà.

ALMAVIVA, DON CURZIO:
Non appiam com’è la cosa,
Osservate un poco là.

[Susanna sees Figaro embracing Marcellina.]

SUSANNA:
Già d’accordo ei colla sposa;
Giusti Dei, che infedeltà!
Lascia iniquo!

FIGARO:
No, t’arresta!
Senti, oh cara!

SUSANNA:
Senti questa!

[ Susanna slaps Figaro, failing completely to wipe the grin off his face.]

MARCELLINA, BARTOLO,
FIGARO:
È un effetto di buon core,
Tutte amore è quel che fa.

ALMAVIVA:
Fremo, smanio dal furore,
Il destino a me la fa.

DON CURZIO:
Freme a smania dal furore
Il destino gliela fa.

SUSANNA:
Fremo, smanio dal furore,
Una vecchia a me la fa.

MARCELLINA:

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Lo sdegno calmate,
Mia cara figliuola,
Sua madre abbracciate
Che or vostra sarà.

SUSANNA:
Sua madre?

BARTOLO:
Sua madre!

SUSANNA:
Sua madre?

ALMAVIVA:
Sua madre!

SUSANNA:
Sua madre?

DON CURZIO:
Sua madre!

SUSANNA:
Sua madre?

MARCELLINA:
Sua madre!

[Susanna turns to Figaro.]  
SUSANNA:
Tua madre?

FIGARO:
E quello è mio padre
Che a te lo dirà.

SUSANNA:
Suo padre?

BARTOLO:
Suo padre!

SUSANNA:
Suo padre?

ALMAVIVA:
Suo padre!

SUSANNA:
Suo padre?

DON CURZIO:
Suo padre!

SUSANNA:
Suo padre?

MARCELLINA:
Suo padre!

SUSANNA:
Tuo padre?

Be calm,
My dear daughter,
And embrace Figaro’s mother
Who must now be your mother as well.

His mother?
His mother!
His mother!
His mother!
His mother!
His mother!
His mother!
His father!
His father!
His father!
His father!
His father!
Your father?
FIGARO: And that is my mother, As she will tell you.
E quella è mia madre Che a te lo dirà.
SUSANNA, MARCELLINA, BARTOLO, FIGARO: This soul hardly knows How to resist
Al dolce contento Di questo momento,
Quest’anima appena Resister or sa.
DON CURZIO, ALMAVIVA: The fiery torments Of this moment.
Al fiero tormento De questo momento
Quell’/quest’anima appena Resister or sa.

J. All rejoice, except the highly frustrated Count Almaviva and Don Curzio. (**Musical selection: The Marriage of Figaro**, No. 19, sextet.)

K. The real marriage made in heaven was Wolfgang Mozart and Lorenzo Da Ponte. In **The Marriage of Figaro**, Mozart’s complete mastery was revealed; no honest critic could deny that he had achieved a level of operatic art far beyond anything that had ever been imagined. When we return, Mozart and Da Ponte do it again in their second opera, created for a grateful city of Prague: **Don Giovanni.**
Lecture Fifteen

Don Giovanni, Part One

Scope: The Bohemians were so delighted with The Marriage of Figaro when it was premiered in 1786 in Prague that Mozart was invited to compose another opera for production in the fall of 1787. Once again, Mozart collaborated with Da Ponte; the result was Don Giovanni. Da Ponte’s libretto, inspired by various sources, recounts the ancient morality tale of Don Juan, whose lack of conscience proves to be fatal. Don Giovanni was enthusiastically received at its premiere in Prague but was criticized by its Viennese audiences, a year later, as too long, too complicated, and too technical—complaints that today’s audiences would find incomprehensible. This lecture takes a look at the opera from its opening scene up to the Act II finale.

Outline

I. In early December of 1786, The Marriage of Figaro was presented in Prague at the National Theater. In January 1787, Wolfgang and Constanze Mozart traveled to Prague to see the production for themselves and to experience the unprecedented enthusiasm the Bohemians had for Mozart and The Marriage of Figaro.

A. The Bohemians embraced Mozart as one of their own and when Mozart and Constanze left Prague on February 8, 1787, they took with them a contract from Pasquale Bondini, the Director of the Prague National Theater, for a new opera, to be produced that fall of 1787.

B. Mozart immediately hired Lorenzo Da Ponte to write the libretto for this new opera, and the two quickly agreed on Don Juan as a subject. Da Ponte set to work on Mozart’s libretto, simultaneously writing libretti for Antonio Salieri and Vicente Martin y Soler.

C. When Mozart, Constanze, and Lorenzo Da Ponte traveled to Prague in October to oversee the production of Don Giovanni, the opera was still incomplete. With opening night just three weeks away, Mozart had yet to compose huge chunks of the opera, including the entire second act finale and the overture.

1. The evidence of Mozart’s last-minute work lies in the music paper on which he wrote Don Giovanni, which was purchased in Prague.

2. According to the legend, Mozart composed the overture during the night before the final dress rehearsal. He was exhausted and kept dozing off. Constanze’s job was to keep him awake and composing. Clearly, she was successful, because Mozart showed up the next morning with the completed overture in hand.

D. If anything, and if possible, Don Giovanni was an even bigger hit in Prague than was The Marriage of Figaro.

1. Unfortunately, the Viennese did not understand or appreciate Don Giovanni as well as the Bohemians did. The opera was produced in Vienna in May of 1788 and was poorly received.

2. We may find it amazing that Mozart’s music, music that today we consider the last word in beauty, clarity, elegance, and accessibility, was considered, by so many of his “learned” colleagues and contemporaries, to be too long, too complicated, too technical; music that could only appeal to the connoisseur and that was inaccessible to the average listener.

II. Myths, allegories, and legends about the consequences of the male ego and libido unrestrained by morality or conscience are as old as man himself. Don Juan, or Don Giovanni in Italian, is the id personified, without a superego to offer any restraint or clutter up the psyche. Ultimately, the legend of Don Juan is a morality play, because this symbol of unrepentant tumescence is punished for his sins with pain and hellfire.

A. In creating his libretto, Da Ponte drew together various sources, including Molière’s play Don Juan of 1665, Carlo Goldoni’s play Don Giovanni Tenorio of 1736, and Giovanni Bertati’s libretto Don Giovanni or the Guest of Stone of 1786.

B. Of the three libretti Da Ponte wrote for Mozart, Don Giovanni is generally considered the weakest in terms of structure and characterization. But Mozart’s music is so good, his characterizations so wonderful, that we become aware of the libretto’s failings only when we read it separately.

III. We will listen to three numbers in Don Giovanni to meet the main characters: the opening scene, where we meet Don Giovanni himself, his manservant, Leporello, Donna Anna, and her father the Commendatore; No. 3,
where we meet the resident madwoman of the opera, Donna Elvira; and No. 7, where we meet the resident ingénue of the opera, the young and lovely Zerlina.

A. Typically, *Don Giovanni* is a couples opera: Each major character has his or her complement in another major character. The alpha-couple is Don Giovanni and his manservant, Leporello.

1. The Don is a gorgeous aristocrat, fearless, utterly without self-doubt, self-restraint, or a conscience. Leporello, his servant, is filled with fear, doubt, and guilt over his part in the Don’s actions. Individually, they are opposites; together, they make one complete person. If the Don is id personified, then Leporello is his superego.

2. We meet the Don and Leporello during the opening scene, along with Donna Anna and her father, the Commendatore. The latter is the commander of the local military garrison, in essence, the chief of police. This miraculous opening scene seamlessly combines buffa-style comedy with physical action and drama, tragedy, and irony.

B. The scene opens at night, with Leporello pacing about in the garden in front of Donna Anna’s house. His buffa, patter-style aria is typical of the entrance arias sung by servants in comic operas, in which they complain about life in general and their jobs in particular.

LEPORELLO: Notte e giorno faticar, Night and day I slave away Per chi nulla sa gradir, For a complete ingrate. Piova e vento sopportar, I have to put up with wind and rain, Mangiar male e mal dormi. And I eat and sleep badly. Voglio far il gentiluomo, You know, I’d like to be a gentleman, E non voglio più servir. And retire from being a servant. Oh, che caro galantuomo! Oh yes, what a fine gentleman you are! Voi star dentro colla bella. You’re inside, warm and cozy, with your Ed io far la sentinella! Lady and I’ve got guard duty on this freezing lawn. Ma mi par che venga gente; But I think someone is coming; Non mi voglio far sentir. I don’t want them to hear me.

(Musical selection: *Don Giovanni*, No. 1 and recitative.)

C. Leporello hides as Don Giovanni and Donna Anna burst out of the house. He is wearing some silly little mask as a disguise; she is desperately trying to unmask him.

D. All this noise has woken up Donna Anna’s father, the Commendatore. He emerges from the house wearing only his nightgown and his sword, prepared to defend his daughter’s honor.

1. At the sight of her father, Donna Anna runs back into the house to wake the servants and get some help.

2. Don Giovanni takes one look at the elder and rather underdressed Commendatore and refuses to fight him. But the Commendatore will not let him go.

3. Leporello has seen his boss in trouble before, but this situation is getting way out of hand. “If I could only get out of here!” he cries.

E. Finally, Don Giovanni unsheathes his sword and agrees to fight the Commendatore, saying “Okay, if you want to die!”

1. A dramatic and dissonant B diminished seventh chord marks the moment when Don Giovanni fatally wounds the Commendatore, who drops to the ground.

2. A haunting, deathly trio ensues, with each man—Don Giovanni, the Commendatore, and Leporello—expressing an entirely different view of what has happened and is happening. The Commendatore is the voice of death:

COMMENDATORE: Help! I am betrayed! This assassin has mortally wounded me, and from my bleeding chest I feel my soul escaping!

[Don Giovanni is the voice of thoughtless impulse; he casually dismisses his actions and wishes only that the Commendatore had put up a better fight:]

DON GIOVANNI: That was the best he could do? He’s gasping for air and from his bleeding chest I can see his life departing.
[Leporello is horrified; he is the voice of conscience:]

LEPORELLO:
What a misdeed! What a crime! I can feel my heart beating hard from my fright! I don’t know what to do or what to say.

[The Commendatore dies; Don Giovanni’s fate is sealed. Suddenly, a comic recitative ensues, the first recitative of the opera; it transports us out of the mysterious twilight tragedy of the trio directly back into the present:]

DON GIOVANNI:
Leporello, where are you?

LEPORELLO:
To my disgrace, I’m over here. And you?

DON GIOVANNI:
Right here.

LEPORELLO:
Who’s dead, you or the old man?

DON GIOVANNI:
What an idiotic question! The old man.

LEPORELLO:
Bravo, two misdeeds in one night! First you raped the daughter and then you murdered her father!

DON GIOVANNI:
It was his own fault, too bad for him.

LEPORELLO:
And Donna Anna, did she ask for it, too?

DON GIOVANNI:
Shut up and leave me alone, unless you’re anxious for a little steel yourself!

[Leoprelo—the conscience—has said his peace; he now retreats and says:]

LEPORELLO:
No thanks, Signor, I’ve no more to say!

F. Here we have comedy, action, tragedy, then comedy again, seamlessly combined in what must be among the greatest opening scenes in all of opera. (Musical selection: Don Giovanni, Act I, scene 1, No. 1 and recitative.)

G. Of this opening scene, Joseph Kerman writes: “No praise is too high for the famous first act introduction. Three things are indelibly established: the tone of violence, speed and passion; the clashing mode of comedy, thanks to Leporello; and the peculiar beauty Mozart sounds in this opera, thanks to the moonlit trio as the Commendatore dies” (Kerman, 100).

IV. We quickly meet the other essential characters of the opera.

A. After the duel, Donna Anna returns with her fiancé (and complement), the utterly ineffectual Don Ottavio, only to find her father dead. She swears vengeance.

B. The next character we meet, in Scene 3, is Donna Elvira. It is dawn; Don Giovanni and Leporello have returned to Seville after their disastrous evening at Donna Anna’s home. In a lengthy recitative, Leporello tells Don Giovanni that he is leading the life of a knave. The Don becomes angry; he again threatens Leporello, then suddenly stops in his tracks, sniffs the air, and says: “I think I smell a woman.” Leporello replies in an aside: “He’s got a perfect sense of smell!”

C. They hide. Donna Elvira enters. She is a bit crazy; the wide vocal leaps and short, choppy phrases Mozart created for her ensure that her entrance aria, No. 3, will have the edge of hysteria to it as she rants about a lover who has abandoned her. (Musical selection: Don Giovanni, No. 3.)
D. In the half-light of dawn, Don Giovanni does not recognize her. He assumes that she is just another heartbroken girl needing comfort and consolation. He steps forward and calls, “Miss,” when, to his horror, the woman is revealed as Donna Elvira. She shrieks: “Don Giovanni! You! You’re here, you monster, you criminal, you pack of lies!” Leporello again quips in an aside: “How nice. She knows him so well!”

E. Don Giovanni tries to calm her down, but Donna Elvira will have none of the Don’s pretty words. Finally, the Don beats a hasty retreat, leaving Leporello to read aloud to Donna Elvira from a little black book that catalogs the Don’s conquests. This is the famous “Catalog Aria” in which the Don’s conquests—the total may be as high as 2,065 women “consoled”—are listed in marvelous and comic detail.

F. Among the remaining characters we must meet is Donna Elvira’s complement, the Man of Stone, the statue of the Commendatore that stands atop his grave (yes, he has been buried already). At a point later in the opera, Don Giovanni and Leporello hide in a cemetery from an angry mob that is out to get them. They find themselves right next to the Commendatore’s statue atop his grave.

1. At the base of the statue are inscribed the words: “Here I wait for vengeance on the villain who brought me to my death.” Don Giovanni laughs and the statue says: “Your laughter will cease before dawn.” (Musical selection: Don Giovanni, recitative.)

2. Leporello is terrified, but nothing can scare Don Giovanni. In a moment of extraordinary braggadocio, he invites the statue to dinner! (Musical selection: Don Giovanni, recitative.)

G. The last characters we need to meet are Zerlina and Masetto.

1. They are two young peasants who are engaged to be married. He is a bit of a lump, but she is very cute, and the Don takes a shine to her. After getting rid of Masetto, the Don attempts to seduce Zerlina, telling her that she’s too good for that peasant and that he will give her what she deserves and marry her on the spot!

2. Don Giovanni caps his seduction with the glorious, tuneful, and direct “La ci darem la mano,” (“There you will give me your hand”), a piece of music as simple and beautiful as its recipient, music engineered to appeal to the untrained ear of a girl like Zerlina:

DON GIOVANNI: 
Là ci darem la mano, There you will give me your hand,
Là mi dirai di sì. There you will tell me “yes.”
Vedi, non è lontano, You see my villa, it is not far.
Partiam, ben mio, da qui. Let us leave, my beloved.

ZERLINA: 
Vorrei e non vorrei, I’d like to, but I know I shouldn’t.
Mi trema un poco il cor. My heart is trembling.
Felice, è ver sarei, It’s true, I would be happy,
Ma può burlarmi ancor. But he may just be tricking me.

DON GIOVANNI: 
Vieni mio bel dilettto! Come, my beloved!

ZERLINA: 
Mi fà pietà Masetto. I feel badly for Masetto.
DON GIOVANNI: 
Io cangierò tua sorte. I will change your life.

ZERLINA: 
Presto, non son più forte. I won’t be able to resist.
DON GIOVANNI: 
Vieni, vieni! Let’s go!

DON GIOVANNI, ZERLINA: 
Andiam, andiam mio bene, Let’s go, let’s go, my beloved,
A ristorar lepene To soothe the ache
D’un innocente amor! Of an innocent love.
3. The seduction finishes with Don Giovanni and Zerlina singing together, a time-tested operatic technique, representing hearts and minds in synchrony. (Musical selection: Don Giovanni, No. 7, duet, “La ci darem la mano” [“There you will give me your hand”].)

H. As the duet ends, Don Giovanni and Zerlina, hand-in-hand, are about to enter his villa, when who should suddenly appear but Donna Elvira, who screams: “Stop! Villain! By the grace of heaven I’ve overheard your lies! I am in time to save this sweet, unfortunate innocent from your dreadful scheming!” Zerlina flees, and the Don misses the opportunity to add another name to his book.

V. By the time we get to the end of Act II, it would seem that everyone in Seville wants a piece of Don Giovanni. Donna Anna wants to dance on his bones because the Don killed her father. Her complement, Don Ottavio, wants revenge on Don Giovanni because Giovanni got Donna Anna first. Both Masetto and Zerlina want to hurt Don Giovanni for the Don’s attempted seduction of Zerlina and his rough treatment of Masetto. And Donna Elvira and her complement, the Commendatore—one driven mad by the Don, the other killed by him—will both offer him the opportunity to repent, an offer he will refuse.
Lecture Sixteen

Don Giovanni, Part Two

Scope: In this lecture, we reach the Act II finale of Don Giovanni, in which the Don’s arrogance brings about his ultimate, tragic end. In this act—as in the previous act—we see how Mozart has mastered a complex array of compositional and dramatic challenges, imbuing his music with a strong sense of momentum and dramatic interaction; using the orchestra to knit together and give context to the vocal parts. We see clearly how Mozart’s musical, dramatic, and psychological genius works to give life to the libretto and create the most amazing operatic finales.

Outline

I. We are in a lighted banquet hall in Don Giovanni’s villa. A table has been set for dinner. Also on stage is a small wind ensemble, awaiting the order to play.
   A. Don Giovanni enters in high spirits. He demands that the musicians being to play and that Leporello serve him his dinner at once.
   B. As Leporello and other servants bring the food out, the musicians on stage begin to play a tune entitled “O quanto un si bel giubilo” from the first act finale of Vicente Martin y Soler’s opera Una cosa rara. The opera had been produced in Vienna in 1786 and was more successful than The Marriage of Figaro; it had been premiered in Prague just weeks before Don Giovanni made its premiere. Leporello hears the music and exclaims: “Wonderful! Cosa Rara!” The Don asks him what he thinks of “this fine music.” Leporello replies: “It is worthy of you.”
   C. Knowing how Leporello feels about Don Giovanni—that the Don is a knave, a scoundrel, and an assassin—this is a wonderfully snide and backhanded comment about Una cosa rara.
   D. The band strikes up an aria entitled “Come un agnello,” (“Like a lamb,”) from Giuseppe Sarti’s opera Fra i due litiganti il terzo gode. Leporello recognizes it immediately and says: “Long live I Litiganti!”
   E. Don Giovanni merely says: “Pour the wine. This is excellent marzimino.” Marzimino is a red wine from Da Ponte’s native district of Trentino. It is also, according to various sources, either excessively dry or exceedingly sweet. The point is that Don Giovanni has, by the proximity of his comments, labeled I Litiganti as being either excessively dry or excessively sweet, no compliment in any case.
   F. The house band next strikes up Figaro’s famous aria “Non piu andrai” from The Marriage of Figaro. With his mouth full of pheasant, Leporello looks up and says: “I know this music all too well!” The singer playing Leporello in Prague, Felice Ponziani, had also sung the part of Figaro in Prague, where he would have had to encore “Non piu andrai” countless times in performance! He definitely “knows it all too well!”
   G. The Don, who has noticed Leporello stealing a piece of pheasant, decides to make life miserable for him. He calls Leporello, who can hardly speak, because his mouth is full.

LEPORELLO:
My master!

DON GIOVANNI:
Speak clearly, you rascal!

LEPORELLO:
I’ve got a cold; it’s preventing me from speaking clearly.

DON GIOVANNI:
Whistle something while I eat.

LEPORELLO:
I cannot.

DON GIOVANNI:
And why cannot you?

LEPORELLO:
Excuse me. Your cook is so excellent that I wanted to taste it!

[Don Giovanni makes fun of Leporello by aping his words:]

DON GIOVANNI:
My cook is so excellent that he wanted to taste it!

H. In Lecture Eleven, while listening to the second act finale of *La finta giardiniera*—composed in 1774 when Mozart was only nineteen—we observed that that finale lacked the sort of genuine dramatic give-and-take that Mozart would eventually master, projecting, as it does, different emotional viewpoints, not simultaneously but consecutively. Consequently, the music seems more theatrical than operatic.

