THE ART OF THE ENSEMBLE OPERA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE USES OF ENSEMBLE IN 1790s VIENNA THROUGH W.A. MOZART'S *COSÌ FAN TUTTE* AND DOMENICO CIMAROSA'S *IL MATRIMONIO SEGRETO*

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the School of Music and Dance
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

June 2015

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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Title: The Art of the Ensemble Opera: A Comparative Study of the Uses of Ensemble in 1790s Vienna Through W.A. Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Domenico Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio Segreto*

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Degree awarded June 2015

THESIS ABSTRACT

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School of Music and Dance

June 2015

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Ensembles have become iconic of the eighteenth-century opera buffa. Previous studies have focused their efforts on form, analyzing ensembles with instrumental structures. However, these forms do not provide information as to how ensemble texts are set musically or function in terms of drama. This study follows Ronald Rabin's dissertation research on opera buffa performed at the Burgtheater in Vienna between 1783 and 1791. Rabin asserts an 'ensemble principle', explaining the broad form of buffa ensembles. This study focuses on the ensembles of two Viennese works: W.A. Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (1790) and Domenico Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio Segreto* (1792). Using Rabin's 'ensemble principle' as a foundation, a close reading of each ensemble from these two works reveals that these composers took very different approaches to ensemble writing. By sticking to or straying from conventions, Mozart and Cimarosa made musical choices that enhance character relationships and drama in diverse ways.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Marian Smith and Dr. Marc Vanscheeuwijck for their help in creating this study and fleshing out this manuscript. In addition, special thanks are due to Professor Karen Esquivel, for her mentorship and support in completing this degree. I also want to thank Dr. Sharon Paul for providing musical therapy through Chamber Choir, without which I never would have had the peace of mind to work effectively on a project of this magnitude. I also owe gratitude to Ronald Rabin for planting the seed of considering *Così fan tutte* as an ensemble opera, opening the door for this research. Finally, special thanks to my parents, Gail and Paul Murphy-Geiss, for their encouragement and unwavering support in my musical education from the very beginning.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Elaborate finales and ensembles are arguably the most recognizable elements of opera buffa in the 1780s and 90s in Vienna. Wolfgang Osthoff argues that ensembles are the foundation of opera buffa. Ensembles focus on affairs and matters of family and society, which is the cornerstone of opera buffa in contrast to the seria tradition. Numerous studies of opera buffa have focused their attention on finales specifically, because they are such extensive ensemble pieces.

Through the 1780s, larger mid-act ensembles became more common. Ensembles of trios, quartets, even sextets and octets were no longer rarities. Especially when juxtaposed against the seria tradition, ensembles stand as a defining characteristic for opera buffa. Mary Hunter elaborates on this:

> Ensembles are often taken to exemplify the spirit of opera buffa. This is partly because they are more numerous in, and more characteristic of, the genre than opera seria, partly because they focus on groups rather than individuals and are thus felt to embody the spirit of the comedy more fully than the seriatim statements of personal positions represented by arias, and partly because their flexible forms and various textures allow an apparent 'naturalness' of interaction.[1]

Hunter also touches on the more flexible structures of ensemble, as well as the spectrum of texture available with multiple voices. Storylines of opere buffe very frequently took place among large groups of people, often families, and the conflicts relied upon complex

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[1] Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 157.

relationships. Ensembles allowed for conflicts and resolutions between multiple characters to play out simultaneously.

Having a historical knowledge of the context for the genre of opera buffa provides a better foundation for study as well as performance practice. Joseph Kerman explains this particularly well: "historical perspective has led on the one hand to a broader, more imaginative concept of the dramatic, and on the other, to a warmer respect for music of the past than was possible in earlier times. We see much more as dramatic; we see much more as musically expressive."[2] Thus there is a precedent to examine dramatic works with a historical and cultural context.

Unfortunately, Wagnerian aesthetics of the Romantic era and theoretical studies of instrumental musical forms have created a tradition for study that focused on formal structures rather than historical and dramatic elements of opera. Thankfully, studies of the last twenty years or so have shifted perspective on opera studies of the eighteenth century. There is still work to be done, however, and John Platoff makes note of taking this direction in scholarship: "the degree to which the organizing forces for the buffo finale are dramatic and textual rather than 'purely musical,' suggests a fruitful direction for further study of other elements of the opera buffa in this period."[3]

A handful of scholars have begun to pave the way for studies of eighteenth-century opera buffa. The present study aims to fall in line with this new scholarship by

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[2] Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 2.

[3] John Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure in the Opera Buffa Finale," *Journal of Musicology*, 7, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 229.

providing an in-depth analysis of the ensembles and finales of two opere buffe of the 1790s in Vienna: *Così fan tutte* (1790) by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Lorenzo Da Ponte, and *Il Matrimonio Segreto* (1792) by Domenico Cimarosa and Giovanni Bertati. I have chosen these particular works for a variety of reasons. Both works were premiered at the Burgtheater in Vienna within two years of each other, meaning that conventions of Viennese opera buffa for the late 1780s and early 1790s are applicable for both works. Hundreds of books and articles have been published on Mozart and his operas; however *Così fan tutte* has received markedly less attention than the other two Da Ponte-Mozart opere buffe. Domenico Cimarosa has received little attention in scholarship as well as performances. While *Matrimonio* remains Cimarosa's legacy in the twenty-first century, there is still a disappointing amount of information on the opera. Additionally, *Matrimonio* was chosen because of the availability of the score, recordings, and performances.

A doctoral dissertation from 1996 by Ronald Rabin studies dramaturgy of every opera buffa performed at the Burgtheater in Vienna between 1783 and 1791. Rabin examines traditions of ensembles, and poses an argument that *Così* could be considered an 'ensemble opera' due to the high number of large ensembles for its time. After considering a handful of other contemporary opere buffe, *Matrimonio* stood out alongside *Così* because of its high number of ensembles as well. I will explore the various practices and reasons these operas are so ensemble-rich, and delve into the different musical techniques Mozart and Cimarosa utilized.

Duets were the most common ensembles found in opera buffa in the 1780s and 90s in Vienna, and larger mid-act ensembles grew in popularity but still remained less frequent than duets. Thus, this study will focus on the 'larger' ensembles in these two operas, since they are considered the less common type. Quintets and sextets did not appear until the 1780s. These two operas in consideration premiered in 1790 and 1792, so quintets and sextets were not unheard of by this point, but it was not the norm to have multiple mid-act large ensembles.

Scholarly Cherry Picking

There has been a potentially misaligned practice of using instrumental forms as a lens for opera studies, which I will discuss in greater detail in chapter three. This technique has led critics and scholars to "habitually privilege certain types of numbers, leaving others rarely mentioned."[4] Numbers that adhere to the chosen instrumental forms are given repeated attention, and those that sit outside that box continue to be ignored. Specifically speaking of Mozart's operas, scholars tend to most often pick works that come from *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* rather than *Così fan tutte.* These three operas are usually considered together as Mozart's 'mature' opere buffe. Unlike the first two operas, *Così* rarely seems to receive the in-depth analytical attention of the other two, but the reason for this preference is not immediately apparent.

[4] Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, "Dismembering Mozart." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2, no. 2 (July 1, 1990), 190.

While the plot of *Così fan tutte* could potentially be argued as 'racier' than the others, and the ending is also rather unsatisfying, these seem weak explanations for why scholars gloss over or sometimes completely ignore this opera. Edward J. Dent gives a frank description of opinions on *Così*, that the "libretto was denounced throughout the nineteenth century as being intolerably stupid, if not positively disgusting."[5] Much of the philosophy and scholarship surrounding the opera has been founded in a belief that the work is relatively incoherent. Edmund Goehring, on the other hand, argues that the opera is rather coherent and contains excellent consistency of vision. His reading assesses the opera as a deep and complex look at human nature: "the chief didactic ambition of the school for lovers is to impugn an untutored certitude about human potential and the transparency of autonomy of the self."[6]

Some historians have theorized that Mozart was not fond of the story and "composed the music very much against his will," but Dent rejects this proposition, revealing that there is absolutely no evidence for this line of thought, and it would be virtually impossible to prove this idea through the original music alone.[7] In sources such as Dent's, where the primary objective is to provide historical facts about Mozart's life and works, *Così* is a natural inclusion. *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* could not possibly be discussed without the third buffo work. *Così* alone contains "five trios, one

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[5] Edward J. Dent, *Mozart's Operas: A Critical Study*, Second Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 190.

[6] Edmund Goehring, *Three Modes of Perception in Mozart: The Philosophical, Pastoral, and Comic in* Così fan tutte, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), xiv.

[7] Edward J. Dent, *Mozart's Operas: A Critical Study*, Second Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 189.

quartet, two quintets, one sextet, and two huge finales,"[8] and Dent was not the only scholar to notice this strategy.

A more recent scholar who has focused on *Così*, Ronald Rabin, calls it an "ensemble opera."[9] Rabin's study focuses on dramaturgy of opera buffa, with Da Ponte and Mozart as center points for his study. By taking an in-depth look at each and every opera performed at the Burgtheater in Vienna between the years 1783 and 1791, Rabin attempts to construct an in-depth understanding of the context for the Mozart-Da Ponte operas. Many scholars that Mozart is 'different', but do not successfully strike at particularly why. Rabin explains that "simply asserting that the Mozart-Da Ponte operas are different, or that they transform or transcend genre conventions, does not get us much closer to the nature of this difference."[10] Rabin takes pages from both Mary Hunter and John Platoff's books, developing his own methodology. While Hunter focuses her energies on examining social and cultural context, Platoff spends more time on convention and structure. Rabin uses some of both, aiming to understand the works as musical dramas. Because his study is so extensive, covering 68 operas in total, his work will be the foundation and context for my own analyses.

Rabin devotes an entire chapter to structures and conventions of ensembles and proposes a progression from independent statements, to dialogue, and finally homophonic

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[8] Edward J. Dent, *Mozart's Operas: A Critical Study*, Second Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 201.

[9] Ronald Rabin, "Mozart, Da Ponte, and the Dramaturgy of Opera Buffa" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1996), 404.

[10] Ibid., 6.

tutti, which he calls the 'ensemble principle'.[11] Rabin aims to track how this principle functions in opera buffa. Rabin uses operas performed at the Burgtheater in Vienna between 1783 and 1791. These include *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*. Rabin's idea of *Così* as an 'ensemble opera' is a theory worth studying, and it is certainly unlikely that everything relevant to this concept could be covered in the last ten pages of his dissertation. My impression is that this section, which is quite literally the very last element of his study, is almost an afterthought, a suggestion for further study. Rabin uses this section to specifically explore how *Così* differs from the other Mozart-Da Ponte operas in its dramaturgical construction. For Rabin, what truly sets it apart is not only its frequency of ensemble but also their role in serving the drama.

Scholars have chosen *Nozze* and *Don Giovanni* and works from these operas to fulfill theories that rely on instrumental form. In particular, ensembles have received sonata-form analyses. *Così* does not adhere so easily to instrumental forms, which I will discuss in greater detail in subsequent chapters, and thus has been brushed aside. However, form is not the only element that makes opera interesting. *Così* has more ensembles than any of Mozart's other operas, as well as many contemporary operas from the late eighteenth-century.

Tim Carter suggests that we break down these analytical frameworks of instrumental music to examine Mozart's operas. Carter's main argument is that Mozart was indeed an instrumental composer, it should come as no surprise that instrumental

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[11] Ronald Rabin, "Mozart, Da Ponte, and the Dramaturgy of Opera Buffa" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1996), 242.

forms might appear in his operas as well. He continues to assert that as Mozart became more comfortable with operatic and vocal forms, his operas reflect this growth. Carter explicitly states that *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* have received more attention because of their musical structures that align with "models developed for the repertory that has proved central to modern analytical endeavor, instrumental music of the Classical period."[12] According to Carter, not only is *Così* unique for its number of ensembles, but the musical structure of these pieces may additionally be distinguishable from Mozart's own styles in previous operas.

In an article published the following year (1997), John Platoff makes a strikingly similar argument that "the connection to instrumental music is strongest in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, while this influence has diminished in importance by the time of *Così fan tutte.*"[13] Perhaps because scholars have been unable to easily identify structural musical form within *Così*, they've avoided it altogether. This leaves an interesting hole to be filled.

Cimarosa

Domenico Cimarosa, although successful and wildly popular during his time, seems to have drifted into obscurity after the nineteenth-century aesthetics took over. While *Così* has received less attention in scholarship and on the stage than many of

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[12] Tim Carter, "Mozart, Da Ponte and the Ensemble: Methods in Progress?" in *Wolfgang Amadè Mozart: Essays on His Life and His Music*, ed. by Stanley Sadie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 249.

[13] John Platoff, "Operatic Ensembles and the Problem of the Don Giovanni Sextet," in *Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, ed. by Mary Hunter and James Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 404.

Mozart's other works, and perhaps for arbitrary reasons, Cimarosa's entire body of work has been practically ignored when compared to Mozart's. The authors of the English-language biography of Cimarosa were astounded by this lack of information:

> Though Cimarosa (1749-1801) had been, without question, the most popular opera composer of his day, and though his *Il Matrimonio Segreto* has never been out of the active repertory since the time of its creation, we discovered – as we tried to collect background information for our production – there was not a single book to be found in English about either Cimarosa's life or his music.[14]

In their research, they discovered that there were scant secondary resources on the composer, even in Italian. The one full book they found was lacking important information because it had been written so long after the composer's death, 1939. Sadly, no diaries or letters are known to exist, and all information about Cimarosa's life comes from biographers and colleagues.

Although Cimarosa is most well known and remembered for his 1792 Viennese opera buffa, he composed over sixty-five operas as well as numerous sacred vocal pieces including masses, motets, a Requiem mass, and cantatas.[15] Thankfully a resurgence in interest in late eighteenth-century composers other than Mozart has helped bring some of Cimarosa's lesser known works back to life. It is sadly the truth that "the genius of Mozart and Rossini, who closely followed Cimarosa in time, overshadowed the work of this Neapolitan composer, and all but *Il Matrimonio Segreto* . . . passed from the boards

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[14] Nicki Rossi and Talmage Fauntleroy, *Domenico Cimarosa: His Life and His Operas*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), vii.

[15] Ibid., viii.

in the second half of the nineteenth century."[16] Despite his fading fame in the nineteenth century, Cimarosa was indeed wildly popular during his time.