I. In the Act II finale of *Don Giovanni*, we are immersed in Mozart’s operatic maturity.

1. Note, first, the tremendous number of tempo changes and contrasting thematic materials Mozart introduces during the opening part of this finale; these changes and contrasts create a sense of rhythmic flexibility and dramatic tension that ensure constant variety of musical materials.
2. Note that the presence of the on-stage band creates a perfect opportunity to present multiple “musics” simultaneously, a built-in counterpoint between voices and orchestra.
3. On a more subtle level, note that one character might begin a musical line only to have it completed by another character, imbuing the music with a terrific sense of momentum and dramatic interaction.
4. Be aware of how the orchestra plays continuously, knitting together and giving context to the vocal parts layered atop it.
5. Finally, note the tremendous variety of declamation Mozart calls for from the singers: The Don is loud and commanding, with key words falling clearly on structural downbeats, while Leporello’s often obsequious words are typically lumped together and sung much more quickly and less rhythmically, as befits his personality and station. Both the Don and Leporello engage in numerous asides and running commentaries, which also helps to vary the texture of the drama and the articulation of the words.
6. By the time he reached his compositional maturity, Mozart’s bag of compositional tricks, his amazing comic timing, his ear for harmonic detail and thematic contrast, his gift for understanding the way people really talk to each other, and his almost unique ability to translate that into music enabled him to create operatic finales that still leave us in amazement. (Musical selection: *Don Giovanni*, No. 24, finale, part 1.)

II. As we move into the second part of the finale, the good times end in Don Giovanni’s villa.

A. Donna Elvira—agitated and excited as usual—rushes into the room declaring: “I want to give you the final proof of my love. I no longer remember your lies; I feel only pity for you.” She asks for loyalty and repentance from the Don, who has no idea what she is talking about. He invites her to join the banquet. She responds:

DONNA ELVIRA:
Stay here then you wicked man! Wallow in your vileness and filth, a dreadful example of evil!

LEPORELLO:
If her pain doesn’t move him, he’s got a heart of stone, or no heart at all!

[Don Giovanni lifts his wineglass and sings:]

DON GIOVANNI:
Here’s to women! Here’s to wine! The basic food groups for all mankind!

B. This is an extraordinary trio: three different characters, three different views, and three different emotions. (Musical selection: *Don Giovanni*, No. 24, finale, part 2, concluding trio.)

C. Donna Elvira, completely disgusted with the Don, marches out in a huff. Suddenly, she screams and runs back through the room and out another door. The Don tells Leporello to go and check it out. Leporello exits and from offstage lets out an even louder scream. He runs back into the room, and slams the door behind him:

LEPORELLO:
Sir, for pity’s sake Don’t leave this room! The man of stone, the man of white!

Ah, master, I’m afraid; I think I’m going to faint! If you saw his face—not good! And if you heard how he moves!
[To help the Don visualize all this, Leporello staggers around like the statue, singing:

Ta, ta, ta, ta!

[None of this is registering on Don Giovanni, who sings:]

DON GIOVANNI:
I have no idea what you’re talking about. I think you’ve gone crazy on me!

[There is a thunderous banging on the door; Leporello nearly jumps out of his skin and sings:]

LEPORELLO:
Listen to that!

DON GIOVANNI:
So, someone’s knocking. Open the door!

LEPORELLO:
I’m shaking!

DON GIOVANNI:
Open the door, I said!

LEPORELLO:
Ah!

DON GIOVANNI:
Open the door, I said!

LEPORELLO:
Ah!

DON GIOVANNI:
You idiot! Enough, already, I’ll open it myself.

D. Leporello decides it is time to hide under the table. (Musical selection: Don Giovanni, No. 24, finale, part 3.)

E. Don Giovanni opens the door and the statue of the Commendatore enters. The statue reminds the Don that he was invited to dinner. The Don tells Leporello to set another place at the table. The terrified Leporello comes out from under the table and starts to leave, but the statue stops him, explaining that “more serious considerations than dinner have brought me here!”

F. An extraordinary trio ensues: The statue of the Commendatore continues his terrifying and otherworldly pronouncement. A quivering Leporello sings obsessively to himself; Don Giovanni holds his ground and bids the statue to say his peace:

LEPORELLO:
La terzana d’aver mi sembra,
E le membra fermar più non so.

LEPORELLO:
I feel as if I have a fever,
And I can’t stop from shaking.

COMMENDATORE (STATUE):
Parlo, ascolta! Più tempo non ho!

COMMENDATORE (STATUE):
I speak, so listen well. My time here is short!

DON GIOVANNI:
Parla, parla! Ascoltando ti sto.

DON GIOVANNI:
All right, speak! I’m listening.

(Musical selection: Don Giovanni, No. 24, finale, part 4, opening.)
III. The moment of truth has arrived. The statue invites Don Giovanni to dine with it. Despite Leporello’s protests, the Don agrees to go with the statue but recoils from the coldness of the statue’s hand. The statue tightens its grip on the Don and demands several times that he repent: “Repent! Change your ways. Your last hour is come!” But the Don steadfastly refuses.

A. The Don has had his chance; the statue says simply: “Your time is up!” The stage goes wild. The statue disappears; flames spring up on all sides; thunder crashes; and the floor begins to shake under Don Giovanni’s feet.

DON GIOVANNI:
Now I’m afraid, right down to my toes! And these flames are definitely not a good thing!

[A chorus of demons, heard from offstage, would seem to confirm the Don’s suspicions:]

CHORUS OF DEMONS:
This is nothing compared to your sins; come with us—there’s lots worse in store!

[It’s no idle threat; the flames rise as the pitch of the music rises and Don Giovanni writhes in pain and cries:]

DON GIOVANNI:
Who is tearing at my soul? Who is ripping out my entrails? What torture, what agony! What hell! What terror!

[Yes, the Don is correct on all counts. Leporello, paralyzed by what he is witnessing, manages to sing:]

LEPORELLO:
What desperation! He is damned! What cries! What agonies! How he terrifies me!

B. The chorus of demons repeats its threat, the flames shoot higher, the floor gives way beneath Don Giovanni, who lets out one last distraught scream of terror and pain, then disappears from sight; a powerful closed cadence tells us that the Don is gone. (Musical selection: Don Giovanni, No. 24, finale, part 4, conclusion.)

IV. The room suddenly returns to normal as the other characters enter, looking for their pound of the Don’s flesh. Leporello tells them about the Don’s demise. (Musical selection: Don Giovanni, No. 24, finale, part 5, Leporello’s description: “Trà fume e fuoco,” “[In smoke and flame”].)

A. Donna Elvira nods her head and says to everyone, “It must have been the ghost that I saw!” With that, the assembled throng is satisfied that the Don has met his doom; they declare how they intend to get on with their lives.

B. First, poor, whipped Don Ottavio attempts—unsuccessfully—to convince Donna Anna to finally marry him; he sings to her in the most syrupy tone imaginable

DON OTTAVIO:
My dearest treasure, now that we have been avenged by Heaven, grant me, o grant me, some relief; don’t let me languish alone any longer!

[But Donna Anna is still a master of this situation; to Don Ottavio’s eternal, fist-biting frustration, she responds:]

DONNA ANNA:
My dearest, you’ll have to wait at least another year for me to recover from my grief. If you love me, you’ll do exactly what I say.

[Now, it’s Donna Elvira’s turn to talk about the future, a future without Don Giovanni; she sings:]

DONNA ELVIRA:
I shall retire to a convent, there to live out my days.

[Zerlina and Masetto, giving voice to what most of the opera audience is thinking at this very moment, sing:]

ZERLINA, MASETTO:
Let’s go home and get something to eat.

[As for Leporello:]
LEPORELLO:
I’m heading down to the tavern to find myself a better master.

ZERLINA, LEPORELLO, MASETTO:
So let the scoundrel stay down there with Proserpine and Pluto! And we, good people, will now sing for you the moral to our story!

ALL:
This is what happens to evildoers! And in this life sinners will always get their just rewards! (Musical selection: Don Giovanni, No. 24, finale, part 5, conclusion.)

V. Don Giovanni remained part of the standard operatic repertoire in Prague for more than twenty years after its premiere. Within a few years, while Mozart was still alive, it was produced in Frankfurt, Mannheim, Bonn, Passau, Hamburg, Graz, Brno, Munich, and of course, in Vienna, where, as we discussed in Lecture Fifteen, it was poorly received.

A. Although The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni were indeed adored by musical connoisseurs, they were not the favorites of the majority of opera goers, who preferred the lighter and more formulaic operas of such composers as Vicente Martin y Soler and Giuseppe Sarti.

B. By 1787, Mozart had become, for his essential Viennese audience, a difficult, “modern,” and increasingly “politically incorrect” composer. For the aristocracy-dominated operatic fan-base in Vienna, a population made uncomfortable by the liberal excesses of The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni was even worse, because it portrays a nobleman—the Don himself—who rends the fabric of his society over the course of the opera.
Timeline

1756................................. Born in Salzburg, Austria, January 27.
1761.......................................................... Musical tour of Vienna.
1763.......................................................... Mozart family begins Grand Tour of Europe and London.
1767.......................................................... Apollo et Hyacinthus, K. 38.
1768.......................................................... Bastien und Bastienne, K. 50/46b.
1769.......................................................... La finta semplice, K. 51/46a.
1769–1773 ............................................. Three tours of Italy.
1770.......................................................... Mithridate, rè di Ponto, K. 87/74a.
1771.......................................................... Ascanio in Alba, K. 111.
1772.......................................................... Lucio Silla, K. 135.
1775.......................................................... La finta giardiniera, K. 196; Il rè pastore, K. 208.
1778.......................................................... Second visit to Paris; Mozart’s mother dies.
1779.......................................................... Zaide, K. 344/336b.
1781.......................................................... Idomeneo, rè di Creta, K. 366.
1782.......................................................... Moves to Vienna; The Abduction from the Harem, K. 384; marries Constanze Weber.
1786.......................................................... The Marriage of Figaro, K. 492; Der Schauspieldirektor, K. 486.
1787.......................................................... Leopold Mozart dies; Don Giovanni, K. 527.
1789.......................................................... Così fan tutte, K. 588.
1791.......................................................... The Magic Flute, K. 620; La Clemenza di Tito, K. 621.
Glossary

**Baroque**: In music history, the period from about 1600 to 1750, divisible into three parts: early Baroque (1600–1650), mid-Baroque (1650–1700), and High Baroque (1700–1750). Music of the High Baroque is characterized by emotional exuberance tempered by intellectual control—very elaborate melodies controlled by harmonies that change in an orderly, predictable manner.

**Cadenza**: Virtuoso solo music designed to show off a singer’s or instrumentalist’s technical ability.

**Classical musical style**: Designation given to works of the later eighteenth century, characterized by clear melodic lines, balanced form, and emotional restraint. The style is brilliantly exemplified by the music Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Mozart.

**Commedia dell’arte**: Traveling Italian theatrical troupes and the improvised performances they staged based on character archetypes, satire, and farce.

**Concerto**: Musical composition for orchestra and soloist(s), typically in three movements.

**Consonance**: Two or more notes sounded together that do not require resolution.

**Continuo**: Abbreviated for *basso continuo*, the Italian term for the keyboard part in most Baroque music that provides harmonic and rhythmic support, usually reinforced with a bass instrument, such as a ’cello or viola da gamba.

**Crescendo**: Gradually increasing or decreasing volume.

**Dissonance**: Two or more notes sounded together that require resolution.

**Enlightenment**: Eighteenth-century philosophical movement characterized by rationalism and positing that individuals are responsible for their own destinies and that all men are born equal.

**Fugue**: Important Baroque musical procedure, in which a theme (or subject) is developed by means of various contrapuntal techniques.

**K. numbers**: Koechel numbers; named after Ludwig von Koechel, who catalogued Mozart’s works during the mid-nineteenth century.

**Mannheim School**: Important group of German composers of the mid-eighteenth century, centered at Mannheim and associated with the orchestra of Elector Karl Theodor. Johann Stamitz (1717–1757) developed the orchestra’s distinctive pre-Classical style, which included the abandonment of the Baroque contrapuntal techniques in favor of a homophonic style and the creation of novel dynamic devices, such as the famous *Mannheim* crescendo.

**Musical form**: Overall formulaic structure of a composition, such as sonata form; also, the smaller divisions of the overall structure, such as the development section.

**Number**: An aria, ensemble, or finale from an opera.

**Opera buffa**: Comic opera, a genre of opera evolved from street theater and the conventions and characters of the Italian *Commedia dell’arte*.

**Opera seria**: “Serious” or heroic opera, an operatic genre cultivated by the aristocracy during the eighteenth century.

**Overture**: Music that precedes an opera or play, often played as an independent concert piece.

**Pedal note**: Pitch sustained for a long period of time against which other changing material is played. A pedal harmony is a sustained chord serving the same purpose.

**Recitative**: Operatic convention in which the lines are half sung, half spoken.

**Singspiel**: German-language musical comedy—usually romantic or farcical in nature—with spoken dialogue; popular in the eighteenth century.

**Voice**: Range or register, commonly used to refer to the four melodic ranges: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.
Biographical Notes

**Colleredo, Hieronymous Count von**: Last of the Salzburg prince-archbishops, Count von Colleredo became archbishop of Salzburg (Mozart’s hometown) in 1772. Although hated as an imperious philistine by Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart, Colleredo was reputedly an enlightened and conscientious ruler. He disliked musical extravagance, including operatic displays by soloists, and preferred his music to be brief.

**Da Ponte, Lorenzo**: Famous Italian poet, man of letters and librettist (1749–1838), Da Ponte settled in Vienna in 1782 and became official poet to the Imperial Theater. He was a close friend of Mozart and was the librettist for Mozart’s most famous Italian-language operas, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Cosi fan tutte*.

**Habsburg**: Austrian royal family, one of the oldest and most prominent dynasties. From 1452, the Habsburg family retained its rule (with the exception of one brief period) of the Holy Roman Empire until 1806. By 1732 (the year of Haydn’s birth), the Habsburg/Austrian Empire was peaceful, flourishing, and headquartered in Vienna. It was a Catholic, German-language, multinational empire consisting of greater Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary.

**Joseph II**: Holy Roman Emperor (1741–1790), eldest son of the Habsburg Emperor Francis I and Empress Maria Theresa, Joseph II carried out progressive reforms of church and state in the Austrian Habsburg domains in accordance with the rationalistic principles of the Enlightenment. He was a champion of Mozart but thought Haydn’s music to be “tricks and nonsense.”

**Maria Theresa**: Wife of Holy Roman Emperor Francis I, Archduchess of Austria and Queen of Hungary and Bohemia (1717–1780), Maria Theresa strengthened and unified the Austrian monarchy in the eighteenth century. Pious and unfriendly to the principles of the Enlightenment, she was pragmatic, a shrewd judge of her ministers, and often contemptuous of artists and musicians, such as Mozart.

**Metastasio, Pietro**: Italian poet and librettist (1698–1782), Metastasio’s twenty-seven libretti were set more than 800 times by various composers during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. More than any other single poet, Metastasio, in his libretti, created the standard template for what we now understand to be Baroque and Classical-era opera seria.

**Mozart (Johann Georg), Leopold**: Wolfgang Mozart’s father, Leopold (1719–1787) was a German-born Austrian composer, violinist, and music theorist. He received a bachelor of philosophy degree in 1737 at the Benedictine University in Salzburg, Austria, where he settled. In 1743, he became a violinist at the court of the prince-archbishop of Salzburg. In 1762, he was appointed vice conductor of the court orchestra. In 1747, he married Anna Maria Pertl. Of their seven children, only Maria Anna (Marianne/Nannerl) and Wolfgang survived infancy. Leopold dedicated his life to the musical education and professional promotion of his children and of Wolfgang in particular.

**Puchberg, Michael**: Textile merchant, amateur cellist, friend of Mozart and fellow Freemason, the indulgent and uncomplaining Puchberg made several loans of money to the financially distressed Mozart. The composer dedicated his String Trio in E flat, K. 563 (1788), to Puchberg.

**Salieri, Antonio**: Italian composer based in Vienna (1750–1825), Salieri composed more than forty operas and rose to the preeminent musical position of Viennese Court Kapellmeister, a position he held from 1788 to 1824. As composer, administrator, and teacher, his influence was felt at virtually every level of cultured musical life in Vienna.

**Schikaneder, Johann Emanuel**: Austrian actor, singer, playwright, impresario, and Freemason (1748–1812), Schikaneder settled in Vienna in 1784. He commissioned Mozart to write *The Magic Flute* opera for his Theater-auf-der-Wieden in Vienna. He supplied the libretto and created the role of Papageno for himself. He later opened another house, the Theater-an-der-Wien, for which he commissioned Beethoven’s opera *Fidelio*.

**Varesco, Abbe Gianbattista**: Salzburg chaplain and librettist. Varesco wrote the libretto for Mozart’s *Idomeneo*, K. 366 (1780), and adapted Metastasio’s libretto *Il ré pastore*, “The Shepherd King,” K. 208 (1775), for Mozart’s use.

**Weber-Hofer, Josepha**: Soprano and eldest sister of Constanze Weber-Mozart (1758–1819), Josepha was known for her high vocal range and colorature singing. As a member of Schikaneder’s company, Mozart created for her the role of the Queen of the Night.
Weber-Lange, Aloysia: Soprano and elder sister of Constanze Weber-Mozart (1759–1839). After a brief relationship, Mozart proposed marriage to Aloysia, only to be rejected. She married the painter Joseph Lange whose incomplete portrait of Mozart (1789) is generally considered the best and most accurate ever painted.

Weber-Mozart, Constanze: Soprano and wife of Wolfgang Mozart (1762–1842), Constanze was one of four daughters born to Fridolin Weber, a German singer and violinist. Constanze’s sisters—Josepha, Sophie, and Aloysia—were all sopranos. Mozart had been in love with Aloysia before courting and marrying Constanze.
Bibliography


Internet Resources

www.mozartproject.org
www.classicalarchives.com/mozart
The Operas of Mozart
Part III
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Robert Greenberg has composed over forty-five works for a wide variety of instrumental and vocal ensembles. Recent performances of Greenberg’s work have taken place in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, England, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and The Netherlands, where his Child’s Play for string quartet was performed at the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam.

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Professor Greenberg has recorded 328 lectures for The Teaching Company, including the forty-eight–lecture super-course How to Listen to and Understand Great Music.
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The Operas of Mozart

Scope:

This course discusses Mozart’s most important operas, which include Apollo and Hyacinthus (1767), La finta semplice (1768), Bastien and Bastienne (1768), Mitridate, King of Pontus (1770), Lucio Silla (1772), La finta giardiniera (1775), Il re pastore (1775), Idomeneo, King of Crete (1781), The Abduction from the Harem (1782), The Marriage of Figaro (1786), Don Giovanni (1787), Così fan tutte (1789), and The Magic Flute (1791). Eight lectures each are devoted to the masterpieces Così fan tutte and The Magic Flute, and special emphasis is also given to The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni.

We begin with the most personal and autobiographical of Mozart’s operas, Così fan tutte. This is one of three operas—the others being The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni—that Mozart wrote with the master librettist Lorenzo da Ponte—a collaboration that can rightly be considered one of the greatest such collaborations in the history of opera. Così is a masterpiece of comic opera—opera buffa—and this study of it will establish an operatic vocabulary with which to measure and study Mozart’s other operas.

Part II of this course begins by looking at Mozart’s earliest works and discusses his apprenticeship in the art of opera composition. We will see how he gave an increasingly important role to the orchestra as a genuine partner to the singers, enhancing the dramatic content, and how his dramatic priorities eventually led him to break with formulaic traditions to focus on character development and dramatic momentum. Idomeneo, premiered on January 29, 1781, and generally considered the greatest opera seria (“serious” opera) ever written, marks Mozart’s mastery of the form. Its dramatic momentum sweeps away the traditional rituals of opera seria; the characters are given depth and substance that transcend their archetypes, and Mozart’s compositional technique reaches an unprecedented level of mastery.

Idomeneo, however, was too radical to be accepted by the audiences of Mozart’s day, unlike The Abduction from the Harem, the most popular of Mozart’s operas in his lifetime in terms of performances and general acclaim. But even the Abduction had its critics, because, like Idomeneo, it too pushed the limits of its own form, in this case, German-language singspiel.

Mozart’s next operas, The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni find him at the peak of his operatic career. He had already written, and would continue to write operas that would eclipse virtually all those of his contemporaries, including Antonio Salieri’s. In The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni, we take a look at some of the greatest ensembles and finales ever written. Unfortunately for Mozart, neither The Marriage of Figaro nor Don Giovanni were popular with the majority of contemporary Viennese opera goers, who considered them too “modern” and politically incorrect, and Così fan tutte, which followed them, was deemed immoral.

It was something of a relief for Mozart to score a huge success in September 1791, with the premiere of his singspiel The Magic Flute. This, his last opera, raised the popular genre of German-language singspiel to the level of operatic art enjoyed by Italian-language opera. A paean to the rituals and creeds of Freemasonry, in which Mozart so fervently believed, The Magic Flute expresses the full range of Mozart’s genius no less than do The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte. The latter eventually became as popular as The Magic Flute and is recognized, along with The Magic Flute, as a masterpiece of the operatic repertoire.
Lecture Seventeen
Mozart, Masonry, and *The Magic Flute*

**Scope:** In the fall of 1780, Mozart met Emanuel Schikaneder, actor and director of a touring theatrical troupe that was visiting Salzburg. Nine years later, Schikaneder became director of the Freihaus Theater outside Vienna, where he wrote plays and opera libretti. In 1791, he and Mozart collaborated on a singspiel that was premiered at the Freihaus Theater on September 30, 1791. *The Magic Flute* quickly proved itself to be one of the most successful operas ever written. Inspired by various Oriental fairy tales, *The Magic Flute* is a love story, a feminist tract, and above all, a musical account of Masonic rituals and beliefs; the weaknesses of its libretto are transcended by Mozart’s musical genius.

**Outline**

I. Johann Josef Emanuel Schikaneder was born in Straubing, Germany, on September 1, 1751. Five years older than Mozart, he grew up in Regensburg, not far from Munich, where he went to the Jesuit Gymnasium and sang in the cathedral choir. His musical studies were augmented by training in dance and acting; beyond that, the details of his early life and adolescence are few.

   A. In 1773, at the age of twenty-two, Schikaneder joined a traveling theatrical troupe, run by F. J. Moser, as an actor and a dancer. By 1777, Schikaneder was one of Moser’s leading actors. In December 1777, at the age of twenty-six, Schikaneder got his big break: He appeared as Hamlet in a production at the prestigious Munich Court Theater. The performance was such a success that the final scene had to be encored.

   B. One month later, in January 1778, Schikaneder founded and became director of his own acting troupe. Between 1778 and 1780, Schikaneder’s company appeared in, among other cities, Ulm, Stuttgart, Augsburg, Nuremburg, Rothenburg, Linz, and Klangenfurt. In September of 1780, the twenty-nine-year-old Schikaneder and his company settled in for an extended season in Salzburg, their repertoire split among spoken plays, Italian operas, and German-language singspiels.

   C. Also living in Salzburg in the fall of 1780 was the city’s most famous and unhappiest son, twenty-four-year-old Wolfgang Mozart. Mozart had come to hate the city’s provincialism and the archbishop’s cretinism with a fervor that we might call pathological.

   D. During the months of September and October 1780, Wolfgang Mozart and Emanuel Schikaneder became great friends. For Mozart—languishing and yearning to escape the clutches of Salzburg, with his love for the theater and for “theater people”—the presence of Schikaneder and his company was manna from heaven, an opportunity to have some fun with professional touring performers—people like himself.

   E. The next nine years saw Schikaneder traveling across Germany and Austria with various theater and opera companies of his own creation. In 1787, he joined the Masonic Lodge in Regensburg, which in itself would be an unimportant footnote except for the fact that *The Magic Flute* just happens to be “about” the initiation rites and rituals of Masonry.

   F. In July of 1789, Schikaneder took over the Freihaus-Theater auf der Wieden, outside the city walls of Vienna. Settling down, Schikaneder began to write the plays and the opera and singspiel libretti that were to become the backbone of the theater’s repertoire for the next ten years.

   G. Sometime early in 1791, Schikaneder suggested that he and Mozart collaborate on a popular show, a musical, a singspiel—in German—to be produced at Schikaneder’s theater.

      1. Mozart had not written a major German-language opera since *The Abduction from the Harem* in 1782; he desperately wanted to write German-language opera, but the opportunity had not presented itself. Here was the opportunity: Schikaneder’s theater was a public theater; its patrons were the middle and working classes, not the nobility and aristocracy for whom Mozart had been composing at the Imperial Opera Theater.


   H. *The Magic Flute* was premiered on September 30, 1791. It was immediately apparent that Mozart and Schikaneder had created a hit. Single-handedly, Mozart had raised the popular genre of German-language singspiel to a level of operatic art equal to that occupied by Italian-language opera.
1. Mozart adored his creation and went to the theater almost every night, where he enjoyed the audience’s reaction to The Magic Flute almost as much as the opera itself.

2. With The Magic Flute a huge hit, October of 1791 saw Mozart in great spirits. And even as The Magic Flute was sold out in Vienna, Mozart’s opera seria La Clemenza di Tito—“The Mercy of Titus,” written just before The Magic Flute—was packing the house in Prague.

3. Sadly, ironically, at this moment of his popular rebirth, Mozart had just a few weeks to live.

II. What is The Magic Flute about? Is it a fairy tale, a love story, a morality play?

A. In his book The Magic Flute: Masonic Opera, the French musicologist Jacques Chailly points out:

   The first act begins as a fairy tale, continues as a commedia buffa, and ends in philosophic tirades. The second act is even less comprehensible [than the first]: we watch the chief protagonists being subjected to unexplained trials of astonishing arbitrariness and then suddenly learn that they have earned the right to places of honor [beside the gods] Isis and Osiris. (Chailly, 3–4)

B. For some sort of explanation, we turn to our program notes or CD booklets, which typically deliver the facts:

   1. Along with the Requiem and the opera The Mercy of Titus, The Magic Flute is Mozart’s last major work.
   2. Because it is a singspiel—a German-language musical comedy—The Magic Flute contains great chunks of spoken dialogue.
   3. The Magic Flute was commissioned by Emanuel Schikaneder—who was the first Papageno—for performance in a suburban burgtheater (as opposed to an Imperial Theater, or hofstheater).
   4. The Magic Flute was incredibly popular, and although Mozart never profited from its success, his widow, Constanze, surely did; The Magic Flute made her a rich woman.
   5. Finally, the program notes usually refer to the fact that Mozart and Schikaneder were Freemasons; this information is meant to explain the countless and obscure allusions to Masonry that fill the opera, references that our program notes usually fail to detail or discuss.

C. The Magic Flute is at least four operas in one, all of them masquerading as a fairy tale farce.

   1. First, The Magic Flute is a love story about successful and unsuccessful couplings.
   3. Third, The Magic Flute is a feminist tract. At its very heart, the opera is about the struggle between matriarchal and patriarchal worldviews. The opera’s essential protagonist—the Queen of the Night—is an old-world matriarch, a tough, savvy professional woman who has hit the glass ceiling and is enraged by what she considers her betrayal at the hands of men. The Queen’s daughter, the Princess Pamina, is rewarded for her extraordinary bravery, purity, and fortitude and is actually admitted into the circle of the sun; she is made a priest in the society of men, and as a result, she redeems and reconciles mankind and womankind.
   4. Most important, The Magic Flute is a depiction of the Masonic rites of initiation, from the rituals of selection and initiation to enlightenment, a journey from darkness, fear, and superstition (that is, from ignorance) to light, courage, and wisdom (that is, enlightenment).

D. We will observe The Magic Flute as a Masonic document. By examining the opera from the point of view of its Masonic ritual, symbolism, and iconography, all the other aspects of the opera will not only be included, but they will actually make sense.

E. Mozart’s music so elevates the genre of singspiel; breathes such life and depth and humanity into stock characters; renders complex and fascinating the interaction of those characters during ensembles and finales; and imbues the moments of ritual in the opera with such sublimity, majesty, and magnificence that the opera transcends the weaknesses of its libretto.

III. Freemasonry was among the most important intellectual, philosophic, and social movements of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Masonic societies were clubs of men (and women) whose tenets combined the various humanitarian teachings of Enlightenment philosophy, organized and systematized those teachings, illustrated them with symbols drawn from a huge variety of ancient and modern sources, and made all of this available to members, or “initiates,” as a somewhat coherent liturgy.

A. From the very beginning, Masonry was intended to go beyond the rites and “articles of faith” of traditional religions and replace them with a single, rational, humanist ideal. Drawing its dogma equally from portions of the Bible, the Koran, the Vedas, and various other sacred books, “Freemasonry proclaimed each of its
members free to adhere to the [religious] faith of his or her choice…. [It] limited itself to extracting a sort
of synthetic dogmatic minimum: belief in a Creator-God, the ‘Great Architect of the Universe,’ in whatever
form He might present Himself” (Chailly, 57).

B. The modern Masonic movement began with the founding of the first Grand Lodge of London on June 24,
1717. This lodge—and all those that followed—was modeled on the stonemasons’ guilds of the Middle
Ages. For the Mason of the eighteenth century, the prefix free signified the intellectual freedom that lay at
the heart of Enlightenment Masonry.

C. The Freemasons of the Enlightenment sought to build the Temple of Humanity, which was symbolized for
them by King Solomon’s Temple and his chief architect, Hiram. The rituals, imagery, and vocabulary of
the Freemasons were taken from the old Masonic guilds, from ancient Egypt, from various ancient Near
Eastern religions (in particular, Zoroastrian practices from Persia), and from Rosicrucian practices devoted
to esoteric wisdom.

D. The practitioners of Enlightenment masonry—the Freemasons themselves—considered it to be the
successor of various “initiate” traditions. Implicit in any “initiate” tradition was the idea that the
complicated hazing rituals, tests, and trials of initiation would be kept secret. Freemasonry believed that if
the content and nature of its initiation process was revealed, the entire premise of complete freedom of
speech in the lodge could be compromised.

E. To protect the secrecy of the Masonic rituals, no uninitiated visitors were allowed entry into the meeting.
Anyone seeking membership in the Masonic Order would first have to sign a declaration pledging his
silence and discretion.

F. Paul Nettl, writing in his book Mozart and Masonry, tells us:
The eighteenth century was the pinnacle of Masonic development. During the Age of Reason, many of the
ablest men in Europe joined its ranks [including members of the upper middle classes], philosophers, and
poets… But most important for the intellectual history of Masonry is Mozart, because The Magic Flute,
one of the greatest art works of all time, was the direct result of his Masonic associations. (Nettl, 5)

IV. On December 5, 1784, Wolfgang Mozart was nominated for membership in the Viennese Masonic Lodge
named “Beneficence.” He was initiated into the lodge nine days later, on December 14.

A. Unlike many of his contemporary artists, who joined Freemasonry for the contacts they could make among
the often-wealthy members, Mozart genuinely wanted to become a Mason.

B. Despite the formula and commonplaces of the libretto of The Magic Flute, Mozart believed with all his
heart and soul in the truths and beauties that lay behind Emanuel Schikaneder’s stilted and silly story. His
love and reverence for the message of Masonry, as he understood it, lie at the heart of the glory that is his
score. In The Magic Flute, there is a purity and joy of musical expression that even Mozart would have
been hard-put to surpass.

V. We must be aware of two elements of the overture to The Magic Flute.

A. The first element is the introduction and the varied reprise of this introduction that appears at the midpoint
of the overture. It consists of rising fanfares, heard in groups of three. These “three-fold chords,” as they
will come to be known later in the opera, are extremely significant, although their significance will not
become apparent until the beginning of the second act.

B. The second element is the rollicking and energized body of the overture that begins about fifty seconds in.
This music begins as a fugato—that is, one melodic voice at a time enters and is joined progressively by
more and more voices, until the entire orchestra is proclaiming its brilliant and joyful musical message. For
Mozart, it is a message of universal brotherhood and enlightenment. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute,
Overture.)

VI. The opera opens on a rocky landscape with a temple in the background. A young man runs onto the stage. He is
typically costumed in some sort of faux Oriental get-up. He carries a bow, but he has no arrows in his quiver.
He is about to become the midday snack of a large snake that is chasing him. The man is Tamino, a noble
aristocrat visiting Egypt from abroad:

TAMINO: Zu Hilfe! Zu Hilfe!
Sonst bin ich verloren, Or I am road kill!
A. Tamino faints; the door to the temple opens; three veiled ladies come out, each carrying a silver spear. Although they are referred to as “ladies” in the literature, they are, in reality, adolescents. They spear the serpent, which dies amid their whoops of victory.

**DIE DREI DAMEN:**
**THE THREE LADIES:**
Stirb, Ungeheuer, 
Die, ugly sucker, 
durch unsere Macht! 
Die by our hands! 
Triumph! Triumph! 
Victory! Victory! 
Sie ist vollbracht, 
It is accomplished, 
Die Heldentat! 
Our heroic deed! 
Er ist befreit durch 
The young man is delivered from death 
Unsers Armes Tapferkeit. 
Thanks to our studliness.

B. The Three Ladies are smitten by the still unconscious Tamino and think he may be able to help their queen.

**ERSTE DAME:**
**FIRST LADY:**
Ein hormone Jungling, 
Dude’s a looker, 
Sanft und schön! 
Sweet and cute!

**ZWEITE DAME:**
**SECOND LADY:**
So schön, als ich 
Definitely the cutest 
Noch nie gesehen! 
I’ve ever seen!

**DREITTE DAME:**
**THIRD LADY:**
Ja, ja, gewiss! Zum Malen schön! 
Got that right, girl! He’s a fox!

**ALLE DREI:**
**ALL THREE:**
Wurd’ ich mein Herz 
If I were ever 
Der Liebe weih’n, 
To fall in love, 
So müsst es 
It would for sure be 
Dieser Jungling sein. 
With this so cute guy. 
Lasst uns zu unsern Fürsten eilen, 
Let’s hurry to our Queen, 
Ihr diese Nachricht zu erteilen. 
And report this news to her. 
Vielleicht, dass dieser 
Maybe this pretty 
Schöne Mann 
Young dude 
Die vor’ge Ruh’ ihr geben kann. 
Can help her get her act back together.

C. Each of them wants to be left alone with him while the others return to tell the queen about him.

**ERSTE DAME:**
**FIRST LADY:**
So geht und sagt es ihr, 
You two go and tell the Queen 
Ich bleib’ indessen hier. 
I’ll stay here and hold down the fort.

**ZWEITE DAME:**
**SECOND LADY:**
Nein, nein, geht ihr nur hin, 
No way, Jose; you go ahead, 
Ich wache hier für ihn! 
And I’ll keep watch over him!

**DREITTE DAME:**
**THIRD LADY:**
Nein, nein, das kann nicht sein. 
Dream on, sisters, 
Ich schützte ihn allein! 
I’ll protect him myself!

**ERSTE DAME:**
**FIRST LADY:**
Ich bleib’ indessen hier! 
I’ll stay here!

**ZWEITE DAME:**
**SECOND LADY:**
Ich wache hier für ihn!  
I'll keep watch!

**DRIETTE DAME:** 
Ich schützte ihn allein!  
I'll protect him!

**ERSTE DAME:** 
Ich bleibe!  
I'll stay!

**ZWEITE DAME:** 
Ich wache!  
I'll watch!

**DRIETTE DAME:** 
Ich schütze!  
I'll protect him!

[Each of the three ladies now sings to herself.]

**ALLE DREI:**  
Ich! Ich! Ich!  
I, I, I, me, me, me!  
Ich sollte fort!  
So I must go?  
Ei, ei! Wie fein!  
Right. Nice!  
Sie wären gern bei ihm allein.  
They want him for themselves!  
Nein, nein! Das kann nicht sein!  
Not a chance; out of the question!  
Was wollte ich darum nicht geben,  
Whoa! I'd give anything  
Könn' ich mit diesem  
To live with this  
Jüngling leben,  
Young dude.  
Hätt' ich ihn doch so ganz allein.  
If only I had him all to myself!  
Doch keine geht,  
Okay,  
Es kann nicht sein.  
No one’s leaving.  
Am besten ist es nun, ich geh'.  
All right, I’ll go.  
Du Jüngling, schön und liebevoll,  
Oh, young dude, so cute and adorable,  
Du trauter Jüngling lebe wohl,  
Oh, faithful dude, be cool,  
Bis ich dich widerseh'.  
Until I see you again.

**D.** In the end, all three of the spear-wielding girls go back into the temple. (**Musical selection:** *The Magic Flute*, Act I, opening.)
Lecture Eighteen

The Magic Flute, Part Two

Scope: In Act I of The Magic Flute, we are introduced to the young hero of the opera, Tamino. He will eventually become an initiate into the Priesthood of the Sun, symbolic of the brotherhood of Freemasons, in which Mozart was a firm believer. In the opera’s opening scene, Tamino is rescued from a giant snake by three spear-wielding women, who serve the Queen of the Night. The Queen represents a state of unenlightenment—quite literally, her realm never sees the light of day. The Queen charges Tamino with a quest to rescue her daughter, Pamina, who, she says, was kidnapped by the villainous Sarastro. Tamino is to be accompanied by Papageno, a good-natured, naïve bird-catcher, who is prone to telling fibs, a crime for which his mouth is padlocked by the Queen’s Three Ladies.

Outline

I. Before we rejoin the story, we must talk about some of the Masonic symbolism we have already been witness to.
   A. The stony and craggy landscape in which the opera begins is in the realm of the Queen of the Night. It is the land of the eternal feminine, and the objects and symbols of the Queen’s domain reflect its female orientation. It is a place where night is the dominant time of day and where the moon is the dominant heavenly body; it is a place where silver—the color of the moon—is the dominant metal and water is the dominant element.
   B. The significance of Tamino’s “Japanese” outfit is that he comes from somewhere in the east, from the direction of the rising sun. He is of the eternal masculine, where day is the dominant time and the sun is the dominant heavenly body; a place where gold—the color of the sun—is the dominant metal and fire is the dominant element.
   C. Tamino, then, is a stranger in a strange land, a child of the masculine, patriarchal world who has somehow been delivered to the land of the great matriarch, the Queen of the Night. He has arrived in the Queen’s domain without any arrows in his quiver—a Masonic symbol for the fact that he is thus far not armed with self-knowledge and is without wisdom, that despite his royal blood, he is among the uninitiated and the unenlightened.
   D. Tamino is being chased by a serpent, which represents both female temptation and his own sexual awakening, and he faints. His faint and subsequent reawakening represent his death and rebirth in the realm of the Queen of the Night. In order to be born anew, as he will be in Act II, Tamino must first leave his childhood and innocence behind.
   E. Tamino is “rescued” by three “ladies” carrying silver spears, the metal of femininity. The three “ladies” have been variously described as representing unenlightenment, the Catholic Church, and female Masonry. However, the libidinous fuss they make over the unconscious Tamino—and the sweet, romantic music with which Mozart describes their yearning—indicates that, in Mozart’s view, they represent young women yearning for something they can never have.
   F. As employees of the Queen of the Night, it is unlikely that they will find mates, and their veils—according to Masonic symbolism—indicate that they will never attain true wisdom or enlightenment.

II. Tamino wakes up, still frightened and more than a little surprised to be alive. In the distance, panpipes are heard, accompanied quietly by the orchestra. Tamino hides behind a tree.
   A. Papageno appears. He is dressed in a suit of feathers and carries on his back a large birdcage filled with birds. He has a set of panpipes in his hands. Be aware that an essential aspect of this wonderful entrance aria is the panpipe tune that Papageno plays to attract birds:

   PAPAGENO:
   Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja. The birdcatcher, that’s me.
   Stets lustig, heisa, hopsasa! I’m always happy, whoop-dee-dee!
   Der Vogelfänger ist bekannt As the birdcatcher I am known
   Bei Alt und Jung im ganzen Land. By young and old throughout the land.
   Weiss mit dem Locken umzugehn I’m a natural at setting decoys,
Und mich auf’s Pfeifen zu verstehn. And I can whistle just like the birds!
Drum kann ich froh und lustig sein, And, with competition nonexistent,
Denn alle Vögel sind ja mein. I know that all the birds belong to me.

Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja, The birdcatcher, that’s me.
Stets lustig heisa, hopsasa! I’m always happy, whoop-dee-dee!
Ich Vogelfänger bin bekannt As the birdcatcher I am known
Bei Alt und Jung im ganzen Land. By young and old throughout the land.
Ein Netz für Mädchen Though what I’d really like is a trap for
Möchte ich; ich fing sie Girls; I’d catch ‘em for myself
Dutzendweis für mich; By the dozen.
Dann sperrte ich sie bei mir ein, I’d lock them up with me at home,
Und alle Mädchen wären mein. And all those girls would be mine alone.

Wenn alle Mädchen wären mein, If all those girls were mine alone,
Dann tauschte ich brav Zucker ein. I’d trade a few for sweets and sugar, and
Die, welche mir am liebsten wär, Then to my number-one favorite I’d give
Der gäb’ ich gleich den Zucker her. All the sweets she wanted.
Und küsste sie mich zärtlich dann, And if then she kissed me tenderly,
Wär sie mein Weib She would be my wife
Und ich ihr Mann. And I her husband.
Sie schlief an meiner Seite ein. She’d fall asleep at my side,
Ich wiegte wie ein Kind sie ein. And I’d rock her like a child.