I will begin by providing a foundational understanding of opera buffa conventions generally, within Vienna, and then specifically for mid-act and finale ensembles. The next chapter will explore the inherent problems and implications of the older tradition of using sonata and instrumental musical forms as a lens for analysis in opera studies. This chapter will also discuss the recent scholarship responsible for shifting focus from form and analysis, which will be a foundation for this reading the ensembles of *Così* and *Matrimonio*. In the next two chapters I will provide a close reading of every large ensemble in these operas. My analysis will focus on relationships between text and music, character expression in the music, and using ensemble as a tool for laying out character relationships. Ultimately, my analysis will use Rabin's work as a foundation. Due to the extensive nature of his study, the work provides a solid context for this research. Finally, the conclusions chapter will synthesize this information and present potential implications and opportunities for further study. A play-by-play reading of each ensemble from these two operas will reveal the differing reliance upon and dialogue with convention by Mozart and Cimarosa. Hopefully this thesis will be a starting point for further study on ensembles in opera buffa of the 1780s and 90s.

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[16] Nicki Rossi and Talmage Fauntleroy, *Domenico Cimarosa: His Life and His Operas*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), ix.

CHAPTER II

CONVENTIONS OF THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY OPERA BUFFA ENSEMBLE

Beginnings and Developments

By the 1790s in Vienna, opera buffa was a genre of codified and well-established cultural conventions. The first existing librettos of comic intermezzos go back as early as 1706, and composers and librettists began specializing in the genre. Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin both identify the performance of Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* in 1733 as an important moment in opera buffa's history. The work had been written to serve as intermezzi between the acts of one of Pergolesi's own seria work, but it gained fame on its own and traveled across Europe through the 1740s.

Daniel Heartz turns attention to Venice in the development of opera buffa, and specifically the roots of the buffa finale. Carlo Goldoni was a prominent librettist and author of the mid-eighteenth century, and considered an influential player in developing the opera buffa ensemble. His 1743 setting of *La Contessina* only contains short ensembles at the ends of acts, which was nothing like that "multi-sectional dramatic finale" of opera buffa later in the century.[17] Five years later, in 1748, Goldoni collaborated with Vincenzo Ciampi in creating *La scuola moderna*, a potent example of

[17] Daniel Heartz, "The Creation of the Buffo Finale in Italian Opera," *Proceedings of the Royal Music Association* 104 (1977-1978): 67.

dramma giocoso. For this work, Goldoni provided text only for the buffa characters, and these characters also happened be the only ones to "participate in the act-endings, which are quite elaborate to judge from the text."[18] Unfortunately the music no longer survives from this work.

Goldoni continued to collaborate with Ciampi, but eventually he worked with a fellow Venetian, Baldassare Galuppi. Heartz asserts that Galuppi was the only composer who could truly live up to Goldoni's "comic gifts."[19] Their first collaboration on a comic work was *L'Arcadia in Brenta* in 1749, which "ends with a remarkable masquerade in which five of the characters dress up as Commedia dell'Arte figures and stage a drama within the drama."[20] Goldoni's goal as an opera librettist was to replace old *commedia dell'arte* with literary comedies that had fully fleshed-out scripts and stories, as well as more believable situations that spoke to the modern sensibility.

In 1760, Gaspare Gozzi wrote a review in the *Gazzetta Veneta* of one of Goldoni's last comic operas set by Latilla. Gozzi wrote that "it is filled with those fiery and lively movements that close the scene, notably at the end of the first and second acts; he may call himself the first inventor of closing the acts with this novelty of pleasing and varied action."[21] Goldoni's work had finales with numerous pieces of action, which allowed composers to set the numbers using various tempi and motives.

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[18] Daniel Heartz, "The Creation of the Buffo Finale in Italian Opera," *Proceedings of the Royal Music Association* 104 (1977-1978): 68.

[19] Ibid., 70.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Gaspare Gozzi quoted in Giuseppe Ortolani and Carlo Goldoni, *Tutte le opere di Carlo Goldoni,* vol. 11, *Drammi giocosi per musica* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1951-1964), 1327.

Opera buffa of the mid-century established traditions for plot. In most productions, characters begin terribly entangled, the drama increases, and the story ultimately resolves happily. The music matched these conventions, which warranted ensemble finales:

> …scenes of great length and intricacy, in which the changing dramatic situation was registered by numbers following on one another without any intervening recitative, all to be played at a whirlwind pace that challenged any composer's imaginative and technical resources.[22]

Opera composer Niccolò Jommelli is said to have complained about the amount of work necessary to write a finale, comparing it to writing eight arias.

Opera Buffa and the Ensemble in 1790s Vienna

There were traditions and cultural dialogues for music and opera in every European city in the years between 1770 and 1790, but because the two operas in question were premiered in the Burgtheater within two years of each other, it is important to assess conventions of opera buffa and their ensembles within the landscape of Viennese trends.

By 1760, Goldonian opera buffa had been disseminated widely throughout Europe but had not yet hit Vienna. What Italian comic opera had reached the city at this time was limited mostly to comic intermezzos.[23] Aside from traveling companies, the two

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[22] Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music Volume 2: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 450.

[23] Daniel Heartz, "Goldoni, Opera buffa, and Mozart's Advent in Vienna," *From Garrick to Gluck: Essays on Opera in the Age of Enlightenment* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2004), 31.

theaters in Vienna lacked the personnel to put on a full opera buffa. In 1762, this changed, when Count Durazzo was appointed as theatre director and he hired Italian singers.

Because of financial troubles, the co-regent Maria Theresa had a number of changes made to the royal palace in the 1770s. One of these was renovating the tennis courts into a small theater, now known as the Burgtheater. While the space was used to house operas for the court, the manager was also able to open the house to the public in order to make money. With this move, "opera detached itself from the realms of court ritual – the people who attended now came voluntarily, and the middle classes who might previously never have made it to court were admitted into the audience."[24] It is hard to actually determine the makeup of the audiences for opera buffa in these years, but scholars believe they were rather exclusive to the elite. Mary Hunter puts it another way, that "the principal Viennese audience for opera buffa was high society, which included the landholding nobility and a few 'layers' below that."[25] As participating members of society, audiences were involved in a cultural dialogue by attending the opera. Their expectations and perceptions shaped the work that would be performed in a given opera house. For this reason, considering audience is essential when examining musical and dramatic conventions.

Antonio Salieri's first opera buffa was premiered at the Burgtheater in 1770, which is when Gustav Zechmeister declares the start of the Viennese "Siegeszug", or

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[24] Rodney Bolt, *The Librettist of Venice: The Remarkable Life of Lorenzo Da Ponte,* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), 102.

[25] Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 14.

victory march of opera buffa in the city.[26] Mary Hunter estimates there were about 128 opere buffe performed at the Burgtheater between 1770 and 1790, and many of these productions received multiple performances.[27]

In a letter to his father in 1783, Mozart explained what he needed from a librettist in regards to creating a story for an opera buffa:

> …the story would be really *comic*; and, if possible, he ought to introduce *two equally good female parts*, one of these to be *seria*, the other *mezzo carattere*, but both parts equal *in importance and excellence*. The third female *character*, however, may be entirely buffa, and so may all the male ones.[28]

While it was almost common for arias to be cut or replaced depending on the singers in the cast, ensembles were rarely substituted or added, and it was unheard of to do so with a finale. When it comes to the social presentation in ensemble, these numbers "raise questions about life in society: who can or should be represented engaged in activity with whom."[29] Ensembles place characters in direct conversation and relation to each other, and sometimes in direct conflict, emphasizing their place in society. Ensembles emphasize relationships, but also individual characters against the whole.

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[26] Gustav Zechmeister, *Die Wiener Theater nächst der Burg und nächst dem Kärntnerthor von 1747 bis 1776*, (Vienna: Böhlau, 1971), 345.

[27] Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 6.

[28] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to Leopold Mozart, *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, Cecil Bernard Oldman, and Ludwig Schiedermair, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1938), 848.

[29] Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 23.

Formal Conventions

Much of the scholarship surrounding formal conventions in opera buffa finales and ensembles is the source of great contention, which I will address in greater detail in the following chapter. However, there are some generalized large-scale commonalities that are useful as a foundation for understanding the tradition. Looking specifically at opera buffa in Vienna between 1770 and 1790, there are common practices for ensembles that provide a context for understanding the ensembles of the two operas in question.

In her study of Viennese opera buffa during these years, Mary Hunter explains that ensembles became more common and prevalent, in fact "the numbers of mid-act ensembles in these operas rise from an average of two in the 1770s to something more like an average of four in the 1780s."[30] Typical opere buffe in Vienna began with an ensemble introduction, finales at the end of the two acts, and a few other ensembles dispersed throughout the show. Hunter theorizes that although *Così fan tutte* stands out with more ensembles than arias, high numbers of ensembles were not entirely uncommon for Viennese opere buffe. Finales were the most typical, followed by duets. Large mid-act ensembles (such as quartets, quintets, and sextets) were less frequent, and "quintets and sextets appear only in the 1780s."[31] Antonio Salieri's *La scuola dei gelosi*, which premiered in Venice in 1778, is thought to be the first opera buffa to include a mid-act quintet.[32]

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[30] Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 157.

[31] Ibid., 158.

[32] Ronald Rabin, "Mozart, Da Ponte, and the Dramaturgy of Opera Buffa" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1996), 284.

Ronald Rabin's Ph.D. dissertation exploring the Burgtheater opere buffe from the 1783 through 1791 reveals that most of the operas he examined contain at least one 'large' ensemble, which he deems a quartet, quintet, or sextet. There does not appear to be any particular convention as to where in the opera these ensembles occur; however, operas that have a large mid-act ensemble in the first act tend to also have one in the second.[33]

Rabin also identifies a common practice in ensembles in Vienna during this time of culminating in tutti homophonic passages at their end. Although there is great diversity in forms of ensembles, there is a general trend of a progression from independent lines moving to tutti. This results in characters ending in musical, if not always textual, agreement. Rabin terms this progression the 'ensemble principle', which Mary Hunter and Elisabeth Cook heavily rely upon for their research as well. This principle is general enough that it leaves room for the diverse ways a composer can handle drama in an ensemble.

There are varying conventions for ensembles depending on where they appear in the opera, and mid-act finales differ from finales. Lorenzo Da Ponte was a master of writing ensembles and also held very strong opinions about conventions. These conventions determined how large-scale finales ought to be organized musically and dramatically. Da Ponte himself wrote about these conventions in his memoirs:

> [A] *finale*, which has to be closely connected with the rest of the opera, is a sort of little comedy in itself and requires a fresh plot and a special

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[33] Ronald Rabin, "Mozart, Da Ponte, and the Dramaturgy of Opera Buffa" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1996), 315.

> interest of its own. This is the great occasion for showing off the genius of the composer, the ability of the singers, and the most effective 'situation' of the drama. Recitative is excluded from it; everything is sung, and every style of singing must find a place in it - *adagio, allegro, andante, amabile, armonioso, strepitoso, arcistrepitoso, strepitosissimo*, and with this the said finale generally ends. This in the musicians' slang is called the *chiusa* or *stretta* - I suppose because it gives not one twinge but a hundred to the unhappy brain of the poet who has to write the words. In this finale it is a dogma of theatrical theology that all the singers should appear on the stage, even if there were three hundred of them, by ones, by twos, by threes, by sixes, by tens, by sixties, to sing solos, duets, trios, sextets, sessantets; and if the plot of the play does not allow of it, the poet must find some way of making the plot allow of it, in defiance of his judgement, of his reason, or of all the Aristotles on earth; and if he then finds his play going badly, so much the worse for him![34]

According to Da Ponte, there seem to be many rules for finales specifically, but there is still so much room for dramatic and musical expression.

After a common expository section, finales tend to be through-composed. Additionally, motivic material can sometimes highlight dramatic elements such as reactions or returns of specific situations. Also, musical articulations such as modulations and tempos tend to accompany dramatic changes, such as the entrance or exit of a character, or the introduction of new dramatic material. John Platoff explains that, "the most important musical articulations in the finale . . . are aligned with the points of articulation that occur in the text between cycles."[35] Platoff's philosophy on the structure of finales is a more specific version of Rabin's principle, what Platoff terms the 'action-expression cycle.' Active passages are characterized by dialogue between the characters,

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[34] Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Memorie*, vol. 1: 125, trans. in Edward Dent, *Mozart's Operas: A Critical Study*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 104-105.

[35] John Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure in the Opera Buffa Finale," *Journal of Musicology*, 7, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 197.

and expressive passages are tutti. He explains the flow of finales similarly to Rabin that finales begin with active passages and culminate in expressive tutti sections. Platoff argues that the pattern "in which action is followed immediately by expression, and then by one or more devices that articulate the end of the scene, occurs so regularly that it may be safely called a conventional procedure."[36]

Dramatically, the function of ensembles is for characters onstage to resolve their differences or delve deeper into a conflict, often allowing the characters to come together over "their expressions of shock and astonishment at some new plot twist."[37] Ultimately, text and drama determines the structure and form of the ensemble, whether it is a finale or a mid-act ensemble. Platoff sums it up succinctly, explaining that each finale is unique in the way it ends an act depending on the necessities of the drama. What the finale does for the drama depends greatly on how the action fits within the drama both before and after the ensemble.[38]

Platoff's survey reveals that although there are formal traditions for opera buffa ensembles and finales, what makes these numbers significant is their role in the drama. While structural conventions did exist, they were so open that composers were able to write with great flexibility in order to accomplish a dramatic goal rather than fulfilling a formula.

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[36] John Platoff, "Music and Drama in the 'Opera Buffa' Finale: Mozart and His Contemporaries in Vienna, 1781-1790" (PhD diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1987), 41.

[37] John Platoff, "Musical and Dramatic Structure in the Opera Buffa Finale," *Journal of Musicology*, 7, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 317.

[38] Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 159.

CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS OF SONATA FORM AS A LENS FOR STUDYING OPERA

Sonata Form in Opera Studies

For scholars studying musicology in the twenty-first century, it might come as a surprise that not too long ago, it was common practice to use sonata form as an analytical tool for studying opera, specifically ensembles and finales of opera buffa. This idea seems absurd: to assign an instrumental musical form to the opera ensemble, which could arguably be considered a genre within a genre. Opera is a multi-dimensional art form that combines voices, instrumental music, poetry, visual arts, dance, and theater. While sonata form is an appropriate lens with which to analyze sonatas, and perhaps other instrumental genres of music, it is wildly inappropriate to rely too heavily upon this form when studying opera.

James Webster brought this problematic practice to the forefront of opera studies in his article entitled: "Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity" (Cambridge Opera Journal).[39] His goal is to dismantle the tradition of analyzing Mozart's operas by relying on formal structures, particularly sonata form. In this article, Webster calls into question a handful of books and articles that apply instrumental forms to studies of

[39] James Webster, "Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2, no. 2 (July 1990): 197-218.

Mozart's operas. These practices of using instrumental analysis for opera ignores the numerous elements of opera, and instead supports concepts of 'unity' which are rooted in Wagnerian and Romantic musical aesthetics.

Musicology itself is grounded in German and Wagnerian ideals, and this has dictated techniques of musical analysis and scholarship for music outside of Germany in the nineteenth-century as well. Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, who hold backgrounds in nineteenth-century music, admit the importance of acknowledging this bias; that "the manner in which critics and music historians evaluate opera still depends a good deal on Wagnerian criteria."[40] It seems that there are two concerns of scholarship bias potentially swaying eighteenth-century opera studies: the restricting structure of sonata form, and Romantic and Wagnerian aesthetics.

It would be virtually impossible to expect any scholar to remove these biases, as they have been deeply ingrained into the study of Western art music in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. But as made clear in Webster's article, acknowledging the limitations and problems created by these lenses is the first step in approaching studies of music that may lie outside the boundaries mentioned above. While there may be an application to read Mozart's music with the lens of Wagnerian aesthetics or analyzing opera ensembles with sonata form, these need to be intentional choices.

The tradition of using instrumental forms to analyze opera music may yield interesting results, but this technique also runs the risk of being extremely limited in its

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[40] Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, "Dismembering Mozart," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2, no. 2 (July 1990): 191.

scope. Webster encompasses the complexity of opera in one word: 'multivalence'. This dynamic of many layers interacting in diverse ways results in much of the aesthetic of opera.

Webster also explores how scholars and critics have relied upon sonata form to not only analyze opera ensembles, but apply its presence as an indicator of value. He mentions one particular example, Joseph Kerman's study of the trio 'Ah taci, ingiusto core' from *Don Giovanni*, in which Kerman uses sonata form as a framework for understanding the development and mental process of each of the characters.[41] In this instance, sonata form may indeed be an interesting and viable scaffolding for analytical work. However, Webster goes on to reveal that in fact, "of the sixteen non-duet ensembles in the three Da Ponte operas, 'Ah taci, ingiusto core' is the only one which is unambiguously in sonata form!"[42] Just considering the Mozart-Da Ponte operas, it becomes highly questionable that any scholar would rely upon sonata form to study the ensembles if the works do not in fact use the form at all.

Kerman may have lucked out, or perhaps more likely he specifically selected that particular trio in order to support his claims. This is an altogether too common practice in scholarship. This draws into question whether or not sonata form is actually as prevalent in opera as we have been led to believe. However, Kerman seems to recognize the dangers of such formal study of opera. In his book *Opera as Drama*, originally published

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[41] See section 2 of Chapter 4 in: Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988).

[42] James Webster, "Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2, no. 2 (July 1990), 200.

in 1956 and then released in a second edition in 1988, Kerman writes: "the work of art has been lost in ticker-tape. For the work of art [*Le Nozze di Figaro*] in this case is a drama, not a harmony exercise."[43]

Additionally, Webster finds that scholars tend to ignore the question of 'why', skipping over how the forms in question may or may not serve the drama or other elements of the opera:

> "to invoke instrumental formal types as the primary basis for understanding arias may be irrelevant, if not positively misleading. Even the hypothesis that most late-eighteenth-century operatic numbers begin with an 'exposition', defined neutrally as a paragraph in the tonic followed by one in the dominant . . . needs critical review. Does this tonic-dominant relation really function analogously to the structural, form-defining polarity of the first large section of a sonata or binary form?"[44]

Using instrumental forms to study Mozart's operas does not give weight to the strong conventions tightly wound into eighteenth-century opera buffa.

It is not reasonable to expect every piece of scholarship to give equal attention to every aspect of an opera, but to focus so closely on one element without even mentioning or considering the other aspects at play does not give weight to the fact that all parts of an opera are constantly interacting. Webster hoped to make a change in approaches to Mozart scholarship, but it goes without saying that this same approach ought to be applied to Mozart's contemporaries as well.

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[43] Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, 50th Anniversary ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 12.

[44] James Webster, "Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2, no. 2 (July 1990), 204.

The Lens of the Wagnerian Aesthetic

Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker have strikingly similar philosophies about Mozart studies, but in their approach they challenge the hermeneutic lens of 'aesthetic correspondence'. This theory is strikingly similar to Webster's concept of 'unity', established by Romantic era musical philosophies and opera criticism. Abbate and Parker address the assumption that prevails in scholarship and popular opinion about opera, which stems from Wagnerian ideals, that "the music will correspond precisely to verbal or staged events, and unfold in parallel to text and action."[45]

Abbate and Parker, scholars who specialize in nineteenth-century opera studies, display how Wagnerian aesthetics have dictated much of music scholarship and analysis of opera even outside the boundaries that these philosophies may have directly impacted (i.e., eighteenth-century opera). Like Webster, they argue that authors pick out specific and frequently-analyzed numbers whenever they want to present a new theory, stating that "writers on musical topics – analysts in particular – tend to turn to a small repertoire of much-analysed pieces whenever they wish to advance a new theory or demonstrate a new prowess."[46]

Following Webster's Lead

Two scholars in particular have followed Webster's lead, and I hope to follow by picking up where they have left off. The first is Tim Carter, specifically in an essay

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[45] Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, "Dismembering Mozart," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2, no. 2 (July 1990): 188.

[46] Ibid., 190.

entitled "Mozart, Da Ponte and the Ensemble: Methods in Progress."[47] Carter's article makes the claim that there is a hole in Mozart scholarship awaiting an "adequate typology of Mozart's ensemble sonata (and other) forms."[48] What is important here is that Carter acknowledges that there may be a completely separate form that would be a more appropriate fit. Carter agrees with Webster, Abbate, and Parker, that Mozart's success and experience in writing instrumental music is a reasonable source for the "intense exploration of sonata forms . . . in *Figaro*."[49] While this connection is certainly logical, there is no excuse for focusing on it so vehemently.

John Platoff, in his dissertation work and subsequent scholarship, has focused greatly on the opera buffa finale of the eighteenth century. The analysis he puts forth in his dissertation of 1984 (i.e., before Webster's article) uses text and character as the foundation for identifying any particular form in these numbers. Platoff proposes that there are two types of 'movements' within a buffa finale: expressive and active sections. He explains that:

> The active passage and the expressive passage comprise a unit (an 'action-expression cycle') within the libretto; and the various devices that divide a finale into smaller sections are employed after the expressive passage, and before the next active one.[50]

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[47] Tim Carter, "Mozart, Da Ponte and the Ensemble: Methods in Progress?" in *Wolfgang Amadè Mozart: Essays on His Life and His Music*, ed. by Stanley Sadie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 241-249.

[48] Ibid., 242.

[49] Ibid., 243.

[50] John Platoff, "Music and Drama in the 'Opera Buffa' Finale: Mozart and His Contemporaries in Vienna, 1781-1790" (PhD diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1987), 33.

By using the libretto, and hence the drama and the story, as the basis for analysis, Platoff reveals that the musical structure of finales most often coincides with the dramatic development of a finale. Musical sections are usually defined from each other by shifting meters, tempos, or keys, though not always. What is important about this work is that Platoff does not adhere to any instrumental forms for his study of opera buffa finales.

I will not argue that sonata form is or is not present in the opera ensembles in question, in some cases it may in fact be present. However, I do propose that sonata form has been given far too much emphasis in opera studies in general and hope to use this as a jumping-off point to focus on other areas of the ensemble. I hope to not only take Webster's advice, but to also scholars such as Hunter, Platoff, and especially Rabin as foundational studies for the way I read these ensembles. Rabin's dissertation, in particular, provides an in-depth and reliable basis with which to read the ensembles of *Così fan tutte* and *Il Matrimonio Segreto*. Even though the scope of this research will only cover two operas, it will not occur in a vacuum.

In Viennese opera buffa, ensembles serve as catalysts of drama as well as moments to emphasize relationships between characters. For this reason, harmonic and structural analysis is not particularly useful. Those lenses for analysis do not provide understanding or answers as to how the ensembles function dramatically, propelling or preparing further action. Whether an ensemble ends in the tonic or dominant does not necessarily provide insight into character relationships. Music is clearly very important, and will receive appropriate focus, but other elements present within these ensembles will receive the same.

CHAPTER IV

COSÌ FAN TUTTE

During his unfortunately short life, Mozart wrote twenty-two musical dramas of various genres. *Così fan tutte* was the last of three operas to come from the partnership between Lorenzo Da Ponte and Mozart. Both agreed on the importance of a strong libretto. When Da Ponte began to work on his first libretto for an opera to be composed by Salieri, he studied many Italian libretti only to be wildly disappointed by the lack of story or convincing characters, and clumsy poetry. Da Ponte and Mozart felt similarly about the libretti they read (although they disagreed whether the libretto served the music or vice versa). Mozart wrote to his father in 1781, four years before he would begin working with Da Ponte:

> I should say that in an opera the poetry must be altogether the obedient daughter of the music. Why do Italian comic operas please everywhere - in spite of their miserable libretti . . . an opera is sure of success when the plot is well worked out, the words written solely for the music and not shoved in here and there to suit some miserable rhyme. . . . The best thing of all is when a good composer, who understands the stage and is talented enough to make sound suggestions, meets an able poet, that true phoenix[51]

It would not be long for Mozart to find his 'phoenix' in Da Ponte. After frustrations trying to create a sufficient opera buffa libretto, he came to Da Ponte in November 1785

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[51] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to Leopold Mozart, October 13, 1781, in *The Letters of Mozart and His Family,* ed. Emily Anderson, Cecil Bernard Oldman, and Ludwig Schiedermair, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1938), 773.

with the idea of adapting *Le Marriage de Figaro* by Beaumarchais. So the fabulous partnership began, to yield three of the most beloved operas of the eighteenth century.

Da Ponte started work on *Così fan tutte* with Antonio Salieri, but he brushed the project to the side. There are speculations that the Emperor commissioned Mozart and Da Ponte to write another opera after the success of *Figaro*, and the 200 ducats Mozart received in commission was far too good to turn down. Unlike his usual practice of adopting plays or novel for the opera house, Da Ponte penned the libretto himself, perhaps drawing inspiration from various urban myths and stories. Of all the operas produced in Vienna between 1770 and 1790, *Così* is the only one that contains more ensembles than arias.[52]

Ferrando and Guglielmo are two young officers who brag to their friend Don Alfonso of the virtues of their lovers, sisters Dorabella and Fiordiligi. Don Alfonso protests that these women would abandon their faithfulness if tested, and the men agree to a bet to prove their lovers' fidelity. Don Alfonso lies to the women that their beloveds must leave for war, and after they 'depart' they return disguised as mustachioed foreigners. The sisters resist strongly, even after the men fake taking poison in order to die for their love. Dorabella is eventually won over by Guglielmo, but Fiordiligi remains troubled. Fernando tries even harder after hearing that his Dorabella caved. Fiordiligi attempts to escape in military uniform to meet her lover on the battlefield, but she is interrupted by Ferrando and eventually gives in to him. Don Alfonso stages a fake wedding with the help of the maid Despina, disguised as an old notary. When military

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[52] Mary Hunter, *Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 157.

music plays in the distance, the foreigners flee and fake their arrival as themselves, and reveal their plot to the sisters. The women beg for forgiveness, and are granted it rather quickly, and by the end, the couples are reunited in proper buffa form.

In a letter from August of 1789, Mozart wrote to his wife asking that she be careful about how familiar she is with a fellow only noted as 'N.N.' Perhaps Mozart himself was toiling with feelings of jealousy as he questioned his own wife's fidelity, as he was writing the music for *Così.*[53] Even so, there was a degree of impropriety that was acceptable in the higher levels of society, and thus, as Rodney Bolt theorizes, Mozart brought "a sense of the ruthless, brittle sexual scheming as existed in such other works of the period."[54]

Così fan tutte opened on January 26, 1790 at the Burgtheater to lukewarm reception from the public. *Così* was only performed five times, because the Burgtheater closed in the middle of February because of the Emperor's severe illness. After Joseph II passed away, the theater was reopened and *Così* put back on the stage, but Leopold did not quite have the taste for music his father had, and *Così* only lasted five performances before drifting into obscurity.

Così fan tutte contains more ensembles than *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* combined – all three operas total twenty-four ensembles, thirteen of which come from *Così*. It should come as no surprise, based on story alone, that this opera

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[53] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to Constanza Mozart, *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, ed. Emily Anderson, Cecil Bernard Oldman, and Ludwig Schiedermair, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1938), 933.

[54] Rodney Bolt, *The Librettist of Venice: The Remarkable Life of Lorenzo Da Ponte* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), 201.

would be so full of ensembles. The entire premise of *Così* relies on relationships, and ensembles are the tool of the librettist and composer to spool out relationships on stage.

Act I

The first act alone contains nine of *Così*'s ensembles, and the opera opens with three short trios back to back with only brief recitatives to separate them. The ensemble seems to last the entire scene, even though there are stylistic changes from recitative to terzetto. All together, the whole scene lasts nine or ten minutes, and these ensembles are mere glimpses of those to come later. Although brief, each trio feeds into the next, acting as coiling springs for the following drama, and the scene as a whole as an introductory paragraph both musically and textually for the entire story.

In this scene, Ferrando and Guglielmo argue with Don Alfonso about the fidelity of their lovers. An example of the ensemble principle,[55] Ferrando, Guglielmo, and Don Alfonso exchange solo lines, revealing themselves in mid-argument as the curtain rises. Fernando and Guglielmo join together and sing in tandem with Don Alfonso replying, and finally the three join in a tutti for the end of the first trio. For fifteen bars, all three men sing tutti, but Ferrando and Guglielmo share the same text while Don Alfonso has his own:

[55] Ronald Rabin, "Mozart, Da Ponte, and the Dramaturgy of Opera Buffa" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1996) , 242.