B. Papageno’s entrance aria—“Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja,” (“The birdcatcher, that’s me!”) is one of the most beloved and familiar in the repertoire. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 2, aria.)

C. Papageno’s name is derived from papagei—Old French for “parrot.” According to Jacques Chailly: “In conformity with [the element Papageno represents]—air—he is a birdcatcher…but why a birdcatcher? The answer doubtlessly lies in the Masonic ritual of the Lodges of Adoption: in it, a live bird is used to represent the warning against female curiosity” (Chailly, 104).

D. Thus, we know why the Queen of the Night is buying up whatever birds are unfortunate enough to fly into her territory: She destroys them, because they represent a warning to all men regarding the dangers of female curiosity.

E. Now, from his hiding place, Tamino has seen Papageno and heard his aria, and he makes the bold decision to speak to this strange birdman-person. This being a singspiel, they converse in dialogue:

TAMINO:
Yo! You with the birds!

PAPAGENO:
You talkin’ to me?

TAMINO:
You see anyone else here? Tell me, you happy person, what the heck are you?

PAPAGENO:
What am I? (That’s a stupid question!) A human, like you. And if I were to ask you the same question?

TAMINO:
My father is a king who rules over many lands and peoples; therefore, am I called a prince.

PAPAGENO:
Well, excuse me, “Mr. Prince.” Are you telling me that beyond these mountains there are other lands and people?

TAMINO:
You betcha; lots of them. So tell me, what is this...ah...this garden spot actually called? And who rules over it?
PAPAGENO:
I don’t know; I’m not very high on the information chain. I can only tell you that my straw hut isn’t far from here and that I get my food and drink by trading birds with the Star-blazing Queen and her various javelin-wielding nubettes.

F. This revelation sets Tamino to thinking: Could Papageno’s “Star-blazing Queen” be the legendary and infamous “Queen of the Night”? And if so, what power has brought him to her lands? All this thinking makes Tamino stare hard at Papageno, who in turn, doesn’t like the way he’s being looked at. Suddenly, Papageno is on his guard; he assumes a defensive stance and says:

PAPAGENO:
Stand back and beware! I have the strength of a giant!! [Then he says to himself:] If this guy doesn’t start looking afraid soon I’m going to have to run really fast!

TAMINO:
You’ve got a giant’s strength? Were you the one who saved me from this vicious viper?

PAPAGENO:
Viper?
[Tamino points. Papageno looks. Papageno sees the dead serpent. Papageno screams, jumps back about five feet, and inquires, rather shakily:] 

PAPAGENO:
Is it dead or alive?
[Papageno tiptoes over to the snake’s carcass and gingerly nudges it with his toe; once he realizes it’s dead, his confidence returns. He tells the incredulous Tamino:] 

PAPAGENO:
Oh yeah, I killed it with my bare hands. My body is my weapon; strangled it dead; you know, my hands are registered with the police department…

[The Three Ladies enter and again admonish the birdman:] 

THREE LADIES:
Papageno!

PAPAGENO:
Oh, darn, the ladies; I’m in trouble.

TAMINO:
Hmm. Who are these ladies?

PAPAGENO:
I don’t really know who they actually are, but every day, I trade them birds for wine, sugar-bread, sweet figs, and the occasional New York strip.

[The Three Ladies enter and again admonish the birdman:] 

THREE LADIES:
Papageno!

PAPAGENO:
Oh my goodness, what have I done now? Here, lovely ladies, I’ve brought you my birds.

[The First Lady hands Papageno a jug of water and says:] 

FIRST LADY
This time, in payment, instead of wine our Queen sends you…water!

SECOND LADY:
And instead of sugar-bread, she ordered me to give you this…stone!!

THIRD LADY:
And instead of sweet figs I have the honor of sealing your lying mouth with this golden padlock!!!

G. Papageno is promptly mugged by the Three Ladies; they seal his mouth shut with a padlock and inform the moaning birdcatcher that this is his punishment for telling lies to strangers.

1. A quick word about the padlock: In female Masonry, a silver padlock pressed to the lips was used as a symbol of discretion, as a warning against gossip and idle chatter.

2. In deference to the fact that Papageno is a man, the Three Ladies attach to him a golden padlock.

Having locked Papageno’s mouth shut, the First Lady demands:

FIRST LADY:
Tell us, did you kill this snaggle-toothed serpent?

[Papageno shakes his head, causing Tamino to ask:]

TAMINO:
Well, who did, then?

THIRD LADY:
We killed it, and it was we who saved you, you, you hunk of prince, you. Our great Queen sends you this small portrait of her daughter. If you are interested in getting to know her daughter, our Queen promises you that happiness, honor, and glory lie in your immediate future.

H. The Queen has calculated well. Tamino, having come of sexual age just a few minutes ago, is not just interested; the woman he sees in the small portrait instantly bewitches him. He sings his first aria, No. 3, “Dies Bildnis,” (“This Portrait”):

TAMINO: 
Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön, 
This portrait is awesome!
Wie noch kein Auge je gesehn! 
I’ve never seen anything like it before!
Ich fühIl es, wie dies Götterbild 
I feel as if this angelic image
Mein Herz mit neuer Regung füllt. 
Is filling my heart with a new emotion.
Dies Etwas kann ich Zwar nicht 
What it is, I’m not sure
nennen.

Doch fühIl ich’s hier wie Feuer brennen. 
But I feel it burning here.
Soll die Empfindung Liebe sein? 
Can this sensation be love?
Ja, ja, die Liebe ist’s allein. 
It’s not heartburn, so love it must be!
O, wenn ich sie nur finden könnte! 
Geez, I’d love to meet this lady!
O, wenn sie doch schon vor mir stände! 
If only she was here right now!
Ich würde, warm und rein, 
I would—um, I would—I would
Was würde ich? 
What would I do?
Ich würde sie voll Entzücken 
Let’s see, I would ecstatically
An diesen heissen Busen drücken, 
Press her to my heart
Und ewig wäre sie dann mein. 
And make her mine forever!

(Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 3, aria.)

I. Tamino is rocked out of his love-induced trance by the Three Ladies, who aren’t finished with him quite yet. In dialogue, they describe his mission, should he choose to take it: to rescue the queen’s daughter, Pamina, whom they claim has been kidnapped by the evil Sarastro.

J. Suddenly and unexpectedly, a huge clap of thunder startles everyone! It heralds the arrival of the Queen of the Night.

K. In a typical, high-end performance of The Magic Flute, the mountains part, and the stage is transformed into a magnificent chamber. The Queen is seated on a huge throne adorned with stars. The Queen’s opening recitative is, of course, accompanied by the full orchestra. Outside of the closing finale, this is the only accompanied recitative in the entire opera:

KÖNIGIN: 
QUEEN OF THE NIGHT:
O zitt’re nicht, 
Listen, kid, don’t be so nervous.
Mein lieber Sohn! 
Do you mind if I call you “son”?
Du bist unschuldig, 
You are guiltless,
Weise, fromm; 
Smart and good;
Ein Jüngling, so wie du, 
Just the sort of boy,
Vermag am besten, 
Who can best console
Das tiefbetrübte Mutterherz 
A stressed-out mother
Zu trösten. 
With a broken heart!

L. The aria proper begins. Convincingly and pathetically, the queen tells the tale of Pamina’s alleged abduction. Do we really believe that this weak, helpless, broken-hearted woman is the real Queen of the Night? Or are these the words of a master manipulator attempting to convince an outgunned and naïve young man to do her dirty work for her, for reasons not yet entirely clear? The Queen sings:

KÖNIGIN:
QUEEN OF THE NIGHT:
Zum Leiden bin ich auserkoren, 
I was born to suffer, because
Denn meine Tochter fehlet mir, 
They’ve taken my daughter from me.
Durch sie ging all 
My happiness has
Mein Glück verloren, 
Disappeared with her;
Ein Bösewicht entfloh mit ihr. 
Taken as she was, by an evil villain.
Noch seh’ ich ihr Zittern 
I still see her trembling with fright
Mit bangen Erschüttern, 
And shock,
Ihr ängstliches Beben, 
Shaking with fear,
Ihr schüchternes Streben, 
Struggling in vain.
Ich musste sie mir rauben sehen. 
I watched her as they stole her from me.
Ach helft! War alles was sie sprach; 
“Help me!” was all she could say,
Allein vergebens war ihr Flehen, 
But her cries were futile,
Denn meine Hilfe war zu schwach. 
For I was too weak to save her.

M. The Queen has Tamino right where she wants him; he’s hanging on her every word. Now she goes for the kill—she snaps out of her cloying grief and becomes a regal prima donna; she boldly sings as she points at Tamino:

QUEEN OF THE NIGHT:
QUEEN OF THE NIGHT:
Du wirst sie zu befreien gehen, 
You, you, you will set her free,
Du wirst der Tochter Retter sein! Ja! 
You shall be my daughter’s savior!
    Yes!
Und werd’ ich dich als Sieger sehen, 
And if you do succeed,
So sei sie dann auf ewig dein. 
She shall be yours forever!

N. A clap of thunder and flickering lightening signal the Queen’s departure. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 4, recitative and aria.)

II. The singer for whom the part was originally written was Josepha Weber Hofer, Mozart’s sister-in-law, the eldest of the four Weber girls.

A. As a reminder, the Weber girls were the daughters of Fridolin and Marie Caecilia Weber. In 1777, while briefly living in Mannheim, Mozart met and befriended Herr Weber. Mozart also fell in love with the second of the four Weber girls, Aloysia, three years his junior. He proposed to her, she blew him off, and he described her as “False, malicious, and a coquette” (Groves, Vol. 20, 240).

B. When Fridolin Weber died in 1779, his widow and her daughters moved to Vienna. There, in 1781, Mozart reacquainted himself with the family, minus the now-married Aloysia. Mozart fell in love with the third of the Weber girls, Constanze, whom he married on August 4, 1782. The only of the four Weber sisters that Mozart seemed not to have had a professional or amorous relationship with was the youngest sister, Sophie, who Mozart described as “Good natured but feather-brained” (Groves, Vol. 20, 240).

C. Josepha, the eldest of the Weber girls, for whom Mozart wrote the part of the Queen of the Night, was well known in Vienna as a dramatic singer of particular vocal agility and the ability to sing very high! In 1790, Josepha was hired by Emanuel Schikaneder, and she joined his company at the Theater auf der Wieden. It was as a member of Schikaneder’s company that Mozart wrote for her the part of the Queen of the Night.
the following year. Mozart described her in a letter as “a lazy, gross, perfidious woman, and as cunning as a fox” (Groves, Vol. 20, 240).

D. Whatever Mozart thought of her personally, Josepha acquitted herself proudly as the Queen of the Night. Indeed, it’s a moving and ironic story that as Mozart lay dying, in his final delirium, he imagined that he was present at a performance of *The Magic Flute*, listening to his sister-in-law sing.

E. The Queen of the Night is by far the most interesting character in the opera, and it is her ruthless ambition that drives the action.

1. The land of the Queen of the Night was governed by matrilinear succession; that is, the Queen would take a series of husbands, who would each serve for a while, then die, until Pamina, the Queen’s daughter, succeeded her mother. According to William Mann:

   Pamina’s father has evidently prepared for this palace revolution, just before his death, by giving the emblem of his sovereignty, the sevenfold circle of the sun, into Sarastro’s keeping. Sarastro then took Pamina, heir to the throne of the Night, under his own wing so that she would in due course become the wife of his own successor, thus reestablishing the old link between night and day on a new patrilinear and patriarchal footing. (Mann, 612)

2. This “fear of the power of women” was an essential component of eighteenth-century Masonry and, like the Catholic Church, male Masonry denied genuine power and position to women.

3. Thus, the Queen of the Night believes (not incorrectly, from her point of view) that she has been ripped off; she has not inherited the “day” as she believes she should have inherited it. Instead, men, including her own husband (Pamina’s father), have plotted behind her back to change the rules of the universe from a matriarchal construct to a patriarchal construct.

4. Like any bright, talented, well-educated, and ambitious modern female professional who was told to expect the world (in the Queen’s case, the universe) from her career, she has suddenly and unexpectedly hit the glass ceiling and someone’s going to pay! That “someone” is Sarastro, the current Priest of the Sun, and the Queen will use any means and any person to destroy Sarastro and unite day and night under her own matriarchal, dictatorial, completely unenlightened rule.

5. Of course, running as an undercurrent throughout all of this is the assumption that the Queen and the feminine ideal she represents are not good but, rather, are representative of ignorance and superstition, as opposed to Sarastro and the masculine ideal, which are represented as being good, enlightened, rational, and reasonable. And make no mistake about it, by the time we meet her, the Queen is not good. But we can understand how she got that way.

F. In convincing Tamino to go and free Pamina, the Queen has lied: Sarastro in not an evil villain, and Pamina was not so much kidnapped as removed and put into foster care for her own well-being. But Tamino knows nothing of any of this. What Tamino does know is that he is filled with a new sense of power and purpose and he is standing next to a very unhappy Papageno, his mouth padlocked shut. A wonderful quintet immediately ensues; the comic, rustic action and music of the quintet help to counter the rather more serious aria just sung by the duplicitous and wily Queen of the Night.
Lecture Nineteen

The Magic Flute, Part Three

Scope: The Three Ladies remove Papageno’s padlock, affording a segue to one of the opera’s many Masonic homilies: If all liars’ mouths were locked, hatred and calumny would be replaced by love and brotherhood. Tamino and Papageno are fitted out for their quest with a magic flute and bells, respectively. Three Boys, representing the Masonic qualities of strength, beauty, and wisdom, lead the way to the realm of Sarastro, who seeks to reunite day and night and restore harmony and peace to the world. In Act I, Scene 2, Papageno and Monostatos take each other by surprise; Monostatos runs away, abandoning his captive, Pamina, who sings a eulogy to the power of love with Papageno. The Act I finale sees Tamino arrive at the Temples of Wisdom, Reason, and Nature, where, unbeknownst to him, he is about to begin his initiation into the Priesthood of the Sun.

Outline

I. We return to the first act of The Magic Flute.
   A. Tamino has just been enlisted by the Queen of the Night to rescue her daughter, Pamina, from the clutches of the ostensibly evil Sarastro. Tamino finds himself back on stage with Papageno and the Queen’s Three Ladies. A quintet immediately ensues, beginning with the unhappy Papageno, who can only moan pathetically because his lips are locked together.

   [Papageno points to the padlock on his mouth and attempts to sing:]

   PAPAGENO:
   Hm! hm! hm! hm! hm! hm!
   TAMINO:
   Der Arme kann von Strafe sagen,
   Denn seine Sprache ist dahin!
   PAPAGENO:
   Hm! hm! hm! hm! hm! hm!
   TAMINO:
   Ich kann nichts tun,
   Als dich beklagen,
   Weil ich zu schwach zu helfen bin!
   PAPAGENO:
   Hm! hm! hm! hm! hm! hm!
   ERSTE DAME:
   Die Königin begnädigt dich,
   Erlässt die Strafe dir
   Durch mich.
   PAPAGENO:
   Hm! hm! hm! hm! hm! hm!
   ZWEITE DAME:
   Ja, plaud’re;
   Lüge nur nicht!
   PAPAGENO:
   Nun plaudert Papageno wieder!
   Now I can ramble on like an idiot once again!
   SECOND LADY:
   Ramble on, as much as you like,
   But no more fibbing!
   PAPAGENO:
   Ich lüge nimmermehr,
   I will never tell another lie,
Nein, nein! Cross my heart, hope to… whatever.

[The ladies brandish the lock at Papageno:]

DIE DREI DAMEN: THE THREE LADIES:

Dies Schloss soll deine ‘Cause we can strap this puppy back
Warnung sein! On anytime!

PAPAGENO: PAPAGENO:

Dies Schlozz soll meine No, it’s cool, it’s cool,
Warnung sein! I’m straight, honest!

[It’s time for a little moralizing.]

ALLE: ALL:

Bekämen doch die Lügner alle If every liar had
Ein solches Schloss A lock
vor ihren Mund, On his mouth,
Statt Hass, Verleumdung, Then would hate, calumny,
Schwarzar Galle, And rancor be replaced
Bestünde Lieb’ und Brüderbund! By love and brotherhood!

B. If Tamino is to be successful on his quest, he will require something more than an empty quiver and the knuckleheaded Papageno! The First Lady gives Tamino a golden flute.

1. In reality, it is gilded wood, as we will later find out. Nevertheless, the flute—and its magical power—is useless to the Queen and her ladies; it is golden; it was made by a man, and its power is that of the sun, the light, of gold, of men.

2. It was made by the Queen’s husband, Pamina’s father, from the deepest roots of an ancient oak during a terrible storm. The flute, therefore, unites and embodies the four elements: It is blown with air; it came from deepest earth; it was produced during a rainstorm—water—in the flash of lightning—fire. The flute, and the music it makes, represents the cosmos in balance—perfection. As the First Lady explains, it will give the player incredible power to transform the unhappiness of people.

C. The Three Ladies insist that Papageno accompany Tamino on his mission to rescue Pamina from Sarastro’s castle.

D. The First Lady gives Papageno a box containing a set of bells. Of course, no one ever mentions what the bells (or the flute, for that matter) are actually supposed to do; this Tamino and Papageno will simply have to figure out on their own, by trial and error.

E. Tamino and Papageno ask where they are supposed to be going.

F. The Three Ladies describe the Three Boys, who will lead Tamino and Papageno to Sarastro’s castle, as “fair, gentle, and wise.” In describing them this way, the Ladies have ascribed to them the essential “pillars” of Freemasonry: Every Masonic Temple is supported inside by the three pillars called “strength,” “beauty,” and “wisdom.”

G. The Three Ladies take their leave and fade from view. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 5, quintet.)

II. The scene changes and we find ourselves in a sumptuous Egyptian room, which we later learn is part of Sarastro’s castle.

A. In a lengthy dialogue, three slaves gleefully celebrate the escape of Pamina from their hated master, the Blackamoor, Monostatos, Sarastro’s chief of security. Suddenly, and much to their terror, Monostatos’s voice is heard calling for his slaves to bring him chains and restraints; Pamina has been recaptured!

1. Of Monostatos, we are told: “He is black and, as such, destined to eventually find his own [dark] element in the kingdom of the Night… He is a golliwog, the sort of comic black doll much adored by white European children [of the time], except that Monostatos is not loveable at all. He is lecherous, ambitious, [cruel], and totally dishonest” (Mann, 615).

2. We must ask, if Sarastro’s abduction of Pamina from her mother, the Queen of the Night, was done for Pamina’s own protection, why has he entrusted the care of this young, beautiful, naive girl to the monster Monostatos?
3. The answer has to do with the trials and tests of initiation that will occupy so much of the second act. It also has to do with the universe out of order: Until day and night are properly and harmoniously reunited, all will not be right with the world.

4. That is why Sarastro is going through such pains to bring together Tamino with Pamina. But first, Pamina needs to perceive Tamino as her hero, her rescuer.

5. Jacques Chaillly notes that Monostatos’s blackness “evokes the darkness of the earth, which is his element, his sign.” In addition, Monostatos recalls a Masonic legend that associates the color black with the crow that flew to Noah’s ark without landing and the color white with the dove that flew to the ark and returned with an olive branch in its beak. As Chaillly notes, “Evil was mixed with good in the world under those two symbols. In this connection, we note the insistence with which Monostatos calls Pamina ‘my little dove,’ ‘täubchen’” (Chaillly, 107).

6. We should also recognize Mozart’s Monostatos as musically a close relation of Osmin, from *The Abduction from the Harem*.

B. In Act I, Scene 2, Pamina has attempted to escape from what she believes are the evil clutches of Sarastro and has been recaptured by the evil Monostatos. Monostatos orders his slaves to bind his “little dove,” Pamina, in chains. Pamina claims that she does not fear death, only that her mother will be grief stricken.

C. The slaves unsuccessfully attempt to bind Pamina in chains; according to Masonic lore, chains were forged in the bowels of the earth by Vulcan and represent ignorance and limitation, two words that definitely apply to Monostatos. Meanwhile, Pamina sinks unconscious on the sofa while Monostatos screams at the slaves to leave him alone with her.

D. The terrified slaves scurry away. Papageno saunters in. When Papageno and Monostatos see each other, both birdman and golliwog are terrified. They run off in opposite directions. We knew that Papageno is, by nature, timid and unheroic, but we might have expected something more of the Moor. Monostatos is, indeed, corrupt, malevolent, and frightened by the unknown. Truly, he is a natural member of the pre-Enlightenment court of the Queen of the Night. (*Musical selection:* *The Magic Flute*, Act I, scene 2, No. 6, trio.)