Ferrando, Guglielmo: (a parte)	**Ferrando and Guglielmo: (aside)**
Sul vivo mi tocca,	He wounds my pride
chi lascia di bocca	Who dares to confide
sortire un accento	A single word
che torto le fa.	That slights her good name.
Don Alfonso: (a parte)	**Don Alfonso: (aside)**
O pazzo desire!	The fatuous lovers!
cercar di scoprire	They want to discover!
quel mal che trovato	The very thing
meschini ci fa.	That will bring them shame[56]

This tutti section begins as brief exchanges that then begin to overlap, only to finish in homophonic texture with each character repeating his or her final line of text in declamatory manner.

Don Alfonso explains that "É la fede delle femmine come l'araba fenice, che vi sia ciascun lo dice, dove sia nessun lo sa / Woman's constancy is like the Arabian phoenix, everyone swears it exists but no one knows where."[57] Both Ferrando and Guglielmo insist that their Fiordiligi and Dorabella are in fact this illustrious phoenix. This brief ensemble, only 55 measures, does not follow Rabin's ensemble principle, lacking any tutti or homophonic passages. Between the first and final trio of this scene, this middle acts as a bridge from the initial fight of whether or not the lovers are truly faithful, to the conversation of the bet (the central point of conflict for the entire opera).

To close this final trio, all three men finally sing the same text in a homophonic tutti. But this choice by Da Ponte to have all three share the same text, and concomitantly

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[56] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos: A Verse Translation*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 692-693.

[57] Ibid., 694-695.

Mozart's decision to set the text in homophony sets up a chuckle-worthy irony. The men sing:

E che brindis' replicati	Again and again, we will raise our glasses
far vogliamo al dio d'amor!	To honor the god of love![58]

Ferrando and Guglielmo have essentially put their love on the line, willing to lie and deceive their lovers for the sake of proving a point. They do not acknowledge the moral grey-area of their agreement to the bet in the first place. Yet they toast to the god of love! Meanwhile, Don Alfonso, whose philosophies on love and women paint him as senile and jaded at best, agrees a toast to the god of love as well. From the previous argument, however, it seems clear that Don Alfonso does not believe in such a god. Don Alfonso's joining in both text and music with Ferrando and Guglielmo appears a tongue-in-cheek jab at their expense.

These three subsequent trios are interesting in their brevity. Because the entire scene with the three numbers has a continuous arc from start to finish, it may be appropriate to consider the scene an extended ensemble with short sections of recitative. The recitative, in this case, could be considered necessary. The three gentlemen are working out a bet, and having more dialogue-based text and music helps the action move forward more efficiently.

One of the brilliances in Mozart's operas is the way he shapes characters musically in ensembles. An excellent example of this early on in his career is the second act quartet from *Idomeneo*. Characters sing the same text, but the words mean different

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[58] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos: A Verse Translation*, trans. J.D. McClatchy (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 701-702.

things according to their development and emotional state, and Mozart portrays this through melodic line and the ways the melodies interact. The first quintet of *Così* is where this practice first shows up in all its glory. This ensemble falls in line with Rabin's 'ensemble principle', with characters making individual statements, and the ensemble culminating in a tutti section. This section is where the ensemble embodies 'multivalence' through diverse musical and textual relationships. All five characters (Ferrando, Guglielmo, Don Alfonso, Fiordiligi, and Dorabella) are all singing the same text, but it means different things for each. This quintet takes place as the soldiers say their farewells to the sisters, and the women ask the men to "plunge [their] swords/deep, deep into both [their] hearts."[59] After exchanging feelings of sorrow and consolation, the quintet shares these words (including Don Alfonso):

Il destin così defrauda	Thus harshest destiny, alas,
le speranze de' mortali.	Mocks all our human hopes.
Ah, chi mai fra tanti mali,	Amidst dark despair we grope,
chi mai può la vita amar?	And which of us would want to live?[60]

For each of the characters, this passage means something a bit different. For the sisters, the 'harshest destiny' is that their lovers are leaving them for war and an uncertain fate. They despair and hold on to hope, but why should they want to carry on without those they love so dearly? For the soldiers, their harsh destiny is that they must carry out this farce and cause the apparent hurt to the women. For Don Alfonso, on the other hand, the "harshest destiny" is that of all men because of the fickle nature of women. There are

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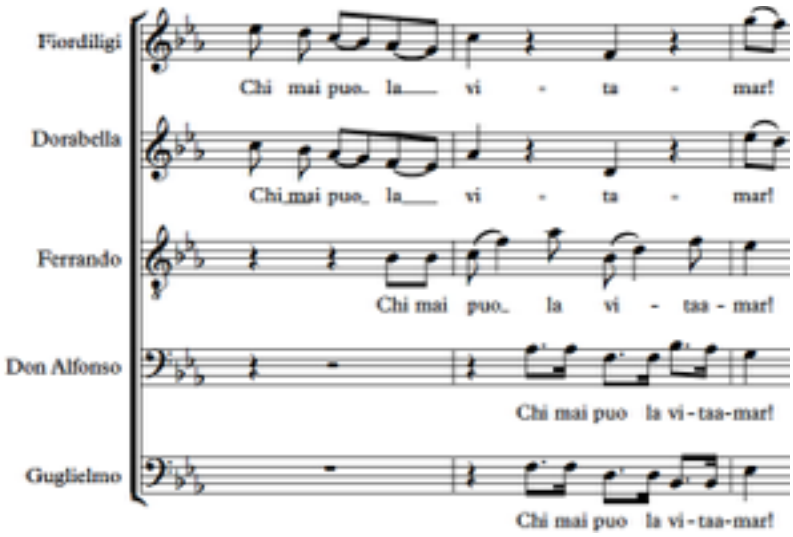
[59] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 709.

[60] Ibid., 710-711.

only a few bars of true homophony in the tutti section of this ensemble. For the most part, the women's lines are melodically paired and the three men match each other. Musically, those who are 'in' on the deal are separate from those who do not know that the soldiers' departure is actually a ruse. For the women, it is in descending scales, which sound like sighs (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Act 1, scene 4 Quintet (mm. 99-101)

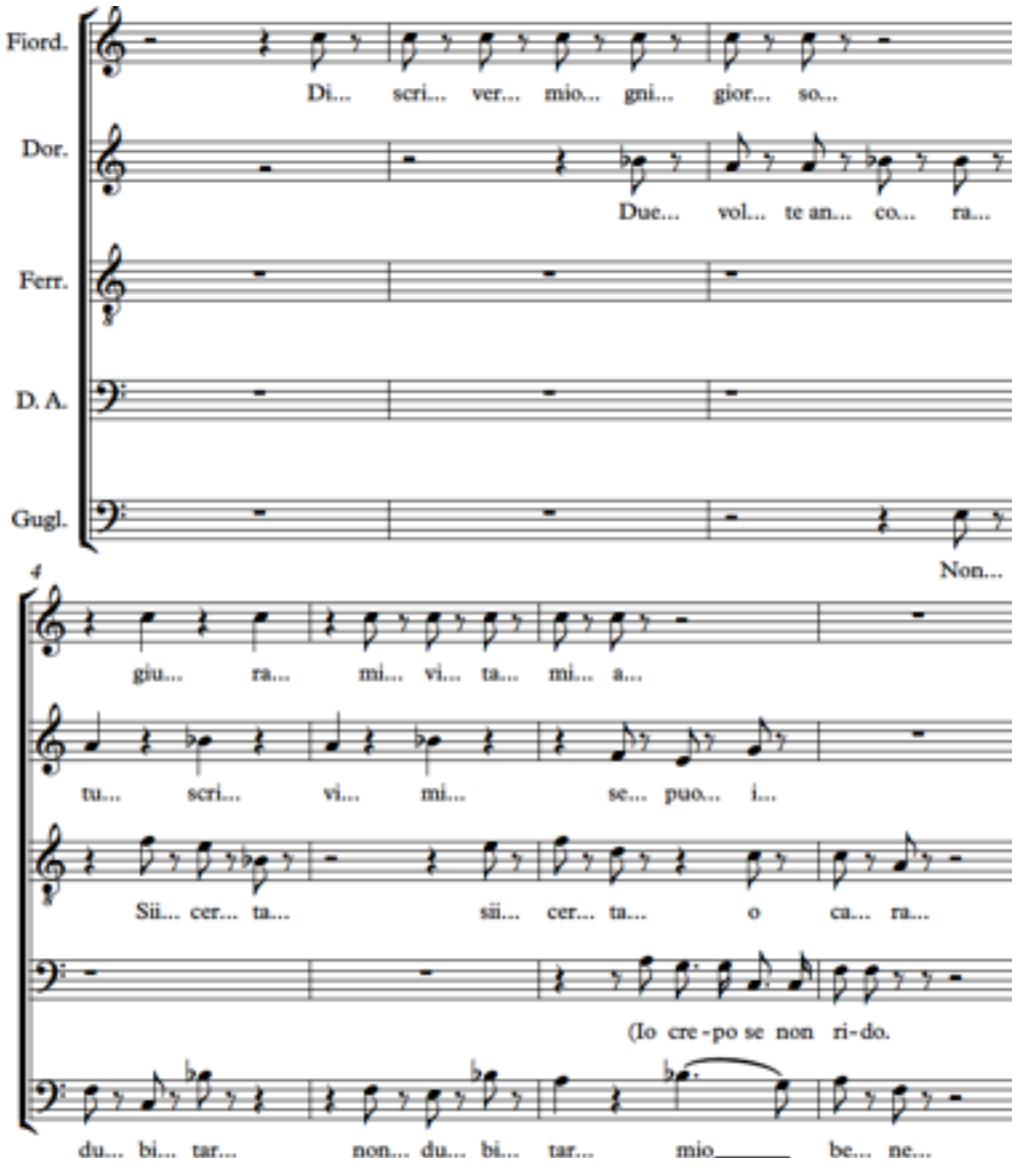


The next ensemble is another quintet between the same set of characters, but it is rather brief. The Urtext edition of the score makes note of this particular scene in the foreword, stating that Mozart labeled this scene as 'Recitativo'. This means that the number contains seven and eight syllable verses that lack any rhyme scheme - save for the closing rhyme. Faye Ferguson and Wolfgang Rehm remark in the foreword that "Mozart departs completely from Da Ponte's conception to create one of the most beautiful ensemble pieces of the entire opera."[61] In the opening solo exchanges between

[61] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Così Fan Tutte*, ed. Faye Ferguson and Wolfgang Rehm, (New York: Bärenreiter, 1999), xx.

the women and the soldiers, each word is separated into single syllables, and each syllable is set to separated eighth notes with rests in between. The resulting effect is seen in Figure 2 below.

Fig. 2: Act 1, scene 5 Quintet (mm. 1-7)



Fiordiligi: (piangendo)
Di…scri...ver...mi o…gni...gior...no...
giu...ra...mi...vita...mi...a...
Dorabella: (piangendo)
Due...vol...te an...co...ra...
tu...scri...vi...mi...se...puo...i...
Ferrando:
Sii...cer...ta...o ca...ra...
Guglielmo:
Non...du...bi...tar...mio bene...

Fiordiligi: (weeping)
You...will...write...to…me...
ev-...ery ...day...
Prom-...ise...me...my...dar-...ling...
Dorabella: (weeping)
Twice...a...day…you…will…write…
If...you...can...
Ferrando:
Of...course...I...will...my... dar-…ling...
Guglielmo:
Nev-…er…doubt...me...my...dear-…est...

Rhetorically, the breaks in text and singing function as *suspiratio*. Defined by Dietrich Bartel, this device is "a musical expression of a sigh through a rest."[62] Make note that the *suspiratione* that appear in the musical example and excerpt from the libretto are indeed from the original manuscripts. For Fiordiligi and Dorabella, they sound overwhelmed with sorrow and emotion. Their text is marked in the score with the note *piangendo*, meaning 'weeping', while Ferrando and Guglielmo get no such directive note. The irony of Guglielmo asking Fiordiligi to 'never doubt' verges on the hysterical. In fact, he repeats the text 'nun dubitar' twice, as if to emphasize his faith in their relationship, adding to the comedy that she will in fact doubt him to the point of betraying her love to him.

Unlike the previously discussed ensemble, the tutti section that closes this brief ensemble has the four lovers on one text (simply repeating *Addio* as the men depart), but Don Alfonso has his own text as well as different music for these closing measures (see Fig. 3). Watching this scene on stage, many productions place Don Alfonso off to the side for his commentary is sparse. This ensemble is really more of a quartet with short

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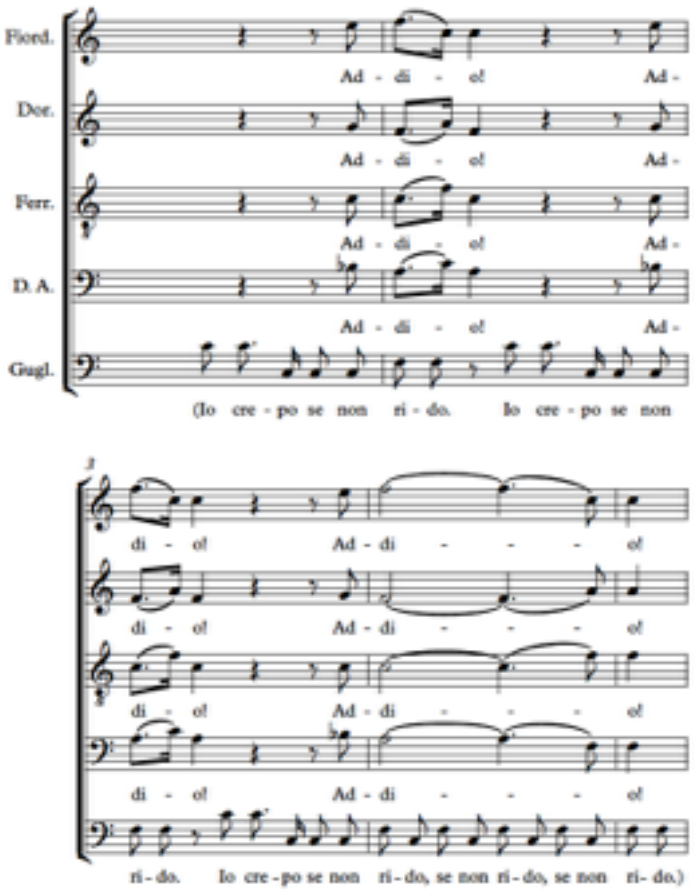
[62] Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 392.

interjections from Don Alfonso, whose only text is: “Io crepo se non rido!” (I’ll burst if I don’t laugh).[63] The texture of his melodic line contrasts the homophonic unison of the other four singers, as well.

Fig. 3: Act 1, scene 5 Quintet (mm. 23-27)



Don Alfonso’s melodic line matches his text, the dotted rhythms make it sound as if he is actually about to burst out in laughter. He only interjects once, and then does not sing again until the last four bars of the ensemble, so it seems a stretch to call this ensemble a quintet.

[63] Lorenzo Da Ponte, “Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers,” in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 716-717.

The next ensemble is a perplexing trio between Fiordiligi, Dorabella, and Don Alfonso after the soldiers have departed. This ensemble steps outside the 'principle', it is entirely homophonic and text is shared between all three singers. Dramatically speaking, this trio does not make much sense at first glance. The lyrics are as follows:

Soave sia il vento,	May the winds be soft
tranquilla sia l'onda,	And the waves be calm.
ed ogni elemento	May all the elements aloft
benigno risponda	Fall like a gentle balm
ai nostri desir	On our desires.[64]

Taking a moment to ponder these words reveals a subtle subtext in Don Alfonso's line once again. The elements that Don Alfonso sings of are all the aspects of the trick he is orchestrating upon the couples, and his desires are that the women succumb not only so he can prove his point, but also win the bet and the money. Don Alfonso singing in homophony with these words reveals how conniving his character truly is. If this opera is viewed through his cynical perspective, it is actually quite dark.

One of the first questions Edmund Goehring asks in the introduction to his book is why Don Alfonso participates in this trio.[65] Audiences are consistently confused by this. Goehring reads the scene as supremely beautiful and pastoral:

> this trio lifts melancholy from the largely hackneyed, self-indulgent affect of 'Di scrivermi ogni giorno' to one that evokes nobility, wins sympathy, and speaks to the transcendent. For a piece of such apparent musical originality - there is not quite anything like it in Mozart's

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[64] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 720-721.

[65] Edmund Goehring, *Three Modes of Perception in Mozart: The Philosophical, Pastoral, and Comic in* Così fan tutte, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), xiii.

> œuvre - the trio draws its material from a repository of well-known devices.[66]

Stefan Kunze explains that the ensemble is hard to pin down in terms of type, but that it does seem to fit in the realm of the 'sorpresa' section of instrumental ensembles, where all players pause to reflect on something unseen before proceeding to the next event.[67] Rhetorically, the ensemble works as a *noema*, which is a "homophonic passage within a contrapuntal texture."[68] This technique primarily makes the text all the clearer. Occurring just after the soldiers have 'departed', this stunning moment of musical harmony is the calm before the storm. In this moment, the opera transitions from set-up to the ruse beginning to unfold.

It also makes sense to compare the ensemble to the homophonic section in the Act I finale of *Don Giovanni*. In similar fashion, the three masked characters take a moment to collect themselves and say a prayer before the ball.[69] However, none of this explains Don Alfonso's involvement. Goehring believes understanding his place in this trio is reliant upon the context of the ensemble: "Don Alfonso forces the audience to distance itself from what sounded like heart-felt numbers. Laughing at these tender moments might show a quirkiness to Don Alfonso."[70] As we will discover later, Don Alfonso is the

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[66] Edmund Goehring, *Three Modes of Perception in Mozart: The Philosophical, Pastoral, and Comic in* Così fan tutte, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 185.

[67] Stefan Kunze, "Über das Verhältnis von musikalisch autonomer Struktur und Textbau in Mozarts Opern: das Terzetten 'Soave sia il vento' (Nr. 10) aus *Così fan tutte*," *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1975): 220.

[68] Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetoric in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Publishing, 1997), 339.

[69] Edmund Goehring, *Three Modes of Perception in Mozart: The Philosophical, Pastoral, and Comic in* Così fan tutte, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 187.

[70] Ibid., 268.

only one truly in on the entire ruse, and so at the end of the opera, he is the one who gets the last laugh.

The next sextet brings in the maid character, Despina, who believes she is in on the joke but does not actually know that the foreign men are actually Ferrando and Guglielmo in disguise until the very end of the opera. As before, Dorabella and Fiordiligi's melodic lines are always paired together, emphasizing the characters who are being tricked and those who are doing the tricking. There is a fabulous passage at the *Molto allegro* where the ladies' melodies are paired in homophonic harmony, the soldiers' lines are paired as well, and Don Alfonso and Despina have their own individual harmonies. This contrast can represent the 'sides' of the situation on which each character falls. Eventually Don Alfonso and Despina join in homophony with the soldiers, but Dorabella and Fiordiligi remain with their paired lines on their side of the bet.

The next trio is very short and spills directly out of Guglielmo's preceding aria, with no preceding recitative. The solo exchanges are brief statements, to reflect the quarrel between Ferrando, Guglielmo, and Don Alfonso. The two soldiers sing their lines in harmony, responding to Don Alfonso's requests to keep their laughter down for fear of revealing the ruse to the ladies. The tutti portion at the end of this ensemble has Don Alfonso singing different text and melodies, but the quality of the melodies reflects the humor all the characters find in the situation, and their differing views. Ferrando and Guglielmo are amused by the preposterous nature of the whole situation. Meanwhile, Don Alfonso finds the ignorance of these men humorous, believing that their lovers

would truly be faithful. As he declares, "ma so che in piangere dee terminar (But I know it will all end in tears)."[71]

Act I Finale

The finale of the first act begins with a brief and lovely lamenting duet between the two sisters, which is abruptly interrupted when the men enter, threatening to kill themselves if the women will not have them. The sisters remain faithful to the soldiers, who pretend to poison themselves with arsenic, appearing to guarantee their deaths. This scene is chaotic and hysterical, the men pretending to be poisoned and the women in torment for their potential responsibility for this travesty. After the men drink the poison, and Don Alfonso confirms to the sisters that they will in fact die, all five characters join in shared text for a moment:

Ah, che del sole il raggio	Ah, the rays of the sun
fosco per me diventa!	Are turning to darkness for me.
Tremo: le fibre e l'anima	I tremble, I seem to feel
par che mancar si senta,	My strength, my soul now flee.
nè può la lingua o il labbro	My lips, my very tongue
accenti articolar.	Cannot form another word.[72]

This section begins in homophony, and the melody and orchestral writing evokes the text stunningly. They begin this text on a harmonic modulation as well. In the previous measure, the orchestra ends on D-Major. The beginning chord of the next is C# fully diminished seventh with a minor ninth. This shift in tone matches the image of the sun

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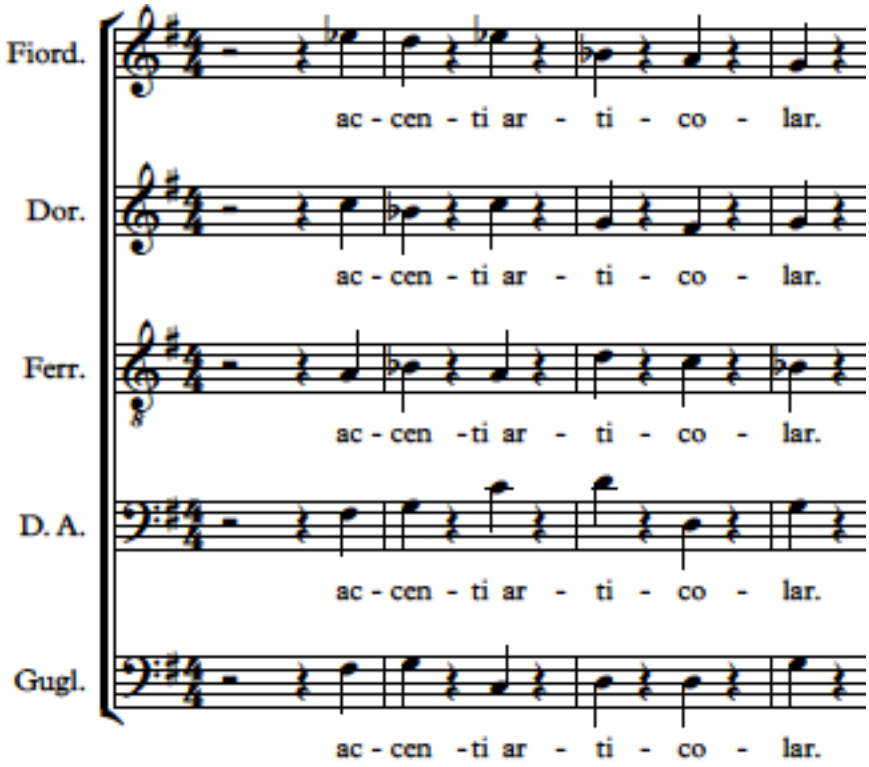
[71] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 748-749.

[72] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 760-761.

turning to darkness quite well. The texture of the orchestra then shifts on the text "tremo/I tremble", as the strings support using tremolo, a technique that literally trembles. Mozart also uses rests strategically, separating every syllable of "accenti articolar/ Cannot form another word" (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4: Act 1 Finale, scene 15 (mm. 133-136)



There is another modulation at the end of this section, this time to articulate a shift in focus. The characters move from a lamenting expressive section, to Don Alfonso expressing the urgency of the situation in the hopes to get them to act in this tense moment. He begs the ladies to have pity, and they frantically call for help, finally asking for Despina to come and assist them. Playing along with Don Alfonso, she encourages the sisters not to abandon the men in such a time of need, and takes Don Alfonso to find a

doctor and antidote for the poison. After they leave, the men and the sisters share asides to each other, sharing text with very different meanings:

Fiordiligi, Dorabella:
Evento più funesto
non si potea trovar.

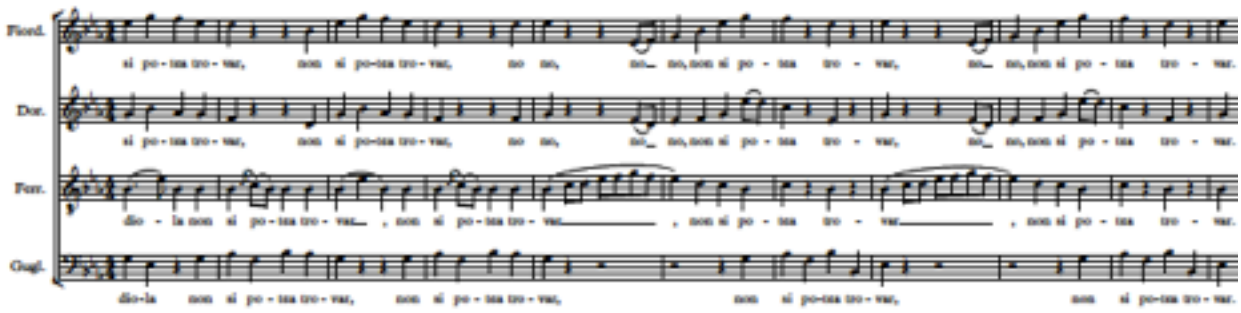
Fiordiligi, Dorabella:
A tragedy worse than this
Would be impossible to find!

Ferrando, Guglielmo (a parte):
Più bella commediola
non si potea trovar.

Ferrando, Guglielmo (aside):
A comedy finer than this
Would be impossible to find![73]

Each pair is remarking on the strange uniqueness of the situation, but their perspective dictates their take. For the sisters, it is tragedy, for the men, it is a hysterical comedy. They all repeat this final line, "non si potea trovar" four times, at first bouncing back and fourth between the pairs, and finally ending on a cadence together, but still singing in asides to each other (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5: Act I Finale, scene 15 (mm. 208-218)

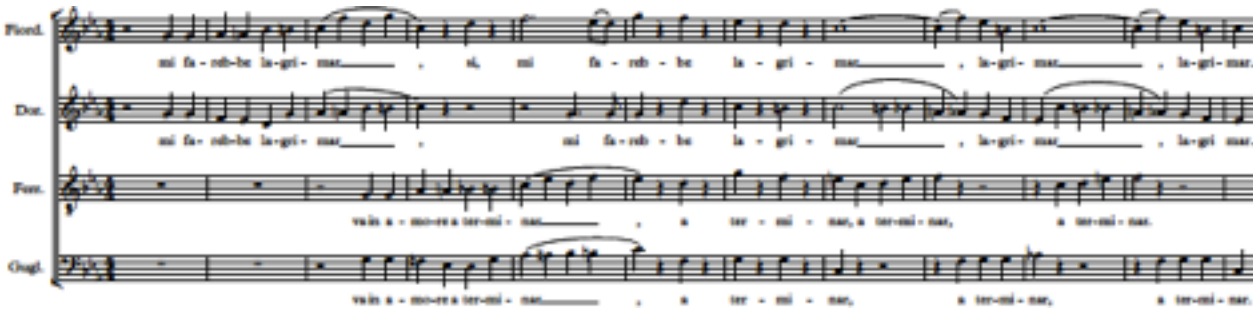


The men then sigh as a ploy to regain the attention of the sisters, prompting them to debate with each other as to the appropriate way to respond and behave in such a situation. This section ends the first portion of the finale, and is punctuated by a glorious

[73] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 762-763.

tutti passage with the four characters on stage. The sisters and the men each sing together in pairs, concluding with exchanges of chromatic passages:

Fig. 6: Act I Finale, scene 15 (mm. 279-290)



"Will surely make me weep / will it keep?"

The chromaticism on the word 'lagrimar' sounds like weeping and sighing, as the same technique on the word 'terminar' reflects the lack of grounding and the growing uncertainty the men are developing for their lovers' fidelity.

This middle ensemble of the finale contains active and expressive passages, moments of tutti as well as individual singing. What makes it particularly interesting, though, are the interactions between the pairs and each other. There are music and lyrical ideas shared across characters, but the ways in which they set the scenario for each character and their position in the drama is unique. This section sets up the final ensemble of the act, which ultimately coils the dramatic spring for what is to follow in the second act.