E. Pamina is now alone on stage. She wakes up, rather surprised to find herself still alive. Her faint, her “death” and “rebirth,” at this moment run parallel to Tamino’s own at the beginning of the opera. Just as Tamino experienced a sexual coming of age, Pamina is now about to experience hers, when Tamino’s existence is revealed to her by Papageno.

F. Papageno has wandered back on stage, and he introduces himself as a messenger from the Queen of the Night. He tells Pamina that Tamino has been sent by her mother to rescue her and that Tamino has already fallen in love with her.

G. Pamina is delighted but warns Papageno that if Sarastro should discover him, he would never see his wife again. This touches a nerve in Papageno who tells Pamina that he would trade every one of his feathers for a wife—a Papagena. A rather sappy-sweet duet follows that celebrates the power of love:

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**PAMINA:**

Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen,
Fehlt auch ein gutes Herz nicht.

**PAPAGENO:**

A man who can feel love as you do
Must truly have a good heart.

**PAPAGENO:**

Die süßen Triebe mitzuführen
Ist dann der Weiber erste Pflicht.

**PAPAGENA:**

And to share her man’s love
Must be a woman’s first duty.

**PAMINA, PAPAGENO:**

Wir wollen uns der Liebe freun,
Wir leben durch die Lieb’ allein.

**PAMINA:**

Let us rejoice in love
And live for love alone!

**PAMINA:**

Die Lieb’ versüsset jede Plage,
Ihr opfert jede Kreatur.

**PAPAGENO:**

Love makes light of every trouble,
Every creature lives for love.

**PAPAGENO:**

Sie würzet unsre Lebenstage,
Sie wirkt im Kreise der Natur.

**PAPAGENO:**

Love sweetens our lives,
And makes the world go ‘round.
PAMINA, PAPAGENO: Love’s high purpose
Ihr höher Zweck, Clearly reveals that
zeigt deutlich an, Nothing is more important than
Nichts edlers sie, Woman and Man,
als Weib und Mann, Man and Woman,
Mann und Weib, And Woman and Man
Und Weib und Mann
Reichen an die Gottheit an. Approach the very nature of God.

H. Dramatically, the duet demonstrates that when it comes to hatred of men and hunger for power, Pamina is not her mother’s daughter, and she will be quite willing to play the part of a loving wife if given half the chance. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 7, duet.)

III. For the Act I finale, we are in a grove of palms. In the middle of the grove stand three temples: the Temple of Wisdom (in the center), the Temple of Reason (on the right), and the Temple of Nature (on the left). The Three Spirits, or Three Boys, have led Tamino to this place.

A. Mozart composed the parts of the Three Boys for three boy sopranos, who typically hover over the stage in a sort of wire-supported gondola.
   1. The three boys are the “alpha” to the three ladies’ “omega”; like Papageno, the boys are creatures of the day—of goodness—who nevertheless have found temporary employ with the Queen of the Night.
   2. Despite the obvious dramatic and Masonic importance of their being male, in performance, the three spirits are often sung by three female sopranos.

B. Part 1: The Three Boys have led Tamino to this grove and now advise him to be “steadfast, patient, and silent.” The Boys suggest that he “act like a man,” for then he “will find what he seeks.” They then fly off. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 8, Act I, finale, part 1.)

C. Part 2: In accompanied recitative, Tamino resolves to do his best to remember their advice and realizes he has no idea where he is or what he is supposed to do. He reads the inscriptions on the Temples of Reason and Nature and approaches each temple in turn, only to be turned away by a chorus of voices coming from inside the building. He does not know that he has not yet earned the right to see these interiors. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 8, Act I, finale, part 2, opening.)

D. He knocks on the door of the third temple, the Temple of Wisdom. This time, an old priest answers the door; he is known as the Speaker. Unbeknownst to Tamino, his initiation into the Priesthood of the Sun is about to begin. We might think of this first step as a sort of preliminary interview.
Lecture Twenty

The Magic Flute, Part Four

Scope: Tamino’s initiation begins with an interrogation by a priest at the Temple of Wisdom. The priest suggests to Tamino that he could be mistaken in his belief that Sarastro is evil. Tamino now realizes that the Queen of the Night lied to him and he wants to know the truth. Symbolically, he will be enlightened after his initiation into the Priesthood of the Sun. He discovers the power of his magic flute, an instrument that can make animals dance and make the unhappy happy. The flute’s sound is heard by Pamina and Papageno, who are running away from Sarastro and his retinue. As they try to reach Tamino, they are ambushed by Monostatos. Thanks to the bewitching power of Papageno’s magic bells, they escape, but run into Sarastro and his retinue. Sarastro tells Pamina that for her own safety, he cannot return Pamina to her mother. He then ushers Tamino and Pamina into the Temple of Trial to be purified.

Outline

I. We have begun the finale of Act I. Tamino, thinking he is being led to Pamina by the three boy sopranos in their gondola, has instead been delivered to a grove of palms, in the middle of which stand three temples: the Temple of Wisdom, the Temple of Reason, and the Temple of Nature.

   A. One after the other, he approaches the Temples of Reason and Nature, only to be sent away by a chorus of voices from within. Tamino approaches the temple at stage center, the Temple of Wisdom. This time, an old priest answers the door; he is known as the Speaker. Unbeknownst to Tamino, his initiation into the Priesthood of the Sun is about to begin. This first step in his initiation is the interview, or interrogation.

   SPEAKER:
   What do you want, stranger? What are you looking for in this holy place?

   [Tamino disingenuously replies:]

   TAMINO:
   Whatever belongs to love and virtue.

   [Wrong answer! Tamino is here to find Pamina and slay the evil Sarastro; he knows it and the Speaker knows it as well. The speaker says:]

   SPEAKER:
   Nice, noble words, young dude, but how are you going to find love and virtue when you’ve come here bent on death and revenge?!

   TAMINO:
   Yes, revenge on that evil villain!

   SPEAKER:
   Well, I doubt that you will find an “evil villain” around here.

   TAMINO:
   Isn’t this Sarastro’s territory?

   SPEAKER:
   Yes, Sarastro’s the boss man in these parts.

   TAMINO:
   But not here, Sarastro can’t be the boss man here, not in the Temple of Wisdom!

   SPEAKER:
   Yes, he rules here, too—in the Temple of Wisdom!

   TAMINO:
   You’re messin’ with my head, man! I’m outta here!

   SPEAKER:
   So that’s it? Leaving so soon?
TAMINO:
I’m outta here, and I’ll be happy never to see your dumb “Temple of Wisdom” again!

SPEAKER:
Might I suggest you’re being a little quick on the trigger; might I suggest that someone’s filled your head with lies?

TAMINO:
Sarastro lives here, that’s all I need to know!

SPEAKER:
If you value your life, you will stay where you are and talk to me. You hate Sarastro?

TAMINO:
Now and forever!

SPEAKER:
Then tell me why!

TAMINO:
He is inhuman, a rotten tyrant!

SPEAKER:
Is that so? Can you prove it?

TAMINO:
My proof is an unhappy woman, broken by her pain and grief.

SPEAKER:
Have you been lied to by a woman? Women do little but gossip and lie; have you, young dude, been taken in by a woman?

[Remember, according to the story, the Kingdom of the Sun/manhood is currently at odds with the Kingdom of the Moon/womanhood. The Speaker continues:]

I only wish that Sarastro could reveal to you the reasons for his actions.

[Tamino does not believe that Sarastro is good, at least not yet. Now it is his turn to ask a question:]

TAMINO:
Oh, his “reasons” are all too clear! You tell me: Did this child stealer not kidnap Pamina from her mother’s arms?

SPEAKER:
Yes, young dude, harshly put, but not inaccurate.

TAMINO:
So where is she? Do you guys do human sacrifice here? Has she been sacrificed already?!!

SPEAKER:
Sorry kid, my lips are sealed.

TAMINO:
What a cop out!

SPEAKER:
I can’t say, my young friend; on this I took an oath of silence!

TAMINO:
So when will I find out if she’s even alive?

SPEAKER:
As soon as you get your act together and figure out who the bad guys really are!

**B.** The Speaker goes back into the temple, leaving Tamino to ponder his last words. Certainly, someone has lied to him and he is, for the moment, mightily confused. *(Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 8, finale, part 2 continued, from “What do you want, stranger?”)*
C. Tamino asks “Oh, endless night, when will you end? When will my eyes again see the light?” He is living in ignorance and confusion, as represented, physically, by the darkness and night around him. Only when he is initiated into the Priesthood of the Sun—during the second act—will he become enlightened.

D. A chorus coming from the temples answers him: “Soon, young dude, or never!” Tamino asks if Pamina is still alive and, to his joy, the chorus affirms that she is. (Musical selection: *The Magic Flute*, No. 8, part 2, conclusion, from Tamino’s line “Oh, endless night, when will you end?”)

II. As we begin part 3 of the finale, Tamino’s words are not adequate to express his joy, so he begins to play a tune on his magic flute.

A. Suddenly, wild animals of all sorts come forth to listen and dance to the music, such is the power of the magic flute. When he stops playing, they wander off. Then, from offstage, Papageno answers Tamino’s flute with his pipes! Tamino sprints off stage in the direction of Papageno. (Musical selection: *The Magic Flute*, No. 8, finale, part 3, from Tamino’s tune on the magic flute.)

B. Meanwhile, nearby, Pamina and Papageno are searching for Tamino, even as they are trying to avoid being captured by Monostatos and his slaves.

1. As part 4 of the finale begins, they enter, Papageno playing his pipes:

PAMINA, PAPAGENO: PAMINA, PAPAGENO:
Schnelle Füsse, rascher Mut, Fast feet and lots of courage
Schützt vor Feindes Will keep us out of the hands
List und Wut! Of the bad guys!
Fänden wir Tamino doch, If only we could find Tamino
Sonst erwischen sie uns noch! Before we’re captured!

PAMINA: PAMINA:
Holder Jüngling! Yo! Adorable young dude!

PAPAGENO: PAPAGENO:
Stille, stille, Whoa, doll! Way too loud!
Ich kann’s besser! I have a much better idea!

[Moments later, Tamino answers from a distance on his flute.]

PAMINA, PAPAGENO: PAMINA, PAPAGENO:
Welche Freude ist wohl grösster All right! That’s the ticket!
Freund Tamino hort uns schon, Tamino has heard us;
Hierher kam der Flötenton. That was his flute out there!
Welch ein Glück, wenn ich He’s as good as found;
Ich finde; nur geschwinde We must hurry,
Nur geschwinde! Hurry!

2. As Pamina and Papageno hurry toward the sound of Tamino’s flute, they run right into an ambush set by Monostatos.

3. Papageno rings the magic bells he was given by the Three Ladies, and the effect on Monostatos and his slaves is instantaneous and wonderfully comic:

MONOSTATO, SKLAVEN: MONOSTATOS, SLAVES:
Das klinget so hefflich, That sounds so wonderful,
Das klinget so schön! That sounds so beautiful!
Tralla, lalala trallalalala! Tralla lalala trallalalala!
Nie hab’ ich so etwas Never have I heard or seen
Gehört und gesehn! Anything like that!

4. They begin to dance and sing and finally flit from the stage, singing the entire time. (Musical selection: *The Magic Flute*, No. 8, finale, part 4, from Papageno and Pamina’s “Schnelle füsse,” [“Fast feet and lots of courage”].)

C. Finale, Part 5: Pamina and Papageno’s little celebration is short-lived.
1. From just offstage, they hear the cheers of a gathered throng from the solar brotherhood, celebrating Sarastro’s return from wherever he’s been: “Es lebe Sarastro! Sarastro lebe!” (“Long live Sarastro! Long live Sarastro!”)

2. All of them seem to be heading right toward Pamina and Papageno, who are terrified.

3. Pamina, however, insists that they should be truthful about their attempt to escape. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 8, finale, part 5, opening, from the choir’s offstage cries of “Es lebe Sarastro!” [“Long live Sarastro!”].)

D. Pamina confesses to Sarastro that she tried to escape from him:

PAMINA:
My Lord, I cannot tell a lie! I have attempted to escape from you. But I cannot be blamed. The evil Moor demanded my body and that is why I ran away.

SARASTRO:
Stand up, don’t worry about it, my dear girl; for even without questioning you I know well your heart; I know that you love someone very much. I also know that love cannot be forced on you. Even still, I cannot yet grant you your freedom.

PAMINA:
But my lord, my duty to my mother calls me, for my mother…

SARASTRO:
Is in my power. She would destroy your happiness forever, if I were to return you to her.

PAMINA:
My lord, I miss her terribly; she is… she is…

SARASTRO:
She is a proud and arrogant woman; a man must guide your heart, for without a man every woman will misbehave!

E. These words, misogynistic though they might seem to our sensitized ears, were penned in 1791.

1. Despite the spirit of the Enlightenment on which Masonry was based, we must maintain a little temporal perspective. In 1791, the American Revolution had been over for only eight years; the French Revolution was in its second year; there were no such things as child labor laws; slavery was practiced across the globe; and the Emancipation Proclamation was still seventy-two years in the future.

2. Sarastro’s view of women was a reflection of the advanced thinking of his time, not a product of evil misogyny. Sarastro is convinced that the Queen of the Night and her entire night-based, silver-standard female crowd are a danger to the cosmos in general and Pamina in particular. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 8, finale, part 5, opening, from Pamina’s words to Sarastro, “My Lord, I cannot tell a lie!”)

F. As the dialogue between Sarastro and Pamina has been going on, Monostatos and his minions have come on stage.

1. They have with them a prisoner—Tamino. Monostatos presents Tamino to Sarastro: “Now, proud young dude, come here! This is Sarastro, our Lord!”

2. Pamina and Tamino, who now see each other for the first time, approach each other and embrace.

3. The attendants, soldiers, priests, and everyone else on stage are aghast.

4. Monostatos cannot believe what he has just seen. He throws himself before Sarastro and asks for permission to punish Tamino:

MONOSTATOS:
Your slave lies at your feet; let this impudent pup be punished! Can you believe what he just did? With the help of the birdman, he came here to steal Pamina from me—I mean, from you! But I managed to track him down like a dog! Nothing gets by me. My vigilance…

[Sarastro interrupts Monostatos and finishes his sentence for him by saying:]

SARASTRO:
Your vigilance deserves to be rewarded.

[He calls over his chief steward and, pointing to Monostatos, says:]
Yo! Give this vigilant man—

[Monostatos is expecting a major reward; he interrupts Sarastro:]

MONOSTATOS:
Your good will has already made me rich!

SARASTRO:
Yo! Give this vigilant man—only seventy-seven strokes with the stick!

MONOSTATOS:
My Lord, that’s not what I was expecting!

SARASTRO:
You don’t have to thank me; really, it’s my pleasure!

G. As we will find out, with Tamino now on the scene, Monostatos’s usefulness is at an end. Pamina has proven herself a tough and resourceful young lady, and that’s why Sarastro had entrusted her to Monostatos in the first place; it was another one of those trials and rites of passage of which the story is so full. Pointing to Tamino and Papageno, Sarastro tells his handlers to blindfold them and take them into the Temple of Trial to be purified. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 8, finale, part 5, conclusion, from Monostatos’s line, “Now, proud young dude, come here!”)
Lecture Twenty-One

The Magic Flute, Part Five

Scope: Act II deals with the initiation of Tamino and Pamina into the Priesthood of the Sun and the destruction of the Queen of the Night’s power. Sarastro and the Queen of the Night represent, respectively, the essential conflict between day/sun and night/moon. Sarastro seeks to turn his power over to a very special couple, who can reunite the sun and moon, night and day (masculine and female domains), and men and women; he and his priests have chosen Tamino and Pamina to play this role. The all-too-human Papageno lacks the conviction to successfully pass the various initiation trials, and his failures provide much of the comedy in this act.

Outline

I. With the conclusion of Act I, we have finally met all the main characters in the opera: Tamino and Pamina, Papageno and Monostatos, and the Queen of the Night and Sarastro.
   A. Mozart wrote the part of Sarastro for a bass singer. The depth of his voice imbues him with a masculinity and a gravitas that leave us no doubt that Sarastro is in charge. Bass singers also tend to be big men; physically, he will dominate the stage visually, as well as vocally.
   B. The name Sarastro is derived from Zoroaster, who was a religious teacher and prophet of ancient Persia.
      1. The founder of Zoroastrianism, Zoroaster lived from approximately 628 B.C.E. to 551 B.C.E., roughly contemporary with the earliest days of the Athenian democracy.
      2. The name Zoroaster is a Greek version of his Persian name, which was Zarathustra.
      3. Zoraster was a charismatic holy man, an expert on astronomy, and an alchemist. All sorts of legends grew up around him during his lifetime and after his death and he came to represent the incarnation of good.
   C. Sarastro is a human manifestation of the sun. He is not married and he considers himself as a sort of regent, watching over his world of male initiates, on guard against the jealousy and ambitions of the Queen of the Night, until he can turn his power over to a couple who can once again unite sun and moon, night and day, man and woman.
      1. That couple is Tamino and Pamina, and their ascension will mark his retirement.
      2. Tamino and Pamina must first prove themselves worthy and capable of such cosmic responsibility. Thus, they must undergo the tests and trials that make up so much of the second act.
   D. With the introduction of Sarastro near the end of the first act, all the conflicting parties and the conflicting elements they represent have been introduced.
      1. The essential conflict between the day/sun and the night/moon is embodied in the conflict between Sarastro and the Queen of the Night.
      2. Tamino, as a male and initiate in Sarastro’s Priesthood of the Sun, represents fire; his natural complement is Pamina, a woman, whose element is water.
      3. Papageno, the birdman, represents air; his complement is Monostatos, the man of darkness, who represents earth.
      4. The one object that embodies all these elements is Tamino’s magic flute.

II. Act II of The Magic Flute revolves around the initiation of Tamino and Pamina into the Priesthood of the Sun, the attempted (but, ultimately, futile) initiation of Papageno, and the destruction of the power-crazed Queen of the Night.
   A. Tamino is pleased to submit himself to the trials that will make him an initiate in Sarastro’s priesthood (which is, itself, a metaphor for Freemasonry), and we harbor no doubt that with his royal blood, increasingly can-do attitude and growing maturity, his love for Pamina, and his magic flute, he will succeed. Pamina, because of her willingness to share any danger with Tamino, will also become an initiate in Sarastro’s Temple and, by doing so, redeem the female sex (something that never happened in the “real world” of Freemasonry).
   B. Papageno is another story entirely. Simply put, Papageno is deeply conflicted. On the one hand, he’d much prefer to be back home, trading birds for food. But, as we all know and have known from the beginning of the opera, Papageno desperately wants a gentle Papagena, and it’s clear that he won’t find her in the land of
the Queen of the Night. He has reluctantly allowed himself to get involved in this “initiation” nonsense. From the start, we as an audience suspect he lacks the right stuff and will wash out.

C. Clearly, Papageno is “everyman”; he is us, someone whose needs are relatively few and basic—food, wine, a mate, and peace in which to live. He is not a prince, nor a philosopher, nor a warrior, and although he might lack the altruism, courage, and ideals of Sarastro, Tamino, and Pamina, he is a good and decent man who has fulfilled that most basic aim of philosophy—to “know thyself.”
   1. To a large degree, we follow the action of the second act of *The Magic Flute* through the eyes and ears of Papageno, someone who knows himself and is comfortable in his skin.
   2. In this second act, Papageno’s flaws and weaknesses become ours; his sense of irony at the silliness of it all is ours as well.

D. Act II opens in a grove of palm trees. The Priests of Isis and Osiris march across the stage in a solemn and magnificent procession, then take their places. At the conclusion of the procession, Sarastro enters and advances to a position at center stage. Three blasts on the horns are sounded by the priests. (*Musical selection: The Magic Flute*, Act III, No. 9, “March of the Priests.”)

E. Immediately following the “March of the Priests,” Sarastro steps forward to address his colleagues on a matter of great importance:

SARASTRO:
Consecrated servants of the great gods Osiris and Isis! I tell you with a pure heart that today’s assembly is one of the most important of all time. Tamino, the son of a king, waits at the northern portal of our temple. He longs to free himself from the power of darkness and ignorance, and to enter our kingdom of light and enlightenment. Today our duty must be to watch over this virtuous young fellow and extend to him the hand of friendship.

F. Sarastro’s statement causes a stir among the assembled priests.
   1. Priests ask Sarastro if Tamino is virtuous and if he can keep his silence. What these priests are really asking is whether Tamino is discrete, whether he can he keep the secrets of the order to himself, precisely what Schikaneder and Mozart were not doing by creating this opera.
   2. Sarastro assures them that Tamino can keep his silence. Sarastro also assures his priests that Tamino is benevolent.