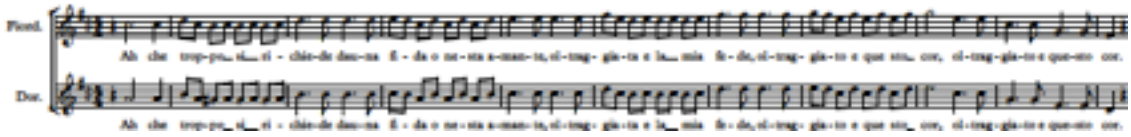
The final ensemble is articulated by changes in key, meter, and tempo. It shifts from common time to triple meter, advances to an allegro, and the key shifts from c-minor to G-Major. When this shift occurs, Don Alfonso returns with Despina disguised as

a doctor to aid the poisoned men. The modulation to a major key and the faster tempo mark an articulation in action and movement as well as a turn towards an optimistic tone for the men's condition.

This final ensemble could easily be split into two sections. The first is outlined by the men being nursed back to health by Despina the 'doctor' and the help of the sisters. Once they regain consciousness, there is a shift in texture. The scores is marked 'Allegro' at this change as well as a modulation. This begins the final passage, where the men comically attempt to woo the women and they have no idea how to react. There are many points of dramatic climax throughout the entire finale, but there is certainly movement in this final section towards an extended tutti passage with all six characters. In fact, this final ensemble is a microcosm of the entire opera. The men repeatedly request a kiss from the ladies, the ladies refuse and are offended at the prospect, and Don Alfonso and Despina stand by the side encouraging the ladies that it is harmless to go along.

The tutti ending to this ensemble continues the trend of aligning characters musically based on their role in the drama and relationships to each other. After the men request a kiss, this starts off by the women responding in parallel thirds, stunned at the forward request (see Fig. 7). They clearly take offense, marked by a strong text and sequences rising to a final descending triad.

Fig. 7: Act I Finale, scene 16 Allegro (mm. 505-515)



Ferrando and Guglielmo's lines pair together, and Despina and Don Alfonso pair off in a shared aside. The text for this portion is repeated a number of times by each character to finish the ensemble:

Fiordiligi, Dorabella:
Ah, che troppo si richiede
da una fida onesta amante!
Oltraggiata è la mia fede,
oltraggiato è questo cor.
Disperati, attossicati,
ite al diavol quanti siete!
Tardi inver vi pentirete
se più cresce il mio furor.

Despina, Don Alfonso: (*da sè*)
Un quadretto più giocondo
non si vide in tutto il mondo!
Quel che più mi fa da ridere
è quell'ira e quel furor,
ch'io ben so che tanto foco
cangerassi in quel d'amor.

Ferrando, Guglielmo: (*da sè*)
Un quadretto più giocondo
non s'è visto in questo il mondo!
Ma non so se finta o vera
sia quell'ira e quel furor,
né vorrei che tanto foco
terminasse in quel d'amor

Fiordiligi and Dorabella:
Ah, you are asking too much
Of a pure and faithful lover,
My honor you besmirch.
My heart you have outraged!
Now desperate, now poisoned . . .
Go to the devil, the lot of you!
This isa day you will later rue
If I choose to vent my rage!

Despina and Don Alfonso: (to themselves)
The world could not reveal
A more amusing situation,
This hilarious combination
Of frenzy and of rage.
I know well, with all this fire,
Love could be the next stage.

Ferrando and Guglielmo: (to themselves)
The world could not reveal
A more amusing situation!
I don't know if it's feigned or real,
All this frenzy and this rage,
Nor would I want, with so much fire,
Love to be its final stage.[74]

After sixteen bars of musical conversation between the men and the Don Alfonso/ Despina pairings, their music aligns into homophony. This homophonic shift marks the similarity in not only text, but their awareness of the situation. The sisters remain paired

[74] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 772-773.

and musically unique from the others. It is not until the final twenty-one bars of the entire ensemble that all six characters align in true homophony.

Act II

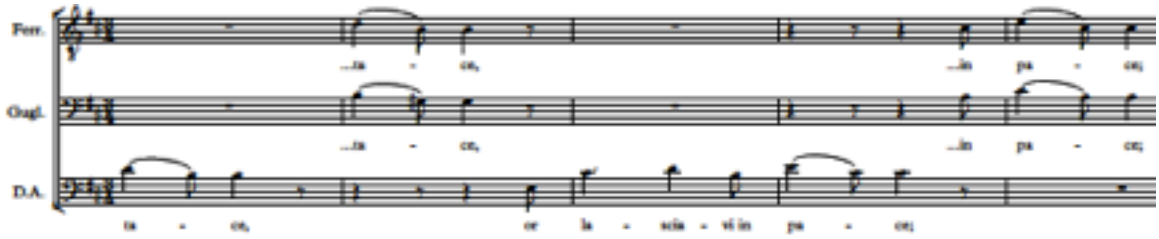
The second act of *Così* is significantly shorter than the first, but it is striking that it contains only two large mid-act ensembles, compared to the eight in the first. Considering the development of the plot, however, this drop in ensembles makes sense. The second act is much more about internal conflict and individual relationships, meaning arias and duets are the most effective musical method for the characters to communicate to each other and themselves. Additionally, the characters begin to stray from each other in motivations and emotional status. While in the first act the sisters function on similar planes, as do Guglielmo and Ferrando, their feelings about the developing situations shift individually. For this reason, arias are more appropriate settings in order to reveal individual character psychology.

The second act does not contain an introductory ensemble, rather dives right into a recitative between the sisters and Despina, who are quarreling over the merits of their fidelity. The first ensemble comes about ten minutes into the act, after the men have made a spectacle as a 'last attempt' at capturing the attention of Fiordiligi and Dorabella. The ladies still do not respond in the way that Don Alfonso would hope or expect, and so the brief ensemble that follows is Don Alfonso truly playing the puppet master.

It may seem suspect to call this piece an ensemble or quartet. In the score, it does not have a title, but just exists as 'Number 22.' The translation I am relying on for this

study heads it as 'Number 22 Quartet.' Whether or not it is a quartet, however, depends on the definition of ensemble. There are no tutti sections whatsoever in this ensemble. Everything sung is either individual, or the brief statements made simultaneously by the two men. Most of the ensemble consists of Don Alfonso: he begins with a long monologue, telling the men he is fed up with their formal manners and will speak for them. He tells the ladies that the men apologize for their rash behavior and now suffer in silence for their affection. The men agree, echoing with a single word, "tace / in silence," and as Don Alfonso says they will leave the ladies in peace, they echo again "in pace / in peace" (see Fig. 8).[75] His next utterance the men repeat verbatim lyrically as well as musically (Ferrando harmonizes above Guglielmo singing the original melody).

Fig. 8: Act II, scene 4 (mm. 22-26)



The ladies still have not responded, and at this point Don Alfonso becomes frustrated and urges the ladies to act. When they still do not do or say a thing, Despina steps in and offers to respond for them:

[75] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 792-793.

Don Alfonso (*alle donne*)	**Don Alfonso (*to the ladies*)**
Suvvia, rispondete.	Come now, an answer.
Guardate e ridete?	You are just staring . . . and giggling.
Despina (*si mette davanti le due donne*)	**Despina (*moving in front of the two ladies*)**
Per voi la risposta	I will give them
a loro darò	An answer for you.

And this is where the ensemble ends. Despina repeats her lines a second time with sixteenth-note elaborations, and with only an eighth-note rest after the cadence on a quarter note, she launches into a recitative preceding her aria. There is no movement towards a homophonic tutti, only individual passages. Not even every character on stage at this point is involved in the music. In fact, this ensemble is interesting because all the characters singing are addressing the sisters, but the sisters do not sing at all for the entire duration of the quartet. There are six characters on stage, but this ensemble is only a quartet.

Quite some time passes before the next ensemble, which occurs just before the beginning of the finale. This next ensemble barely passes as such, but deserves brief mentioning if only for its triumphant declaration of the opera's title. The men are devastated because the sisters have betrayed them and promised to marry them as the disguised strangers. Don Alfonso consoles them in the most bitter way, stating that it should come as no surprise that the hearts of women stray. He himself just shrugs, and finds no surprise in it any longer. He asks the men to repeat after him: "Così fan tutte / Thus are they all!"[76] After their betrayal, it comes as no surprise that the men would join

[76] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 838-839.

Don Alfonso in his bitter and cold philosophy. They state it clearly, with a strong cadence and rests between each syllable to make very obvious how they feel.

Act II Finale

After a short recitative from Despina announcing that the sisters are ready to marry the men, the series of ensembles that constitute the second act finale begin. The first piece is essentially a duet between Despina and Don Alfonso with a passage for the chorus. They are setting up the hall for the ceremony. Once it is set, the next piece begins with the chorus blessing the brides and grooms as they enter. After their song of welcome ends, the two couples sing in four-part homophony. While the sisters sing of a future full of love and joy, the men sharing this text drips with irony. As audience members we cannot believe the ruse will last through the wedding, surely putting a damper on this love and joy. They also make a comment that Despina deserves a reward for her involvement, but this comes from different motivations depending on the character. For Fiordiligi and Dorabella, Despina deserves a reward for helping to coax them to accept the men as their new lovers. For the men, Despina deserves a reward for helping to reveal the fickle nature of their lovers' hearts, potentially preventing further heartbreak later. This irony in Ferrando and Guglielmo sharing these words is emphasized by the fact that they are singing in harmony with the ladies, putting on a face to appear to join in the joy with them. The chorus is repeated again, and once they finish the men remark that they have everything they could ever desire, which of course in reality could not be further

from the truth. The sisters are filled with passion, and the couples share compliments before toasting to their love.

After an extended rest, usually staged as an actual raising of the glass and drinking, Fiordiligi begins a section marked as 'Larghetto' in the score. A slow tempo marking over a ¾-meter, as well as arpeggiating strings and woodwinds, creates a pastoral affect for this trio. All four characters sing in canon: Fiordiligi begins and states the theme, which is picked up by her 'lover' Ferrando, and then Dorabella joins with a modification to fit the harmony. With their lovely intertwining melodies, they sing of abandoning any sorrows, and no longer dwelling on the past. The sisters hope to abandon the episodes of denying the men and driving them to poison themselves. Meanwhile, it is an absolute farce for Ferrando to sing of forgetting the past. When Guglielmo joins, he has a separate text and his melodic line differs in texture. Rather than arcing, legato lines, he has ascending, syllabic sixteenth notes, singing:

Guglielmo (*da sè*)	**Guglielmo (*to himself*)**
(Ah, bevessero del tossico	(Ah, if only it were poison they drank,
queste volpi senza onor!)	Those shameless little tarts!)[77]

This trio is ended by an articulation with Don Alfonso's entrance. The meter shifts to common time, and the tempo is now marked 'Allegro,' and is also punctuated by a modulation from Eb major to E major. Don Alfonso enters to inform the couples that the notary has arrived, and everything is ready, and they ask him to enter. Despina enters dressed as an old man, and announces herself as Notary Beccavivi. She reads the contract

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[77] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 846-847.

aloud, and the couples hastily agree verbally, but the women are the only ones to sign the document before they are interrupted. Drums are heard offstage, as if coming from the distance, and the chorus 'Bella vita militar' which accompanied the soldiers as they departed is heard distantly as well. Dorabella, Fiordiligi, as well as Despina are all incredibly confused. The men join in pretending to be confused, and they sing in homophony: "Che rumor! Che canto è questo! / What is that commotion, that singing?"[78] Don Alfonso goes to check, and comes back with horrible news, punctuated by a modulation.

Don Alfonso's words are so dramatic it is comedic:

Don Alfonso	Oh mercy! Gods above!
Misericordia! Numi del cielo!	What a dreadful situation! I'm trembling,
Che caso orribile! Io tremo, io gelo!	cold with fright!
Gli sposi vostri…	Your fiancés…

Don Alfonso has revealed long ago his true feelings, and we know he is not actually frightened, nor does he find this situation dreadful. He is more than likely taking great pleasure from this dramatic reveal, forcing the sisters to face their unfaithful behavior. In a panic, the sisters shove the men into a room to hide and try to eradicate any evidence of what was just about to occur. In their flurry, Don Alfonso continues to console them that everything will be fine and no harm is done. Again, the irony in his actions and words is almost painful. The sisters take a moment to compose themselves, and wonder aloud their terror at being discovered. Little do they know, they were discovered from the first moment.

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[78] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 850-851.

The ‘scena ultima’ is punctuated with another modulation that marks the re-entrance of the men dressed as themselves again in soldiers’ uniforms. They continue the ruse, ironically declaring their joy at returning to their faithful lovers. The soldiers sing in harmony, and Don Alfonso responds, joining in on the continued lie. He acts genuinely surprised, and asks when and how they have returned so quickly. They answer with a non-answer, “Richiamati da regio contrordine / Suddenly recalled by royal orders,” and continue to make references to the fidelity of their fiancées.[79] The ladies remain silent, too terrified to say a word.

Conveniently, Guglielmo asks to have his trunk put in the same room in which the ladies believe the Albanians are hiding. He claims to have seen a man hiding, as well as a notary, hoping to pull a confession from the sisters. Despina comes forward and reveals herself, thinking she has been very clever, but in reality the men have known everything all along. Now comes a shining moment of complex action that goes unnoticed without understanding the words of each character:

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[79] Lorenzo Da Ponte, “Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers,” in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 854-855.

Ferrando, Guglielmo	**Ferrando and Guglielmo**
Una furba ugale a questa	Where could one ever find a girl
dove mai si troverà?	As clever as this one!
Despina	**Despina**
Una furba che m'agguagli	Where could one ever find a girl
dove mai si troverà?	As clever as me!
Fiordiligi, Dorabella	**Fiordiligi and Dorabella**
La Despina! La Despina!	It's Despina! It's Despina!
Non capisco come va.	I don't understand what's happening
Don Alfonso (*piano agli amanti*)	**Don Alfonso (*softly, to the men*)**
Già cader lasciai le carte:	I've dropped the documents
raccoglietele con arte.	Pick them up as if by chance.[80]

It is at this point that the veil begins to lift for the three women, who are all being duped at various levels. Even though Despina thinks she is in on it and orchestrating the entire trick with Don Alfonso, he is really the mastermind who is using Despina as one of his puppets as well.

What follows is a dramatic duet passage between the men. They follow Don Alfonso's lead, and Ferrando pretends to 'find' the marriage contract on the ground, claiming that since they have signed it there is no denying their betrayal. With a tempo marking of 'Allegro', sixteenth-note scales in the strings during this passage create a tumultuous feeling of rage. It is clear that the soldiers have been bottling their disappointment and anger in order to maintain the lie, and at this point they are finally able to release their true rage.

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[80] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 856-857.

The sisters beg for forgiveness. After a grand pause, the texture of the orchestra shifts, the strings now playing rocking eighth note intervals. The tempo marking slows to 'Andante,' and the melodies seem to float gently above. Their words are powerful and desperate:

A signor, son rea di morte	Oh sir, I am morally guilty
e la morte io sol vi chiedo.	And death is all I ask from you.
Il mio fallo tardi vedo:	Too late do I see my error.
con quel ferro un sen ferite	Plunge this sword into my breast.
che no merita pietà!	Which deserves no pity.[81]

The particular request to plunge a sword into their hearts is a callback to the scene in which the men announce that they will be leaving, and the sisters make the same request because their pain of being left behind is too great. The difference in context for this request is striking and moving.

The men ask for more explanation, and sixteenth notes return in the strings again, echoing their rage. This time, however, the orchestration does not shift when Fiordiligi responds, for she is full of rage as well. She points blame at Despina and Don Alfonso for tricking them. Don Alfonso surprises the ladies, by gladly accepting blame and pointing the men to go look in the room where the Albanians supposedly hide. When they return, they carry their disguises and reveal the entire scenario. Mozart and Da Ponte wittily quote scenes from earlier, proving that these men witnessed each moment of the betrayal. Ferrando quotes the scene in which they first met the sisters as the Albanians seen in Figure 9.

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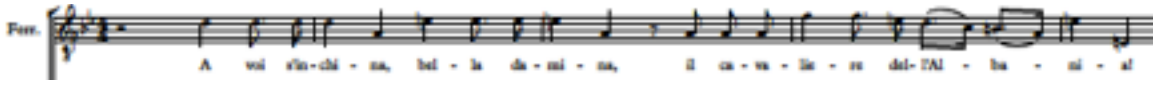
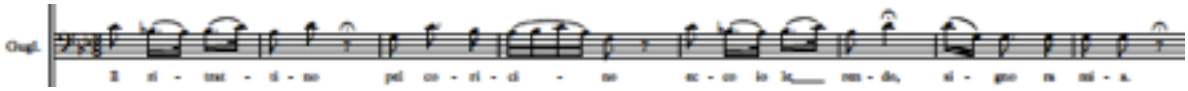
[81] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 858-859.

Fig. 9: Act II Finale, scene 18 Allegretto (mm. 496-500)



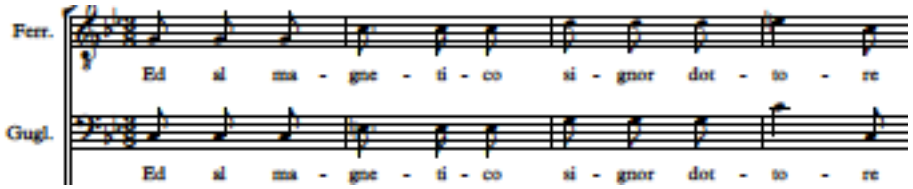
Guglielmo makes reference to the heart duet with Dorabella, seen in Figure 10.

Fig. 10: Act II Finale, scene 18 Allegretto (mm. 501-508)



And then they both address Despina by mentioning the doctor who healed them from being poisoned, as in Figure 11.

Fig. 11: Act II Finale, scene 18 Allegretto (mm. 509-512)



A tutti section unfolds after Don Alfonso explains his reasoning for orchestrating the entire situation, and encourages the couples to forgive each other and laugh at the ridiculousness of the joke. As the sisters beg for forgiveness and promise to love them better, all the while in paired harmony, the men tentatively accept their words, singing in paired harmony themselves. Meanwhile, Despina seems to be murmuring to herself over syllabically set eighth notes, concerned that she was so easily tricked.

After one final grand pause, the opera ends in a three-quarter-time homophonic sextet. Dramatically, it seems rather abrupt. While the characters have been slowly moving towards resolution and a potentially happy ending, the way the story finishes is

rather unfitting. After almost three hours of ridiculous disguises, swapping lovers, a fake wedding, and then a big reveal, the opera ends with a hymn-like sextet that declares a flaky moral. The text seems to present an elaborate 'ignorance is bliss' message:

Furtunato l'uom che prende	Happy is the man who looks
ogni cosa pel buon verso,	On the bright side of everything,
e tra i casi e le vicende	And in all circumstances and trails
da ragion guidar si fa.	Lets himself be guided by reason.
Quel che suole altrui far piangere	What only makes the others weep
fia per lui cagion di riso,	Will be for him a source of joy,
e del mondo in mezzo ai turbini	And amid the storms of this world
bella calma troverà.	He will find his peace in every season.[82]

In this case, ignorance probably would have been bliss for both couples. The storyline of the opera is rather ridiculous, and so there may not be a more effective way to wrap up loose ends. All the while, the sudden and rather uncharacteristic ending forces the audience to wonder: what happened to Don Alfonso to make him so bitter?

The ways in which Mozart and Da Ponte wrote ensembles make a stunning opera, regardless of how one may feel about the subject matter. Understanding the characters and their relationships is only enhanced by doing a close reading of each of the ensembles. Textual and musical interactions between characters changes from scene to scene based on emotional state and situational drama. What is important to remember is that Da Ponte wrote the ensembles in the libretto, and Mozart chose to set them in certain ways in order to serve the drama most effectively.

Following Rabin's 'ensemble principle', it seems that Mozart does not adhere to this convention in this opera. One particular element that stands out is musical alignment

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[82] Lorenzo Da Ponte, "Così Fan Tutte or The School for Lovers," in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, trans. J.D. McClatchy, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 862-865.

of characters on the same side of the ruse. Rabin terms this 'a due' singing, and also argues that the music used for these lines indicates the strength of their status in the given scenario.[83] The story of *Così* lends itself more to polyphonic, interwoven textures, rather than adhering to a convention of culminating ensembles in passages of homophony. When Mozart uses homophony in *Così* (the prime example for this opera is the Act I trio 'Soave sia il vento') it is all the more striking because it is a rarity. The ways in which this is unique or particularly interesting will be more clear when juxtaposed against the techniques Cimarosa takes in *Matrimonio.*

[83] Ronald Rabin, "Mozart, Da Ponte, and the Dramaturgy of Opera Buffa" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1996), 410.

CHAPTER V

IL MATRIMONIO SEGRETO

When Leopold II rose to the throne in Austria after Joseph II's death, he appointed Domenico Cimarosa as the new *Kapellmeister* to replace Antonio Salieri. Almost immediately after Cimarosa's appointment, Leopold requested an opera buffa and provided the court poet, Giovanni Bertati, as librettist. Bertati chose the story from an English play, *The Clandestine Marriage*, by George Coleman and David Garrick, but relocated the setting to Italy and set the characters at six. Cimarosa worked quickly, finishing the opera in a mere month. *Il Matrimonio Segreto* opened at the Burgtheater on February 7, 1792, just two months after Mozart's death in early December 1791.

This opera is all about love and marriage. Carolina, the daughter of Geronimo, has married her lover Paolino in secret. We never learn his exact duties, but Paolino is employed in some manner by Geronimo. They have been married for some time now, and have decided to devise a scheme in which they can reveal the news and have it be a happy celebration rather than cause shock and disgrace upon Carolina's family. The plan is to have Count Robinson marry Carolina's sister, Elisetta. The excitement of Elisetta becoming a Countess and bringing higher status and honor to the family name would be the perfect opportunity to reveal the news. With the distraction of the wedding, everyone will surely take it as additional good news. When Count Robinson arrives, he is quite disappointed that Elisetta is his betrothed, because he is immediately taken with Carolina. Carolina attempts to thwart his advances, but only seems to encourage him to try harder.

Elisetta is highly offended by both of their behavior. Meanwhile, Geronimo's sister and the sisters' aunt, Fidalma, is head over heels for Paolino and intends to woo him. She is convinced his strange behavior must be due to his love for her. Hilarious scenarios unfold, with Carolina and Paolino skirting advances from their suitors, and eventually decide to just run away. They are revealed, which causes quite a scandal, but ultimately everyone is happy. Carolina and Paolino can live happily married in the open, and the Count agrees to take Elisetta as his bride.

Il Matrimonio Segreto received hundreds of performances across Europe in multiple languages in Cimarosa's lifetime alone (d. 1801). In fact, there are many stories about the Emperor adoring the work so much that he demanded an encore performance back at the palace immediately after the premier production.[84] *Matrimonio* is decidedly Cimarosa's most well-known opera and composition in general, with regular productions by modern opera companies each year.

Act I

The first ensemble of the opera does not come until after we learn of the secret marriage between Paolino and Carolina, and the proposed marriage between Elisetta and the Count has been announced. At this point, Elisetta has let the marriage proposal go to her head, and demands respect because she is bound to be a Countess. Carolina, however, mocks her with thick sarcasm:

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[84] Nicki Rossi and Talmage Fauntleroy, *Domenico Cimarosa: His Life and His Operas*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 122.

Le faccio un inchino,	I curtsy to the accomplished Countess.
Contessa garbata;	
Per essere dama si vede ch'è nata.	One sees you were born to have a title.

This trio fits Rabin's 'ensemble principle' well. Carolina begins, then Elisetta has an extended solo section teasing her sister, and finally Fidalma scolds the girls extensively for their childish behavior. Ultimately, her attempts are unsuccessful, as they all begin to sing at the same time, the sisters teasing and mocking each other, and the aunt scolding them. The imitative canons create a dense polyphony that enhances the feeling of chaos inherent in bickering or a quarrel.

The next ensemble is labeled as a Cavatina in the score, as it begins with the Count's introductory aria that leads into a sextet that fits Rabin's and Platoff's principles. The ensemble sections of this scene, however, function as choral responses to the Count's singing. As he greets the family and makes his entrance, he must stop to catch his breath, at which point all the characters on stage encourage him to rest before he proceeds. When reduced to its basic elements, this ensemble does fall in line with Rabin's principle. The count's opening aria is a solo declamation, and the ensemble is concluded with a tutti section after an exchange between the ensemble and the count.

The next ensemble, and the last before the extensive finale of the first act, is a clever and lovely quartet. The Count has just discovered that Elisetta is his betrothed, but upon meeting the family he was taken with Carolina and hoped she was his bride. All the solo exclamations at the start of this aria are asides, written in parentheses in the texts. They all seem to freeze in time as each character (the Count, Elisetta, Carolina, and Fidalma) reveals his or her thoughts and emotions in that moment. Eventually the parts

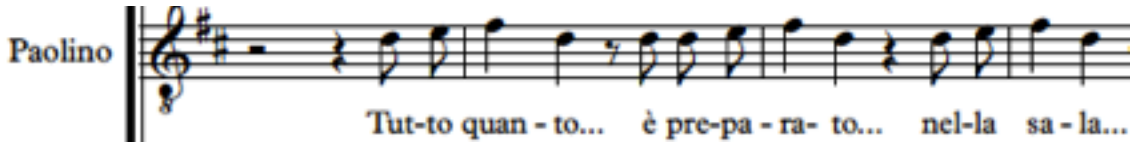
begin to overlap, first the sisters, then joined by the count. Eventually they all sing in tutti, but singing his or her own text as they are all continuing their own asides. In this way this quartet seems reminiscent of that from Mozart's *Idomeneo*, each character expressing particular emotions on the situation to him or herself at the same time as the other characters do the very same thing.

Act I Finale

In the score, the Act I Finale is split into four scenes Just before the finale begins, Carolina has attempted to fend off the Count by explaining that she is a simple woman and not fit to marry him. She tries her hardest without revealing that she is indeed married, sticking to the plan to reveal the marriage only once the Count has married Elisetta. Unfortunately the Count remains persistent, and the Finale begins when Elisetta, Geronimo, and Fidalma enter. It begins with a series of solo iterations, Geronimo asks Elisetta if what she says is true, that she is discontent with the Count. What proceeds is a conversation between the three: Elisetta confirming that she is unhappy with the Count's behavior, Fidalma confirming that he has acted strangely, and Geronimo scolding her for expecting the Count to worship at her feet.

Paolino interrupts them to show the wedding preparations. There is a comical moment here when Geronimo asks him to repeat himself, and the way Paolino responds is written quite creatively. This time he repeats the text, but separates every few words by a rest to assure Geronimo has heard and understood him, additionally the music is more repetitive than the initial statement (see Fig. 12).

Fig. 12: Act I Finale, scene 13



Geronimo responds, "Vanne al diavolo! Forse credi ch'io sia sordo?/ Go to hell, fool! Perhaps you believe I am deaf?"[85] Elisetta and Fidalma respond to Paolino's request, with a passage almost entirely in parallel thirds. The text they sing is then repeated by all four characters on stage at this moment in a tutti homophonic passage. This first 'scene' as it is marked in the score fits the ensemble principle quite well, with solo lines by each character moving into a tutti passage. The ending of this section is also punctuated by all four characters exiting, and Carolina and the Count reenter.