G. Sarastro calls Tamino’s candidacy forward for a vote, indicating that despite his executive position, the society of priests is an enlightened, democratic society. The priests blow three chords three times on their horns. (*Musical selection: The Magic Flute*, Act II, “three-fold chord.”)
   1. We have heard these horn calls, this democratic “voice of the priests,” before. The so-called “three-fold chord” was first heard, in a different permutation, at the beginning of the overture. (*Musical selection: The Magic Flute*, Overture, measures 1–3.)
   2. The same version of the three-fold chord heard here in the second act was first heard in measures 97–102 of the overture, at roughly its halfway point. (*Musical selection: The Magic Flute*, Overture, measures 92–102.)
   3. The three sets of three “knocks” represent the “Proclamation of the Degree” in the Masonic Order; such a series of rhythmic “knocks” is used in Masonry to signal “yea” on an issue being voted on. Mozart’s three-fold chord, then, is a musical version of yet another Masonic ritual.

H. The priests have voted in favor of Tamino’s candidacy. Sarastro expresses his gratitude for the support of the priests:

SARASTRO:
Moved by the unanimity of your vote, I, Sarastro, thank you in the name of humanity. Pamina, the gentle and virtuous maiden, has been chosen by the gods for Tamino, and that is the reason why I was compelled to remove her from the side of her mother.

I. The assembled throng again signals its agreement with Sarastro and his actions regarding Pamina by repeating the three-fold chord. (*Musical selection: The Magic Flute*, “three-fold chord.”)

J. The Speaker—the priest who interrogated Tamino during the Act I finale—now steps forward. As a result of the interview, he knows more about Tamino than any of his colleagues, with the exception of Sarastro himself. The Speaker’s question—the last question Sarastro will entertain regarding Tamino—is ripe with significance:
SPEAKER:
Great Sarastro, we hear and admire the great wisdom of your words, but will Tamino really be able to endure the trials that await him? Forgive me that I express my doubts so freely, but remember, he is a prince.

[Sarastro’s response to the Speaker is classic in its brevity and its meaning:]

SARASTRO:
Noch mehr—er ist mensch; he is more than a prince—he is a mensch!

K. What the speaker is really saying is that “Tamino is only a prince,” meaning, of course, that not only is his royalty no guarantee of success, but it is also liable to make him less capable of the sort of virtue, discretion, benevolence, and enlightenment that the priests, and the Masons, held so dear.
1. Note that Sarastro did not say “mann.” Mann means “man, husband, or vassal”; as a word, it refers to the image, the object that is a man.
2. Mensch means “man” as well, but it also means “human being” and “mankind”; as a word, it refers to the substance of all humanity. “Er ist Mensch” means, then, “he is more than a prince—he is that which is human, that which is good and best in us all.”
3. This is, from Sarastro, the ultimate vote of confidence, and his comment stills any further dissent. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, Sarastro’s response.)

L. Sarastro and the priests seal the deal with a marvelous aria and chorus.

SARASTRO: SARASTRO:
O Isis und Osiris, O Isis und Osiris,
Schenket der Weisheit Grant Tamino and his companion
Geist dem neuen Paar! The spirit of wisdom!
Die ihr der Wand’rer Schritte You who guide their steps,
Lenket starkt mit Geduld Grant them courage
Sie in Gefahr. When in peril.

CHOR: CHORUS:
Starkt mit Geduld sie in Gefahr. Grant them courage when in peril!

SARASTRO: SARASTRO:
Lasst sie der Prüfung Früchte sehen. Let them see the benefits of their trial.
Doch sollten sie zu Grabe gehen, But should they not survive,
So lohnt der Tugend kühnen Lauf, Reward their bravery,
Nehmt sie in euren Wohnsitz auf. And admit them to your heavenly home.

CHOR: CHORUS:
Nehmt sie in euren Wohnsitz auf. Admit them to your heavenly home.

M. Note that this slow and stately aria features Sarastro’s bass voice and is colored entirely by low, dark instrumental timbres.
1. Mozart orchestrated the number for basset horns (essentially low clarinets), bassoons, three trombones, violas, and ‘cellos; no violins, flutes, oboes, or trumpets are heard here.
2. This low and dark orchestration imbues this music with a masculine gravity that reflects both the company of priests on stage and Mozart’s own view and experience of the brotherhood inherent in Freemasonry. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 10, aria and chorus.)

III. We move to the court of the Temple. It is night; thunder rumbles in the distance. It is a dark and desolate scene, with collapsed pillars and ruins all around and thorn bushes here and there. Tamino and Papageno—still blindfolded—are led into the courtyard by the First and Second Priests. The Priests remove their hoods and depart. Tamino and Papageno have been liberated of their “impurities”: in this case, the magic flute and bells.

A. The darkness and desolation around Tamino and Papageno represent the first Masonic trial, the so-called “Cabinet of Reflection.” Before one can be reborn as an initiate, one must experience the darkness of nothingness. Before one can be enlightened, one must contemplate one’s unenlightenment.
1. Just so, in Freemasonry, as the first step in the process of initiation, a potential initiate would encounter, just inside the entrance of a Masonic hall, a small, dark room, appointed in black, with paintings of skeletons on its walls.
2. The Masonic ritual of initiation is based on the journey from darkness to light, from ignorance to enlightenment, and this first stage establishes the darkness that must be overcome in the initiate’s search for the light and for enlightenment.

3. For all intents and purposes, Tamino and Papageno have been led to a dark place analogous to the Cabinet of Reflection in a Masonic hall. Having been led there, a dialogue ensues that demonstrates nicely Tamino and Papageno’s rather different “degree of commitment” to this entire initiation process.

B. The dialogue begins with the first part of the Masonic initiation process: the so-called “Trial by Earth,” a philosophical interrogation in the hostile environment of the Cabinet of Reflection. Having taken off Tamino’s blindfold or hood, the First Priest questions him.

FIRST PRIEST:
Stranger, what do you seek from us? Why have you come here?

TAMINO:
I seek wisdom and love.

FIRST PRIEST:
And are you prepared to fight for them with your life?

TAMINO:
Yes.

FIRST PRIEST:
You are prepared for your trials—even if death is to be your fate?

TAMINO:
Yes.

FIRST PRIEST:
Is that your final answer? Prince, you can still withdraw. Are you sure? One more step and it’s too late!

TAMINO:
I will stay. Let wisdom be my victory and the lovely Pamina be my reward.

FIRST PRIEST:
Give me your hand, then.

C. Tamino solemnly shakes hands with the First Priest. While this conversation has been going on, Papageno has been listening with increasing distress to such phrases as “fight with your life,” “even if death were to be your fate,” and “one more step and it’s too late.”

1. The Second Priest asks Papageno if he is prepared to fight for the love of wisdom. Papageno replies, “Of course not!” All he needs, he says, is “sleep, food and a little drink now and then, and a pretty wife.”

2. But the priest warns him that he will not get a wife unless he submits to the trials without fear of death.

3. Papageno insists he would prefer to remain single in that case.

4. The priest ultimately persuades Papageno to undertake the trials by promising him a pretty Papagena as a reward. But there is a catch: Papageno may not speak to her until the trials are over.

5. The Second Priest forbids Tamino to speak to Pamina.

D. The Trial by Earth continues as the two priests warn Tamino and Papageno against the dishonest words of women (to which Tamino, as we know from his interview with the Queen of the Night, has already fallen victim!). (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 11, duet.)

E. With that, the two priests leave, and what little light there was on stage is suddenly extinguished almost completely.

1. The Three Ladies enter, carrying torches. Singing in close harmony, as if they were speaking with a single voice, the “good” ladies “warn” the men that they’re done for if they do not soon get out and away from the priests!

2. Papageno cries out in panic, but Tamino silences him.

3. The ladies then say that the Queen of the Night is close by.
4. Once again, Papageno falls for their line and begins to speak; he is quickly silenced by an increasingly exasperated Tamino.

F. Next, the ladies attempt to knock down Tamino’s defenses by indulging in some anti-Priest of the Sun heresy and threats of eternal damnation. Tamino remains silent, except to remind Papageno, who continues to babble in panic, that they both took a vow of silence. The Three Ladies now appear tearful and pouty:

THREE LADIES:
Why are you so mean to us? And now not even Papageno will talk to us? That’s so mean. Papageno please talk to us!

PAPAGENO:
Well, I’d really like to…

TAMINO:
Shhh!

PAPAGENO:
But you see, I’m not allowed!

TAMINO:
Shhh!

PAPAGENO:
I know, I know, I have impulse-control issues; I just can’t stop chattering!

TAMINO:
You should be really embarrassed that you can’t stop chattering!

THE THREE LADIES:
We’re leaving. We know when we’re not wanted.

TAMINO, PAPAGENO:
They’re leaving; they finally figured out that they’re not wanted.

[The moral of the quintet follows:]
ALL:
A man is firm in spirit, if he thinks before he speaks.

Suddenly, a Chorus of Priests sings out, banishing the ladies from the stage:

CHORUS OF PRIESTS:
The sacred threshold is desecrated! Away, evil women, to hell!

[The stage explodes in lightning and thunder:]

THE THREE LADIES:
Woe is us!

[Papageno runs around the stage and dives to the floor, looking for cover:]

PAPAGENO:
Woe is me!

G. While listening to this quintet, let us be aware of Mozart’s incredible comic timing. The comedic speed with which the taunting ladies, the fearful Papageno, and the increasingly exasperated Tamino interact with one another is nothing short of amazing.

1. Mozart’s way of repeating certain lines for emphasis, the way he overlaps certain sentences, demonstrates an ear for conversational exchange that is remarkable.

2. We are so accustomed to hearing ensembles like this one in Mozart’s operas that we take for granted that this is “how it’s done,” this is how operatic ensembles are written, how they “work.” But we must keep in mind that this is how Mozart’s operatic ensembles work.

3. No one else living in the eighteenth century could do this, and if such nineteenth-century opera composers as Beethoven, Weber, Wagner, Rossini, and Verdi could write ensembles like this, it was
only because they had immersed themselves entirely in Mozart’s scores. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 12, quintet.)

IV. Obviously, if Papageno was not supposed to talk to the ladies he failed miserably. According to the dire words of the priests, he should already have been dead. But this is a fable and a comedy, and the laws of such a theatrical production demand a happy ending. Of course, Papageno will not be struck dead; he’s just an ordinary guy with a lack of self-control. The priests are not going to punish him for being himself.
Lecture Twenty-Two

The Magic Flute, Part Six

Scope: Monostatos turns out to be a lonely and pathetic villain with some all-too-human human feelings. His attempt to "kiss" Pamina is thwarted by the arrival of the Queen of the Night, who threatens—in one of the legendary arias of all time—to disown her daughter if she does not kill Sarastro. This Pamina is unable to do. She is rescued from the clutches of Monostatos yet again, this time by Sarastro, who states his creed of love, forgiveness, and brotherhood—the "enlightened" creed of the Masonic Order as Mozart and Schikaneder knew and embraced it. During the Trial by Earth (a trial of keeping silence), the rules of which he ignores, Papageno meets an old hag, who informs him that she is eighteen years old and is called Papagena. Tamino successfully endures the Trial by Silence, but in doing so, breaks Pamina’s heart.

Outline

I. The scene changes to a beautiful garden flooded with moonlight. In the middle is a bench surrounded by flowers and roses, on which Pamina has fallen asleep.
   A. Into this gentle landscape creeps Monostatos, who has been stalking Pamina. He cannot resist the power of Pamina’s purity and, yes, her sexuality. Stealthily, speaking almost in whispers, Monostatos approaches the object of his desire:

   MONOSTATOS:
   Ha! There she is, the uptight beauty! And for this puny little flower, they wanted to cane the soles of my feet! But what man could remain cold or indifferent to such a sight? Hmmm... By the stars! This girl is driving me crazy! The fire that burns within me is liable to consume me entirely! If I knew for sure that I was alone and that no one was watching, I would... I would... Oh, love! I do believe one kiss, one little kiss might be forgiven!

   (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, Act II, scene 2, Monostatos’s soliloquy.)
   
   B. Monostatos’s lust over the sleeping Pamina has its parallel with the Three Ladies drooling over the passed-out Tamino at the beginning of the opera. In both cases, it is an example of what was called the “degraded love of pure desire”; animal lust without the ameliorating aspects of affection, mutual respect, and love. In this respect, Monostatos and the Three Ladies all represent degraded humanity, and they will not be rewarded; they will not attain the objects of their lustful and illicit desire.

   C. Monostatos’s following aria, No. 13, almost entirely does away with his image as a one-dimensional golliwog. He emerges as a genuinely unfortunate man—one who has been spurned and rejected and is terribly lonely. His existential loneliness lies at the core of his being, and it has turned him to the “dark side.”
   1. Even his name—“Mono-statos,” Greek for “he who stands as one, he who stands alone”—reminds us of his singularity.
   2. We can see that in this light, his skin color—like Othello’s—has little to do with racism and much to do with creating the visible image of a person apart, someone who cannot simply “blend in,” someone whose anger and rage at his apartness has destroyed whatever good he might have once harbored within and has led to his making some rather bad decisions.
   3. Had Sarastro wanted to, we believe that he could have redeemed Monostatos; he could have provided him with a Monostata and, in doing so, eliminated almost entirely Monostatos’s loneliness and angst. But Sarastro required a bad guy and a fall guy for his plans to succeed: he needed someone to test Pamina’s mettle, and for reasons we will discover later in the opera, his plans also require a turncoat, an insider with intimate knowledge of Sarastro’s castle who will ally himself with the Queen of the Night.

   MONOSTATOS:
   Alles fühlt der Liebe Freuden.
   Schnäbelt, tändelt, herzt und küsst;
   Und ich soll die Liebe meiden,
   Weil ein Schwarzer hässlich ist!
   Ist mir denn kein Herz gegeben?

   MONOSTATOS:
   Every creature feels the joy of love,
   Bills and coos, and hugs, and kisses;
   Yet I’m supposed to forego love
   Because my dark skin makes me ugly!
   Have I not been given a heart?
Ich bin auch den Mädchen gut!  
Am I not made of flesh and blood?
Immer ohne Weibchen leben  
To always live without a woman
Wäre wahrlich Höllengluth!  
Would really be a living hell…
Drum so will ich, weil ich lebe,  
So because I live,
Schnäbeln, küssen,  
I will bill and coo,
Zärtlich sein!  
Kiss and be tender!
Liebe guter Mond, vergebe  
Dear, good moon, forgive me,
Eine Weisse nahm mich ein!  
This white-skin girl so tempts me!
Weiss ist schön!  
Her whiteness is beautiful!
Ich muss sie küssen.  
And I must kiss her.
Mond, verstecke dich dazu!  
Hide yourself, moon, while I do it!
Sollt’ es dich zu sehr verdriessen.  
If it bothers you,
O, so mach’ die Augen zu!  
Just shut your eyes!

(Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 13, aria, “Alles fühlt der Liebe Freuden” [“Every creature feels the joy of love”].)

D. Monostatos approaches the sleeping Pamina; just as he’s about to kiss her, the Queen of the Night appears and shrieks, “Stand back!” Pamina wakes up and cries out to her mother. Monostatos is thunderstruck, not just because the Queen has startled him, but because he had no idea that Pamina is the daughter of the Queen of the Night. Always an opportunist, he makes his escape but stays close enough to eavesdrop.

E. The Queen of the Night, in all her evil glory, is in the garden of Sarastro’s castle. Clearly, she’s been tracking her daughter; her sudden appearance is no accident.
1. Why doesn’t she just take Pamina with her now? If she could show up here, now, she probably could have rescued Pamina almost any time she wanted to.
2. We might also think that the Queen would be happy to see her daughter, but she’s not. She’s been using Pamina from the very beginning, pushing her around like a pawn, and now the whole sordid mess—and the Queen’s genuine evil—becomes clear.
3. When Pamina sees her mother, she cries for joy. All the Queen can ask is: “Where is the young dude I sent you?”
4. Pamina tells her that Tamino has joined the initiates. The Queen is thunderstruck. She tells Pamina that she is lost forever. Pamina has no clue as to what her mother is talking about. She believes her mother can protect her. But the Queen of the Night explains that her power came to an end when Pamina’s father died. She can only regain it by re-appropriating the sevenfold circle of the sun, which is now in Sarastro’s hands.
5. When Pamina asks if Tamino is also lost to her, the Queen of the Night replies that Tamino is indeed lost, unless Pamina can persuade him to escape with her.
6. Pamina is not convinced that Sarastro and his followers are the enemy. Her mother accuses her of defending barbarians and loving a man who could cause her downfall.
7. Suddenly, a dagger appears from nowhere. The queen tells Pamina to kill Sarastro with the dagger and bring her to the Circle of the Sun.

F. In perhaps the single most famous and spectacular aria in the entire operatic repertoire, the Queen shows her true colors: she is vicious, indignant, and hell-bent on revenge. Note in particular the extremely high “F’s”—four of them in all—that Mozart wrote for her; they are like a bugle call, a call to arms. Indeed, during the course of this aria, the Queen does everything in her power to convince her daughter to do her evil bidding.

QUEEN OF THE NIGHT:  
Der Hölle Rache kocht  
The wrath of Hell seethes
In meinem Herzen.  
In my heart,
Tod und Verzweiflung  
Death and despair
Flammet um mich her!  
Burn all around me!
Fühlt nicht, durch dich  
If Sarastro does not die
Sarastro Todesschmerzen,  
By your hand,
So bist du meine Tochter  
Then you are no longer
Nimmermehr.  
My daughter!
Verstossen sei auf ewig
Und verlassen,
Zerstrümmert alle Bände der Natur,
Wenn nicht durch dich Sarastro
Wirt erblasen!
Hört!
Rachegötter!
Hört der Mutter Schwur!

Forever be disowned, forever be
Abandoned, and forever will be
Destroyed all the ties between
mother and daughter if Sarastro’s
Blood is not shed by your hand!
Hear, hear, hear me,
Ye Gods of vengeance!
Hear the mother’s curse!

G. At the violent conclusion of this extraordinary aria, thunder roars and the Queen disappears from the stage, leaving Pamina onstage holding the knife with which she is supposed to slay Sarastro. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 14, aria, “Der Hölle Rache” [“The Wrath of Hell”].)

H. Pamina throws the dagger to the ground. Monostatos comes out from his hiding place. He picks up the knife and informs a terrified Pamina that he has heard everything and that the only way she can save herself and her mother is to become his lover. Confused and frightened though she is, Pamina refuses. Monostatos threatens to kill her.

I. Just at this moment, Sarastro shows up. His mere presence is enough to cow Monostatos. For reasons entirely his own, Sarastro allows Monostatos to slink away into the shadows. Even as he leaves, the Moor mutters under his breath: “If I cannot have the daughter, then perhaps I will seek out the mother!”

J. Sarastro has rescued Pamina from Monostatos, and after a brief bit of dialogue, he sings his aria, No. 15, “Within these sacred halls”:

SARASTRO:

In diesen heil’gen Hallen
Kennt man die Rache nicht.
Und ist ein Mensch gefallen,
Führt Liebe ihn zur Pflicht.
Dann wandelt er an Freundes Hand
Vergnügt und froh
In’s bess’re Land,

In diesen heil’gen Mauern
Wo Mensch den Menschen liebt,
Kann kein Verräther lauern,
Weil man dem Feind’ vergiebt.
Wen solche Lehren nicht erfreuen,
Verdientet nicht ein Mensch zu sein.

K. This aria expresses the “enlightened” creed of Sarastro’s Temple and that of the Masonic Order as Mozart and Schikaneder knew and embraced it. No. 15 also stands in stark and effective contrast to the previous aria, the Queen of the Night’s “The Wrath of Hell!” (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 15, aria, “In diesen heil’gen Hallen” [“In These Sacred Halls”].)

II. The scene is a large, darkened hall. Tamino and Papageno are led in by the First Priest and the Second Priest.

A. The First Priest tells the pair, “As soon as you hear a trumpet, walk in that direction.” He also reminds them that the magic word is “silence,” but Papageno almost immediately begins trying to speak to Tamino.

B. At this point, the powers that be decide to offer Papageno a little incentive to help him control himself. In one of the most delightful and comic bits of dialogue in the opera, he meets someone who, literally, turns out to be his match.

C. At this moment, an ugly old hag emerges from a trapdoor holding a large, enticing-looking goblet. She offers the goblet to Papageno and says his name.
1. Papageno’s not happy about having only water to drink, but he’s thrilled to have some way to alleviate his boredom, to have someone to talk to. The fact that he’s not supposed to be talking to a woman never occurs to him. He asks the old woman her age.

2. She replies that she is eighteen years and two minutes old.

3. Papageno is amused and asks her if she has a sweetheart and what his age is.

4. The old woman tells Papageno that she does indeed have a sweetheart, who is ten years older than she. But when she tells Papageno that her sweetheart’s name is Papageno and that her name is Papagena, Papageno is not so amused. He swears to Tamino that he will not say another word. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, dialogue, from the appearance of the old lady saying “Papageno.”)

D. With that, the Three Boys come wafting into view; they are riding a flying platform that carries on it a table covered with food. The platform lands on center stage. One of the boys carries the magic flute; another, Papageno’s magic bells.

THE THREE BOYS:
Welcome for the second time you men to Sarastro’s kingdom! He sends you that which was taken from you, your flute and your bells. And if you are hungry, chow down with pleasure. When we meet for the third time, joy will reward your courage. Tamino—be strong; your goal is near. And you, Papageno! Be quiet!

E. They hand the flute and bells to Tamino and Papageno, put the table loaded with food and drink on the stage, and fly off. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 16, trio.)

F. Papageno attacks the food and, for the most part, is silent because his mouth is full to overflowing. Tamino doesn’t eat but instead picks up the flute and begins to play. Unbeknownst to either man, the food is another trial, and by playing his flute instead of indulging in gluttony, Tamino has passed his “Trial by Air.”

G. At this moment, Pamina joyfully enters; she has been drawn by the sound of Tamino’s flute. Is this yet another trial? Tamino certainly seems to think so. He refuses to talk to Pamina and signals with his hand that she should leave. Papageno can’t talk because his mouth is completely full. Pathetically, Pamina says:

PAMINA:
You do not want to see me? You don’t love me? Oh, this is worse than scorn, worse than death.

H. According to William Mann, “Pamina has followed the sound of the flute, but Tamino will not talk to her. She, like the Three Ladies, is part of the Silence Ritual, and therefore partly a hallucination. So we will only half believe in her tragic aria, No. 17” (Mann, 629). Pamina’s aria, No. 17, is achingly beautiful, and it well expresses her profound loneliness—abandoned by her mother and now ignored by Tamino, her heart is near to breaking.

PAMINA:
Ach, ich fühle’s,  
Es ist verschwunden  
Ewig hin der Liebe Glück!  
Nimmer kommt ihr Wonnestunden!  
Sieh, Tamino, diese Tränen  
Fliesen, Trauer, dir allein.  
Fühlst du nicht der Liebe Sehnen,  
So wird Ruh im Tode sein.

PAMINA:
Ah, I feel it,  
All is lost!  
Love’s joy is gone forever!  
Unhappy days are here again!  
Look Tamino! These tears  
Flow, my love, for you.  
If you truly no longer love me,  
I will just crawl off to die!

I. Broken-hearted, Pamina wanders away. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 17, aria.)

J. Tamino and Papageno look almost as distraught as Pamina; Papageno says, pathetically and not a small bit defensively: “You see, Tamino, I can keep quiet if I have to!” The “three-fold chord” sounds, signaling the end of the trial-by-Pamina, and Papageno and Tamino exit.
Lecture Twenty-Three  
*The Magic Flute*, Part Seven

**Scope:** Tamino has successfully passed his trial of silence (Trial by Earth) and the food trial (Trial by Air), in which he refrained from indulging his appetite, choosing to play his magic flute instead. Papageno is not concerned that he has not fared so well in the trials; all he wants is a wife. As an ironic answer to his wish, the old hag reappears and persuades him to marry her or become a permanent prisoner of Sarastro. Papageno agrees to marry the old hag, who is then magically transformed into an attractive young woman called Papagena. Their joy is short-lived, however, when priests come to separate them, and Papageno is swallowed up in the ground. In the meantime, Pamina, heartbroken that Tamino seems to have rejected her, attempts to commit suicide but is rescued by the Three Boys.

**Outline**

I. We quickly review the action of the second act of *The Magic Flute* to this point.
   A. Tamino and Papageno have begun undergoing the trials of initiation for membership into Sarastro’s Priesthood of the Sun.
      1. The first of these trials, the Trial by Earth, required that they show themselves capable of being discrete—of maintaining silence—in the face of all sorts of temptations to talk.
      2. Tamino passed this test with flying colors; he even managed to stay silent while a weeping and aggrieved Pamina (or at least, some sort of illusion of a weeping and aggrieved Pamina) begged him to speak to her.
   B. Papageno has shown himself to be incapable of pretty much any impulse control whatsoever and has failed his trials miserably.

II. We find ourselves in the huge, vaulted space in a pyramid. The Priests enter, led by Sarastro.
   A. In a tone of great religious gravity and reverence, the Priests comment on Tamino’s success to this point of his trials:
      
      **CHORUS OF PRIESTS:**
      Oh, Isis and Osiris, happenin’! The rays of the sun drive away the darkness of night! Soon the young dude will feel new life, soon he will be one of us. His spirit is bold, his heart is pure, soon he will be worthy of us! *(Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 18, chorus.)*
   
      B. Following the chorus, Tamino is led in and Sarastro tells him that he has done well so far, but he still has two more dangerous paths to tread. Pamina is brought forth, and now begins another test.
      1. Sarastro leads Tamino to believe that he must leave Pamina for an unknown length of time.
      2. The test: How will Tamino handle the news of this open-ended separation from Pamina? How will Tamino tell Pamina, and how will he handle her reaction to the news? Pamina begins the trio, asking Tamino:

      **PAMINA:**
      Beloved, shall I never see you again?

      **SARASTRO:**
      You will joyfully see one another again!

      **PAMINA:**
      But deadly dangers await you!

      **TAMINO:**
      May the gods protect me!

      **SARASTRO:**
      May the gods protect him!

      **PAMINA:**
      I’m afraid that you will die!
TAMINO, SARASTRO:
May the gods’ will be done; their word shall be my law.

PAMINA:
Well, if you loved me as much as I love you, you wouldn’t be unconcerned about all of this!

TAMINO, SARASTRO:
Believe me, I feel the same way you do! So chill out on the guilt trip, honey.

SARASTRO:
Tamino, it’s time for you to split.

PAMINA, TAMINO:
How bitter is the pain of parting!

SARASTRO:
Tamino, you’re outta here!

TAMINO:
Pamina, I’m outta here!

PAMINA:
Tamino is outta here!

SARASTRO:
It’s time for you to split, Tamino, you’re outta here!

TAMINO:
How bitter is the pain of parting! Pamina, I really must be going!

PAMINA:
Tamino! Tamino!

SARASTRO:
He must leave!

TAMINO:
I must leave!

PAMINA:
So leave!

TAMINO:
Pamina, farewell!

PAMINA:
Tamino, farewell!

SARASTRO:
Now hurry off! Your future calls! Don’t be a stranger!

PAMINA, TAMINO:
Oh good times, please return! Return again!

SARASTRO:
We shall meet again!

PAMINA, TAMINO:
Farewell! Farewell!

C. We have heard of long goodbyes, but this is ridiculous. Rarely has a great composer had to ennoble such frankly stupid words, such obvious sentiments, as Mozart must in this trio. In Mozart’s setting, silliness is replaced by pathos, and Schikaneder’s stiff and formulaic lines take on the character of genuine dramatic poetry. This trio is an astonishing compositional tour-de-force because of Mozart’s incredible lyricism, his insight into the emotions being felt by the characters and his ability to project those emotions musically,
and the brilliant polyphonic interaction of the voice parts themselves. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 19, trio, from Pamina’s “Beloved, shall I never see you again?”)

D. Pamina is led away by two Priests; Sarastro and Tamino exit in the opposite direction. The stage becomes dark. Papageno cries out from offstage, looking for Tamino.

1. A Priest with a torch then comes forward to tell Papageno that he will never experience the joy of being an initiate of the Temple of the Sun. Papageno tells the Priest that he doesn’t really care; he really only wants a drink.

2. A large goblet filled with wine then rises from the ground. As it turns out, it’s a genuinely bottomless goblet, and during the course of the following aria, Papageno becomes increasingly inebriated. As the wine takes effect, Papageno begins to think about the one thing he really does desire above everything else: a wife.

E. Papageno’s aria, No. 20, is a delightful, rustic, straightforward, popularly styled strophic song in three verses, with each verse sung a bit more drunkenly than the last. The aria is scored for flute, oboes, bassoons, horns, strings, and glockenspiel—bells! It is an inspired detail on Mozart’s part—to include the sound of the “magic bells” in Papageno’s lament:

PAPAGENO:
A sweetheart, or a wife, is what Papageno really wants! Oh, a soft little dove would be bliss! Then, I could really enjoy food and drink; I could match wits with a prince; I could enjoy life like a wise man and think that I’d gone to heaven.

A sweetheart of a wife is what Papageno really wants! Oh, a soft little dove would be bliss! Shoot, can’t I please have just one of all the pretty girls in the world? One of them must be mine, or I’m going to just die of grief!

A sweetheart or a wife is what Papageno really wants! Oh, a soft little dove would be bliss! If no girl will love me, I’m going to roast in my own hormones! But if a woman would kiss me, well, I’d be the happiest man in the world!

(Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 20, aria, “A sweetheart or a wife is what Papageno really wants!”)

F. Who answers the call from Papageno’s mouth? The ugly old water-hag suddenly reappears! The old hag proceeds to make Papageno an offer: If he is faithful to her forever, she will be a faithful and loving wife. Otherwise, he will be imprisoned there forever, with only water to drink. Papageno sees that he’s trapped:

PAPAGENO:
Drink water? Renounce the world? Well, I guess I’d rather take an old wife than none at all. Here’s my hand, with the guarantee that I shall always remain faithful to you.

[As long as someone prettier doesn’t show up!]

OLD WOMAN:
You swear it?

PAPAGENO:
Yes, yes, yes, I swear it.

[Suddenly, the old woman takes off her shawl and is transformed into a lovely young woman, dressed, like Papageno, in feathers. Papageno yells in shock and delight:]

PAPAGENO:
Pa-Pa-Papagena!

FIRST PRIEST:
Off with you, young woman. He is not yet worthy of you!

[The Priest then turns to Papageno and yells:]

Back off? Or else!

PAPAGENO:
Back off?! Are you talkin’ to me?! Before I back off, the earth will have to swallow me up!
III. The earth does indeed swallow Papageno up: He sinks through a trap door on the floor of the stage and screams all the while. Thus begins the Act II finale, which opens with the Three Boys.

A. The trio the boys sing anticipates the earthly paradise that will be the result of Tamino’s successful negotiation of the trials and his joining with Pamina.

THE THREE BOYS:
Soon the sun, that splendid herald of the morning, will take its course. Soon all superstition will disappear and wise men and reason will triumph! O glorious peace, descend upon us and return to the hearts of people; then earth shall be a paradise and mortals shall be gods.

B. Are the Three Boys incredible optimists, or is Tamino and Pamina’s success preordained? (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 21, part 1, trio, opening.)

C. The Three Boys finish their little paean to the future, only to discover that a rather important part of that future—Pamina—is about to kill herself with a dagger.

FIRST BOY:
But, look, Pamina is filled with despair!
SECOND AND THIRD BOY:
What’s she doing?
FIRST BOY:
She appears not to be acting reasonably!
THE THREE BOYS:
She is tormented by the pangs of lost love; we must console the poor lady! This is most worrisome! If only the young dude were here! Here she comes! Let’s step aside and see what she intends to do.

PAMINA:
You [speaking to the knife]! You will be my bridegroom; with you I will put an end to my misery!

THE THREE BOYS:
Hello! What is she talking about? She’s acting as if she’s taken crazy pills!

PAMINA:
Be patient my love, I am yours—soon we will be married!

THE THREE BOYS:
Her brain has turned to blackcurrant jelly! She intends to kill herself! Hey, crazy lady, over here, look at us!

[Pamina looks their way and notices the boys for the first time. Her eyes are glazed; her voice is quiet and calm:]

PAMINA:
I must die—for a man I could never hate has deserted me!

[Pamina shows the boys the dagger:]
My mother gave this to me, dear mother!

THE THREE BOYS:
God will punish you if you commit suicide!

PAMINA:
I’d rather die by this blade than rot with grief and sorrow. Mother, it’s all your fault! Your curse pursues me!

THE THREE BOYS:
C’mon, lighten up, will you just come with us?

PAMINA:
Hah! The cup of my misery is full! Lying young dude I’m taking myself out! Do you see? Pamina dies because of you! Let this dagger kill me!

THE THREE BOYS:
You crazy person! What is wrong with you? If Tamino saw you like this he would die of grief, for he loves only you!

PAMINA:
What? He loves me? But why did he hide his love? Why wouldn’t he look at me? What was that all about?

THE THREE BOYS:
Listen, we can’t talk about that, but we can bring you to him, and you will see with your own eyes that he has given his heart to you and is prepared to die for you! Let’s get a move on.

PAMINA:
Lead on, little fellas, take me to him!

PAMINA, THE BOYS:
Two hearts which burn with love can never be parted by human weakness. Our enemies’ efforts have failed, because the gods protect true lovers. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 21, finale, part 1, conclusion, from the First Boy’s “But look, Pamina is filled with despair!”)

IV. Part 2 of the finale opens with a major change of scene. Two large, craggy mountains loom up on either side of the stage. Inside one of the mountains is a huge, thundering waterfall; inside the other is a wall of flame. In between the two mountains—at the point where they join on the stage—is a pyramid with an inscription on it.

A. The pyramid is guarded by two men dressed in black armor, each carrying a torch attached to his helmet. An instrumental introduction is heard; it is as bleak and dark as the scene itself. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 21, finale, part 2, instrumental introduction.)

B. The two men in armor sing the inscription on the pyramid’s façade.

DIE ZWEI GEHARNISCHTEN: TWO MEN IN ARMOR:
Der, welcher wandert diese Strasse He, who travels
Voll Beschwerden, These dangerous paths,
Wird rein durch Feuer Will be purified by fire,
Wasser, Luft und Erden; Water, air, and earth.
Wenn er des Todes Schrecken If he can overcome
Uberwinden kann, His fear of death,
Schwingt er sich aus He will soar heavenwards
Aus der Erde himmelan. Away from earth!
Erleuchtet wird er dann Enlightened, he will then
Imstande sein, Be able to dedicate himself
Sich den Mysterien der Isis To the mysteries
Ganz zu weihn. Of Isis.

C. As the armored men sing, they are accompanied by a fugato in the strings.

1. The melody that the guards sing is the German Lutheran chorale setting of Psalm XI, Ach Gott, von Himmel sieh darein.

2. Mozart sets the chorale melody in the style of Johann Sebastian Bach’s own church music, as a so-called fugato chorale-prelude. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 21, finale, part 2 continued, beginning with “Der, welcher wandert” [“He who travels these dangerous paths”].)

D. Tamino is brought forth by two Priests. He is lightly dressed, without sandals; as befits Masonic initiation ritual, his clothes are to offer no protection from the trials to come.

TAMINO: TAMINO:
Mich schreckt kein Tod, Do I look worried? No!
Als Mann zu handeln, The fear of death will not keep me
Den Weg der Tugend fortzuwandeln. From the path of virtue!
Schliesst mir die Open up
Schreckensporten auf, The gates of dread,
Ich wage froh den kühnen Lauf! The path of courage I will tread!

(Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 21, finale, part 2 continued.)
E. Just as Tamino prepares to step forward into the mountain, he hears Pamina’s voice telling him to stop from offstage. In our final lecture, we’ll see Tamino and Pamina’s reunion and their successful negotiation—together—of the trials by fire and water.
Lecture Twenty-Four
The Magic Flute, Part Eight

Scope: The conclusion of the finale to Act II sees both Pamina and Tamino reunited to undergo the Trial by Water and the Trial by Fire together. It is a bold innovation on Sarastro’s part to include Pamina in the initiation to the all-male Priesthood of the Sun. Once initiated, or “enlightened,” the couple will be able to dedicate themselves to the mysteries of Isis. Pamina explains that the magic flute, representing the four elements—air, earth, water, and fire—will protect them in the trials. Papageno, convinced that his failure to pass the trials has cost him his Papagena, is about to hang himself, when the Three Boys arrive and suggest that he play his magic bells. He does so and Papagena appears. Together, they sing one of opera’s most celebrated love duets. Tamino and Pamina pass their final trials. The Queen of the Night, the Three Ladies, and Monostatos are destroyed and the opera ends jubilantly, as the day banishes night and harmony is restored to the universe.

Outline

I. We rejoin the second-act finale of The Magic Flute.
   A. To reset the scene, we see two large, craggy mountains on either side of the stage surrounding a pyramid with an inscription on it. The pyramid is guarded by two men dressed in black armor, each carrying a torch attached to his helmet. These two armored gents have just sung the inscription on the face pyramid:

   DIE ZWEI GEHARNISCHTEN: TWO MEN IN ARMOR:
   Der, welcher wandert diese Strasse He, who travels
   Voll Beschwerden, These dangerous paths,
   Wird rein durch Feuer Will be purified by fire,
   Wasser, Luft und Erden; Water, air, and earth.
   Wenn er des Todes Schrecken If he can overcome
   Uberwinden kann, His fear of death,
   Schwingt er sich aus He will soar heavenwards
   Aus der Erde himmelan. Away from earth!
   Erleuchtet wird er dann Enlightened, he will then
   Imstande sein, Be able to dedicate himself
   Sich den Mysterien der Isis To the mysteries
   Ganz zu weihn. Of Isis.

   1. Note that we did not hear a single “she” during the reading of the inscription. This is most significant, as the Gods of the Temple of the Sun, Isis and Osirus, never intended a woman to take their tests, pass their tests, or join their priesthood as an initiate.

   2. In this respect, Sarastro proves himself to be a bold innovator. He has decided that Pamina must be not only Tamino’s mate but, truly, his complete equal. In just a moment, she will prove herself worthy of initiation and inclusion in the brotherhood, the priesthood of the circle of the sun.

   B. After the two men in armor finish their reading of the inscription, Tamino is brought on stage, dressed lightly and in bare feet. Tamino expresses his conviction to go forth and pass these last two and most dreaded trials—those of fire and water. Just as Tamino prepares to step forward into the mountain, he hears Pamina’s voice from offstage.

   PAMINA:
   Tamino! Halt! Stop! I must see you!

   TAMINO:
   Hark! Do I hear Pamina’s voice?

   TWO MEN IN ARMOR:
   Yup, that’s Pamina all right. Rejoice young dude, for she can go with you! Nothing can now ever separate you, not even death.
TAMINO:
All right, we can be tested together! Nothing can now separate us, even if we were to die. Does this mean I’m allowed to talk her now?

TWO MEN IN ARMOR:
Oh yea, sure, talk all you like!

TAMINO, TWO MEN IN ARMOR:
What joy to see each other again, hand in hand to enter the Temple. A woman who fears not darkness and death is worthy to become an initiate herself!

PAMINA:
My Tamino! I am so glad to see you!

TAMINO:
I’m glad to see you, too, baby. So, check it out. Here are the gates of dread, gates that threaten me with danger and death.

PAMINA:
No problemo! Wherever you go, I’ll be by your side. I’ll even lead you with love as my guide!

[She takes Tamino’s hand and continues:]

Love will strew the way with roses. Play on your magic flute; it will protect us on our way. In a magic hour, my father cut it from the deepest roots of a thousand-year-old oak tree during the rain, wind, and lightning of a terrible storm. Now come and play on the flute! It will guide us on our terrible path!

[Filled with love and confidence, Pamina and Tamino together sing:]

PAMINA, TAMINO:
By the power of its music we joyfully walk through death’s dark night.

TWO MEN IN ARMOR:
By the power of its music you joyfully walk through death’s dark night.

C. We listen to No. 21, Part 2, before moving on to the Trials of Fire and Water. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 21, part 2, conclusion, from Pamina’s “Tamino halt! I must see you!”)

II. Pamina and Tamino walk forward into the mountain, through the “gates of dread”; the massive doors close menacingly behind them

A. They first enter the fiery furnace. A quiet and dignified march in C Major accompanies Pamina’s and Tamino’s stroll into, through, and out of this hellish broiler; the solo flute featured in the march is, of course, Tamino’s magic flute, which he plays as they walk through the flaming inferno. Its song is one of purity and enlightenment.

B. Having successfully negotiated the Trial by Fire without being burned, Pamina and Tamino sing a quiet hymn of thanksgiving before embarking on the Trial by Water.

PAMINA, TAMINO:
We have walked through the heat of the fire and bravely faced the danger; may the music of the flute protect us from the flood just as it did in the fire.

C. Pamina and Tamino now walk through the raging torrent of the Trial by Water, accompanied again by the same magic flute-dominated march. Again they emerge unscathed. As they exit from the raging cataract, the dark mountains behind them part and light virtually floods the stage, revealing the entrance to a brilliantly lit temple. Pamina and Tamino take the opportunity to celebrate a bit; together, they jubilantly sing:

PAMINA, TAMINO:
Yes, ye gods, what a joyful moment! We have been granted the blessing of Isis!

[From within the temple, only now just revealed, come the voices of the Priests, singing:]
Triumph!  Triumph!  Victory!  Victory!
Du edles Paar!  You dynamic duo!
Besleget hast du die Gafähr.  You have overcome fear and danger!
Isis Weihe ist nun dein.  Now you are worthy of Isis.
Kommt,  C’mon into the temple;
Tretet in den Tempel ein!  Ya’ll set down for a while and relax!

D.  This celebratory hymn is accompanied by the full orchestra with trumpets and drums, and it is a stirring and magnificent moment. It is also, dramatically, an auspicious moment. Not only are Pamina and Tamino now initiates, not only have they “earned the right” to live happily ever after, but by hazarding and surviving the trials with Tamino, Pamina has single-handedly redeemed womanhood by making herself the equal to Tamino and the priests. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 21, part 3, from the beginning of the Trial by Fire.)

III. In Part 4 of the finale, Papageno has returned to the garden of the temple to search for Papagena.

A.  Slowly but surely, it dawns on him that his total failure at the trials, in particular his inability to keep his mouth shut, has likely cost him his bride. His mood darkens until he begins to despair.

PAPAGENO:
Papagena! Papagena! Papagena!
Weibchen! Täubchen!
Meine schöne!
Vergebens! Ach, sie ist verloren!
Ich bin zum Unglück schon geboren.
Seit ich gekostet diesen Wein,
Seit ich das schöne Weibchen sah,
So brennt’s im Herzenskämmerlein,
So zwickt uns hier,
So zwickt es da.
Papagena! Herzenstäubchen!
Papagena! Liebes Weibchen!
’s ist imsonst!
Es ist vergebens!
Müde bin ich meines Lebens!
Wenn’s im Herzen noch so brennt.

[At this point, Papageno takes a rope in his hand, and a spindly tree with a single horizontal branch usually rises from a trapdoor at stage center. Papageno, sniffing all the way, shuffles over to the tree, rope in hand, and sings:]  

Diesem Baum da will ich zieren.
Mir an ihm den Hals zuschnüren,
Weil das Leben mir missfällt.
[Note that one of the staples of the Italian Commedia dell’arte is the image of a “clown” swinging from the gallows. Papageno continues:]  

Gute Nacht, du falsche Welt!
Weil du böse an mir handelst.
Mir kein schönes Kind zubandelst.
So ist’s aus, so sterbe ich.

[Note that one of the staples of the Italian Commedia dell’arte is the image of a “clown” swinging from the gallows. Papageno continues:]  

Schöne Mädchen, denkt an mich.
Will sich eine um mich Armen,

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Eh’ ich hänge, noch erbarmen.
Me before I should actually hang
Wohl, so lass ich’s diesmal sein!
Myself, I’ll let it go this time!
Rufet nur, ja—oder nein—
Just give me a heads up, a yes or no!

[Completely dejected, Papageno almost puts the noose around his neck.]

Nun, ich wäre noch, es sei.
You know, I’ll just wait a little longer,
Bis man zählt eins, zwei, drei.
I’ll count: one, two, three.

[Still nothing. Papageno puts his pipes to his mouth and blows a series of increasingly pathetic notes after saying each number out loud:] 

Eins! Zwei! Drei!
One! Two! Three!
Nun wohlan, es bleibt dabei!
Well, that’s it, then!
Weil mich nichts zurücke hält!
Since there’s no reason to stick around,
Gute Nacht, du falsche Welt.
I’ll say good night, you world of pain!

(Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 21, finale, part 4, opening, beginning with Papageno’s calling “Papagena! Papagena! Papagena!”)

B. Papageno puts the noose around his neck and, just in the nick of time, the Three Boys fly over.

THE THREE BOYS:
Stop it, Papageno, don’t be such a turkey! You only live once, work with it!

PAPAGENO:
It’s all very well for you to talk and joke, but if you were as girl crazy as me, you’d also be heartsick!

THE THREE BOYS:
Papageno! Dummy! Use the bells! Play the bells! They’ll bring you your babe lickety-split!

PAPAGENO:
I am such an idiot! I forgot about the bells! Ring, magic bells, ring. I must see my beautiful girl! Ring, little bells, ring, send my sweetheart here to me! Ring, little bells, ring, bring my baby here. Ring, little bells, ring, Bring her here! My baby here! My little wife here! (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 21, finale, part 4 continued from the Three Boys singing “Stop it, Papageno.”)

C. Meanwhile, the Three Boys have been fetching Papagena. They call out to Papageno—“Yo, Papageno, check it out!”—Papageno looks up and sees Papagena. As they approach each other, they slowly find their voices, and in doing so, they sing what must be among the most charming and wonderful duets in the repertoire:

PAPAGENO:
Pa-Pa-Pa-
Pa-Pa-Pa-
PAPAGENA:
Pa-Pa-Pa-
Pa-Pa-Pa-
PAPAGENO:
Pa-Pa-Pa-
Pa-Pa-Pa-
PAPAGENA:
Pa-Pa-Pa-
Pa-Pa-Pa-
PAPAGENO:
Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Papagena!
Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Papagena!
PAPAGENA: Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Papageno!
Bist du mir nun ganz gegeben?
Nun bin ich dir ganz gegeben.
Nun, so sei mein liebes Weibchen!
Nun, so sei mein Herzenstäubchen!
Welche Freude wird das sein!
Erst einen kleinen Papageno!
Dann eine kleine Papagena!
Dann wieder einen Papageno!
Dann eine kleine Papagena!
PAPAGENO: Papagena! Papagena!
Es ist das höchste der Gefühle,
Wenn viele, viele, viele, viele,
Pa-Pa-Pa-genos, Pa-Pa-Pa-genas
Der Segen froher Eltern sein.

PAPAGENO: Bist du mir nun ganz gegeben?
Nun bin ich dir ganz gegeben.
Nun, so sei mein liebes Weibchen!
Nun, so sei mein Herzenstäubchen!
What joy it will be,
Lots and lots of little children!
First a little Papageno!
Then a little Papagena!
Then another Papageno!
Then another Papagena!
Papagena! Papagena!
The greatest joy of all will be
When all those
Papagenos and Papagenas
Bless their parents!

D. Clucking like chickens, Papageno and Papagena rush off stage, hand in hand. (Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 21, finale, part 4, conclusion, Papageno and Papagena’s duet.)

IV. In part 5 of the finale, the scene changes to a dark, rocky, desolate landscape. Monostatos, the Queen of the Night, and the Three Ladies ooze their way onto the stage.

A. Monostatos has, predictably, changed allegiances and is now leading this little band on a mission of mayhem. They intend to enter the castle through a secret door and ambush Sarastro and his priests, kill as many of them as they can, and steal the sevenfold disk of the sun. Monostatos holds up his hand and they come to a stop.

MONOSTATOS:
Now softly, softly, softly! Soon we’ll be in the Temple!

QUEEN OF THE NIGHT, THREE LADIES:
Now softly, softly, softly! Soon we’ll be in the Temple!

MONOSTATOS:
But Queen! Remember our deal! Your child must be my wife!

QUEEN OF THE NIGHT:
I won’t welch, a deal’s a deal, my child will be your wife!

THE THREE LADIES:
Her child will be your wife.

**B.** Monostatos is pleased; Pamina will finally be his. Suddenly, in the distance, he hears muffled thunder and rushing water; we know that it is Pamina and Tamino successfully completing the last of their trials. Monostatos says, a bit fearfully:

MONOSTATOS:
Quiet! I hear terrible noises, rumbling thunder and cascading water!

QUEEN OF THE NIGHT, THREE LADIES:
Yes, yes, the noise is terrible, like the echo of distant thunder.

[Monostatos is now on edge and all ears. He listens for a moment, then says:]

MONOSTATOS:
They are in the great hall of the Temple.

ALL:
We will attack them there! We will crush the hypocrites and drive them from the earth with fire and our mighty swords!

[Monostatos and the Three Ladies fall to one knee and swear their undying allegiance to the Queen of the Night, singing:]

THE THREE LADIES, MONOSTATOS:
To you, great Queen of the Night, revenge will be brought as an offering!

**C.** But the rogues have been spotted. A huge, deafening storm of lightning and thunder explodes upon them; a sudden and devastatingly dissonant diminished seventh chord erupts from the orchestra. The Queen is now even more powerless than she was before, because Day and Night have been reunited by the joining of Pamina and Tamino. The group screams in agony:

ALL:
Our power is broken and destroyed; we are plunged into everlasting darkness!

**D.** The Queen and her entourage sink into the earth, leaving only an oily scum to evidence their miserable existence. (**Musical selection: The Magic Flute, No. 21, finale, part 5, opening, from Monostatos’s “Now softly, softly, softly, softly!”**)

**V.** The stage is suddenly transformed into the brilliantly glowing Temple of the Sun. Sarastro stands on an elevated dais; Tamino and Pamina are both in priestly garb. The Priests stand to either side of them, and the Three Boys are holding flowers. In an accompanied recitative, Sarastro announces total victory:

SARASTRO:
Die Strahlen der Sonne
Verreibe die Nacht,
Zernichten der
Heuchlererschliche Macht.

CHOR DER PRIESTER:
Heil sie euch Geweihten!
Ihr dranget durch Nacht,
Dank sei dir, Osiris und
Isis, gebracht!

A. With the thanks out of the way, the entire cast breaks into a glorious and jubilant chorus in Eb Major—the key with three flats—the masculine key of Masonry:

CHOR DER PRIESTER:
Es siegte die Stärke und krönet
Zum Lohn die Schönheit
Und Weisheit mit ewiger Kron’!

CHORUS OF PRIESTS:
Strength has conquered
And crowned as a reward
Beauty and wisdom!
B. There can be no more joyful, magnificent, and genuinely ennobling music in the repertoire. (Musical selection: *The Magic Flute*, No. 21, finale, part 5, conclusion.)

VI. Time has precluded an exploration of all Mozart’s operas. The most glaring oversights in our study are *Der Schauspieldirektor*, or *The Impressario*, a marvelous singspiel composed in 1786 as part of a royal entertainment, and Mozart’s second-to-last opera, the opera seria *La Clemenza di Tito*, or *The Mercy of Titus*, composed in 1791 and premiered in Prague just a few days before the Vienna premiere of *The Magic Flute*. I encourage you to seek these marvelous operas out on your own.

A. We began this study with a description of Mozart’s dire emotional and financial circumstances in 1789. By October of 1791, Mozart’s life and career were truly back on track. *The Magic Flute* was a huge success in Vienna, and *The Mercy of Titus* was being acclaimed in Prague.

B. It is one of the great and enduring tragedies that so soon after these successes, Wolfgang Mozart died, aged thirty-five years, ten months, and nine days.

C. Mozart’s skill-set as a composer was, very possibly, unique in the history of music. He was, perhaps, the greatest melodist who has yet lived, and at the same time, his technical skills as a harmonist, as a polyphonist, and as an orchestrator were so highly advanced that there was nothing, from a technical point of view, that he could not do.

D. He was a dramatist of the greatest genius; his insights into the human condition and his ability to express them musically still boggle the mind and the ear. And he had an imagination—an inner musical vision—of such wealth, richness, beauty, and poignancy that it defies description. His operas embody the full range of his genius more ably than any other single genre of his compositions.

E. In his seminal study *Opera as Drama*, Joseph Kerman writes: “The vindication of opera as drama comes in occasional, unique triumphs, and among these, Mozart has left us our most precious examples” (Kerman, 108). I can think of no more appropriate or accurate words with which to conclude this course.
Timeline

1756 ................................................ Born in Salzburg, Austria, January 27.
1761 ................................................ Musical tour of Vienna.
1763 ................................................ Mozart family begins Grand Tour of Europe and London.
1767 ................................................ Apollo et Hyacinthus, K. 38.
1768 ................................................ Bastien und Bastienne, K. 50/46b.
1769 ................................................ La finta semplice, K. 51/46a.
1769–1773 ...................................... Three tours of Italy.
1770 ................................................ Mithridate, rè di Ponto, K. 87/74a.
1771 ................................................ Ascanio in Alba, K. 111.
1772 ................................................ Lucio Silla, K. 135.
1775 ................................................ La finta giardiniera, K. 196; Il rè pastore, K. 208.
1778 ................................................ Second visit to Paris; Mozart’s mother dies.
1779 ................................................ Zaide, K. 344/336b.
1781 ................................................ Idomeneo, rè di Creta, K. 366.
1782 ................................................ Moves to Vienna; The Abduction from the Harem, K. 384; marries Constanze Weber.
1786 ................................................ The Marriage of Figaro, K. 492; Der Schauspieldirektor, K. 486.
1787 ................................................ Leopold Mozart dies; Don Giovanni, K. 527.
1789 ................................................ Così fan tutte, K. 588.
1791 ................................................ The Magic Flute, K. 620; La Clemenza di Tito, K. 621.
Glossary

**Baroque**: In music history, the period from about 1600 to 1750, divisible into three parts: early Baroque (1600–1650), mid-Baroque (1650–1700), and High Baroque (1700–1750). Music of the High Baroque is characterized by emotional exuberance tempered by intellectual control—very elaborate melodies controlled by harmonies that change in an orderly, predictable manner.

**Cadenza**: Virtuoso solo music designed to show off a singer’s or instrumentalist’s technical ability.

**Classical musical style**: Designation given to works of the later eighteenth century, characterized by clear melodic lines, balanced form, and emotional restraint. The style is brilliantly exemplified by the music Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Mozart.

**Commedia dell’arte**: Traveling Italian theatrical troupes and the improvised performances they staged based on character archetypes, satire, and farce.

**Concerto**: Musical composition for orchestra and soloist(s), typically in three movements.

**Consonance**: Two or more notes sounded together that do not require resolution.

**Continuo**: Abbreviated for *basso continuo*, the Italian term for the keyboard part in most Baroque music that provides harmonic and rhythmic support, usually reinforced with a bass instrument, such as a ‘cello or viola da gamba.

**Crescendo**: Gradually increasing or decreasing volume.

**Dissonance**: Two or more notes sounded together that require resolution.

**Enlightenment**: Eighteenth-century philosophical movement characterized by rationalism and positing that individuals are responsible for their own destinies and that all men are born equal.

**Fugue**: Important Baroque musical procedure, in which a theme (or subject) is developed by means of various contrapuntal techniques.

**K. numbers**: Koechel numbers; named after Ludwig von Koechel, who catalogued Mozart’s works during the mid-nineteenth century.

**Mannheim School**: Important group of German composers of the mid-eighteenth century, centered at Mannheim and associated with the orchestra of Elector Karl Theodor. Johann Stamitz (1717–1757) developed the orchestra’s distinctive pre-Classical style, which included the abandonment of the Baroque contrapuntal techniques in favor of a homophonic style and the creation of novel dynamic devices, such as the famous Mannheim crescendo.

**Musical form**: Overall formulaic structure of a composition, such as sonata form; also, the smaller divisions of the overall structure, such as the development section.

**Number**: An aria, ensemble, or finale from an opera.

**Opera buffa**: Comic opera, a genre of opera evolved from street theater and the conventions and characters of the Italian *Commedia dell’arte*.

**Opera seria**: “Serious” or heroic opera, an operatic genre cultivated by the aristocracy during the eighteenth century.

**Overture**: Music that precedes an opera or play, often played as an independent concert piece.

**Pedal note**: Pitch sustained for a long period of time against which other changing material is played. A pedal harmony is a sustained chord serving the same purpose.

**Recitative**: Operatic convention in which the lines are half sung, half spoken.

**Singspiel**: German-language musical comedy—usually romantic or farcical in nature—with spoken dialogue; popular in the eighteenth century.

**Voice**: Range or register, commonly used to refer to the four melodic ranges: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.
Biographical Notes

Colleredo, Hieronymous Count von: Last of the Salzburg prince-archbishops, Count von Colleredo became archbishop of Salzburg (Mozart’s hometown) in 1772. Although hated as an imperious philistine by Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart, Colleredo was reputedly an enlightened and conscientious ruler. He disliked musical extravagance, including operatic displays by soloists, and preferred his music to be brief.

Da Ponte, Lorenzo: Famous Italian poet, man of letters and librettist (1749–1838), Da Ponte settled in Vienna in 1782 and became official poet to the Imperial Theater. He was a close friend of Mozart and was the librettist for Mozart’s most famous Italian-language operas, The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte.

Habsburg: Austrian royal family, one of the oldest and most prominent dynasties. From 1452, the Habsburg family retained its rule (with the exception of one brief period) of the Holy Roman Empire until 1806. By 1732 (the year of Haydn’s birth), the Habsburg/Austrian Empire was peaceful, flourishing, and headquartered in Vienna. It was a Catholic, German-language, multinational empire consisting of greater Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary.

Joseph II: Holy Roman Emperor (1741–1790), eldest son of the Habsburg Emperor Francis I and Empress Maria Theresa, Joseph II carried out progressive reforms of church and state in the Austrian Habsburg domains in accordance with the rationalistic principles of the Enlightenment. He was a champion of Mozart but thought Haydn’s music to be “tricks and nonsense.”

Maria Theresa: Wife of Holy Roman Emperor Francis I, Archduchess of Austria and Queen of Hungary and Bohemia (1717–1780), Maria Theresa strengthened and unified the Austrian monarchy in the eighteenth century. Pious and unfriendly to the principles of the Enlightenment, she was pragmatic, a shrewd judge of her ministers, and often contemptuous of artists and musicians, such as Mozart.

Metastasio, Pietro: Italian poet and librettist (1698–1782), Metastasio’s twenty-seven libretti were set more than 800 times by various composers during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. More than any other single poet, Metastasio, in his libretti, created the standard template for what we now understand to be Baroque and Classical-era opera seria.

Mozart (Johann Georg), Leopold: Wolfgang Mozart’s father, Leopold (1719–1787) was a German-born Austrian composer, violinist, and music theorist. He received a bachelor of philosophy degree in 1737 at the Benedictine University in Salzburg, Austria, where he settled. In 1743, he became a violinist at the court of the prince-archbishop of Salzburg. In 1762, he was appointed vice conductor of the court orchestra. In 1747, he married Anna Maria Pertl. Of their seven children, only Maria Anna (Marianne/Nannerl) and Wolfgang survived infancy. Leopold dedicated his life to the musical education and professional promotion of his children and of Wolfgang in particular.

Puchberg, Michael: Textile merchant, amateur cellist, friend of Mozart and fellow Freemason, the indulgent and uncomplaining Puchberg made several loans of money to the financially distressed Mozart. The composer dedicated his String Trio in E flat, K. 563 (1788), to Puchberg.

Salieri, Antonio: Italian composer based in Vienna (1750–1825), Salieri composed more than forty operas and rose to the preeminent musical position of Viennese Court Kapellmeister, a position he held from 1788 to 1824. As composer, administrator, and teacher, his influence was felt at virtually every level of cultured musical life in Vienna.

Schikaneder, Johann Emanuel: Austrian actor, singer, playwright, impresario, and Freemason (1748–1812), Schikaneder settled in Vienna in 1784. He commissioned Mozart to write The Magic Flute opera for his Theater-auf-der-Wieden in Vienna. He supplied the libretto and created the role of Papageno for himself. He later opened another house, the Theater-an-der-Wien, for which he commissioned Beethoven’s opera Fidelio.

Varesco, Abbe Gianbattista: Salzburg chaplain and librettist. Varesco wrote the libretto for Mozart’s Idomeneo, K. 366 (1780), and adapted Metastasio’s libretto Il ré pastore, “The Shepherd King,” K. 208 (1775), for Mozart’s use.

Weber-Hofer, Josepha: Soprano and eldest sister of Constanze Weber-Mozart (1758–1819), Josepha was known for her high vocal range and colorature singing. As a member of Schikaneder’s company, Mozart created for her the role of the Queen of the Night.
**Weber-Lange, Aloysia**: Soprano and elder sister of Constanze Weber-Mozart (1759–1839). After a brief relationship, Mozart proposed marriage to Aloysia, only to be rejected. She married the painter Joseph Lange whose incomplete portrait of Mozart (1789) is generally considered the best and most accurate ever painted.

**Weber-Mozart, Constanze**: Soprano and wife of Wolfgang Mozart (1762–1842), Constanze was one of four daughters born to Fridolin Weber, a German singer and violinist. Constanze’s sisters—Josepha, Sophie, and Aloysia—were all sopranos. Mozart had been in love with Aloysia before courting and marrying Constanze.
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