This time, the Count has become even more aggressive in his advances, but Carolina continues to try and ward him off. They exchange solos, which become more and more brief and eventually overlap. This overlap could be considered the tutti passage for this scene, because as it ends the next scene begins. Elisetta interrupts the two, accusing the Count of betrayal and expressing anger at him as well as at her sister. Her extended solo at the beginning of this scene could be considered in the quality of rage as seen in larger rage arias.[86]

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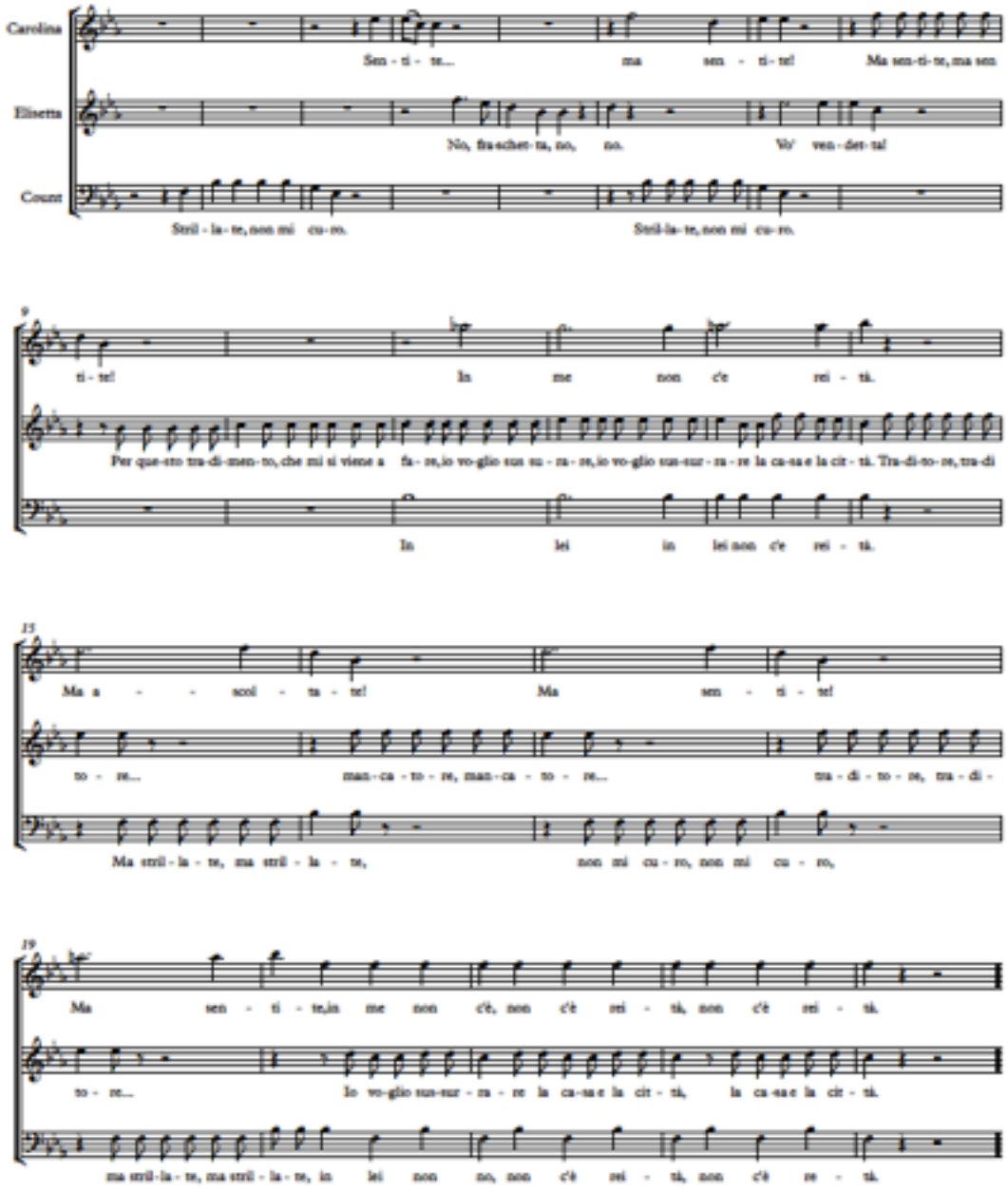
[85] Domenico Cimarosa and Bertati Giovanni, I*l Matrimonio Segreto,* ed. Franco Donatoni (Milan: Ricordi, 1979), 208.

[86] Because it is not the focus of this study, I will not take time to delve into character or aria types. For a detailed description of these conventions, I recommend the second section of Mary Hunter's book on opera buffa and culture in Vienna. See Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 93-243.

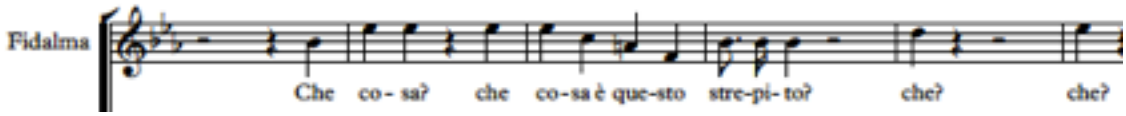
After her statement of rage, an argument ensues between the sisters and the Count. Although the argument is laid out in solo lines, they begin to overlap which matches the tone of how an emotional argument might sound (see Fig. 13). At first, only two characters will sing over each other, but eventually they all sing together. Their texts vary, but the music becomes more homophonic moving towards their final cadence.

Fig. 13: Act I Finale, scene 15



When Fidalma breaks up the argument, the tone of the music changes as well. She is trying to get a grasp on the situation and understand what is really going on, so her line begins more slowly, with large rests separating words of questions (see Fig. 14).

Fig. 14: Act I Finale, scene 15



She calms everyone down and points out how ridiculous they are behaving, and to quiet down before Geronimo returns. When he does, everyone suddenly becomes silent, not wanting to give away the drama. When he asks what is going on, no one responds. His questions are answered only by the accompaniment of the orchestra.

This awkward moment leads into a set of asides by each character. Paolino begins, and then everyone joins. Every character comments to themselves on the awkward silence in the room:

Tutti:
Che tristo silenzio!

Carolina, Elisetta, Fidalma, Count:
Così non va bene.
Parlare conviene
Parlare si dè.

Paolino, Geronimo:
Sospetto mi viene.
Vi sono, vi son
delle scene saperlo si dè.

All:
What a sad silence!

Carolina, Elisetta, Fidalma, Count:
This is no good.
Someone should speak.

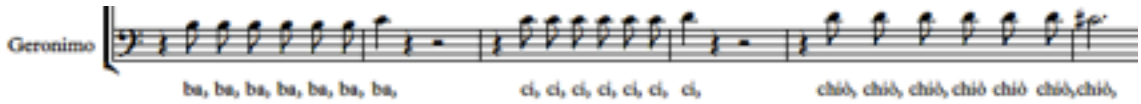
Paolino, Geronimo:
I suspect it is.
There are,
There are scenes you know.

Geronimo breaks the ‘silence’ in what is marked as a Recitativo, demanding that the girls explain what is happening. Elisetta begins, once again to express rage but not

giving any actual information to her father. Carolina puts the blame on the Count, but Elisetta becomes outraged again, thinking that her sister is really the guilty party. They both demand that Fidalma explains things since she is not involved, but she cannot and will not because she does not know the whole story.

The count steps in, and reveals that he does not fancy the bride he has been given, but prefers the younger sister. Either from deafness or because of the pure ridiculous nature of the scenario, Geronimo blurts out that they are all full of nonsense, singing nonsense syllables himself, seen in Figure 15.

Fig. 15: Act I Finale, scene 16



The final section now begins, as everyone simultaneously attempts to explain to Geronimo what is going on, only causing more chaos. Texts vary, but generally the two sisters share the same text, and Paolino and the Count share the same text, while Fidalma and Geronimo have their own. This indicates where people are in terms of understanding things and their personal investment in the situation. Elisetta and Carolina are both invested in getting the Count to marry Elisetta. The Count and Paolino are both in love with Carolina. And Geronimo and Fidalma are confused and overwhelmed by the varying stories being given by different people. This extended tutti section in homophony ends the finale and the act, providing plenty of conflict to resolve in the second act.

Act II

Like *Così*, the second act of *Matrimonio* contains fewer ensembles than the first. The drama in the second act centers more around individual developments surrounding the plot conflicts. Additionally, the second act lacks an introductory ensemble, and starts off with a recitative before a duet. Thus, the first mid-act ensemble does not occur until fifteen minutes into the second act, a trio. Paolino, in trying to confide in Fidalma about his secret marriage with Carolina, has led her to believe her feelings for him are reciprocated. This ensemble begins after Fidalma reveals her willingness to let him confide is because her intentions are to wed Paolino, sending him into a frenzy. Of course, to add to the humor, Fidalma believes Paolino's energetic response is out of excitement and love, not confusion and worry. Paolino repeats his worry over and over:

Sento, oimè! che mi vien male,	
già mi manca quasi il fiato,	Oh, my head, I feel like dying.
Per pietà, che in svenimento,	And my breath is failing, and failing.
io sento già cader.	I think I die.[87]

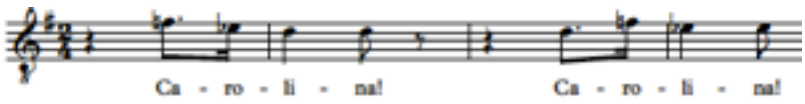
Fidalma consoles him, that his feelings of worry will pass, that he is just overwhelmed with happiness and joy. But finally he works himself up to the point of fainting, at which point Fidalma seeks help for his condition, and naturally Carolina answers the call.

When asked what he was doing, Fidalma replies that Paolino was so overcome with love for her that he fainted. Fidalma exits to retrieve things from her room to help Paolino recover, and Carolina wonders to herself what has happened and gathers her strength: "Su, favella, ch'io mi sento lacerar / Must be steady or I'll surely lose my

[87] Giovanni Bertati, *The Secret Marriage: An Opera in Two Acts by Domenico Cimarosa*, trans. Conrad and Lisbeth Rawski (1950), 21.

mind."[88] When Paolino awakes, he utters Carolina's name twice. The first is notated as 's'alza', or 'rises', and consists of three notes descending (see Fig. 16). It sounds as if he is sighing, and only just waking up to see the face of his wife. But when he comes to and realizes what she has walked in on, he repeats her name in surprise, this time in a more declamatory manner.

Fig. 16: Act II, scene 3



He urges her to leave, that he will explain everything later, but Carolina is far to suspicious now to just leave him be. Carolina demands an explanation, underneath which Paolino begs her to remain quiet and leave. In tutti harmony, they sing separate texts:

Paolino	**Paolino**
non mi posso, no qui spiegar.	I cannot explain here
Carolina	**Carolina**
per più farmi delirar!	it makes me boiling mad

Their cadence, sung together, is followed by a change in orchestral texture from sparse eighth notes to rocking sixteenth-note figures, which punctuates Fidalma returning.

Fidalma, surprised to see Paolino on his feet, offers her hand to kiss. Such intimacy is too bold, and he refuses, Carolina asks that she be gentle for he has just awoken. Fidalma insists, and on a staccato eighth-note arpeggio, demands that Carolina stay out of it (see Fig. 17).

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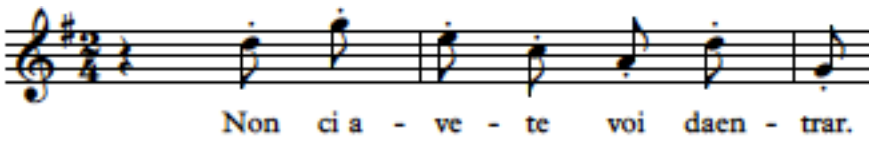
[88] Giovanni Bertati, *The Secret Marriage: An Opera in Two Acts by Domenico Cimarosa*, trans. Conrad and Lisbeth Rawski (1950), 22.

Fig. 17: Act II, scene 3



This strong statement then ends the individual statements of the ensemble, and launches into the homophonic tutti passage that ends the trio. This ensemble is interesting up to this point because of its various groupings. The ensemble begins as an exchange between Paolino and Fidalma, then a pairing with Paolino and Carolina, and finally all three together. The final passage of the trio is all homophonic harmonization between the three characters, and Paolino and Carolina share the same text while Fidalma has her own:

Fidalma
Di qualunque alla presenza
posso dar tal confidenza
a colui che ho da sposar

Fidalma
In the presence of anyone
I can give this confidence
to him, to the one I will marry

Carolina, Paolino
Questa certa confidenza
di fanciulle alla presenza che stia ben,
che stia ben non mi par

Carolina, Paolino
Such confidence is not proper
in the presence of young ladies,
Familiarity often offends those with good manners.

There is something subtly hilarious about Fidalma insisting that she can behave however she likes in front of the man she will marry, when that man is in fact already married to the other woman on stage at that moment. The repeated V-I cadences at the end of the ensemble reinforce Fidalma's stubbornness, and her lack of awareness.

The next ensemble of the second act is also a trio, this time with Fidalma, Elisetta, and Geronimo. In her attempts to keep the marriage secret as well as thwart the advances

of the Count, Carolina has instilled ridiculous notions in the minds of her sister and aunt. Fidalma and Elisetta are convinced that Carolina is pursuing the Count as well as Paolino, and have decided that the only solution is to send her to a convent until the whole thing blows over. This trio begins after the two ladies have proposed the idea to Geronimo, but he hesitates in deciding. They immediately launch into badgering him, with syllabic sixteenth notes in harmony sung at a quick tempo, insisting on a decision in their favor. He responds in a similar manner, annoyed at their persistence. He requests that they stop screaming and speak quietly and gently. This plays into the running joke that Geronimo is virtually deaf, and the only way he hears is by speaking loudly and clearly, but he is consistently chastising people for speaking to him as if he is deaf.

When they do, inevitably Geronimo cannot hear a word, and he sings in tutti with the ladies asking them to speak up but not scream. He asks them what they have said, and exasperated they explain that they spoke like angels and he still did not hear. There are a series of back-and-forth individual exchanges, all culminating in a final tutti in homophony between the three. The text remains essentially the same, the two ladies are insisting upon an answer and Geronimo is annoyed at their persistence and loud nagging. The independent statements in this ensemble are shared, Fidalma and Elisetta mostly sing together, and there is a homophonic tutti section in the middle as well as the end.

The final ensemble before the finale of the second act is a quintet, all the principals except for Paolino. Carolina has just discovered that she will be sent to a convent, and this ensemble is a dramatic climax for the opera. Carolina begins by calmly requesting a moment to catch her breath, that she has been falsely accused and it is quite

ridiculous that her own sister and aunt have become her rivals in love. She turns to the Count, asking him to reveal that she never pursued him, to which he replies: "Quest'amabile ragazza… / What a lovely little girl." Clearly his response only hurts her case, and Fidalma, Elisetta, and Geronimo all become more persistent in their decision.

In the following tutti passage, the three accusers sing in homophony, while Carolina and the Count sing simultaneously. At this point, the Count is aligned with Carolina because the whole situation has got quite out of control and he wants to escape just as she does. This is reflected in the way the characters are grouped together. This unfolds in the final tutti passage, which is made up of these exchanges of two versus three, and finally builds to a rather brief homophonic ending (about ten measures). The ensemble ends leaving the audience thinking Carolina must reveal the truth or she is doomed to be sent away. Will the Count actually marry Elisetta, or is he so fed up he will abandon any notion? This ensemble certainly functions to coil the dramatic spring.

Act II Finale

Now we arrive at the finale for the second act. The first section of the finale is a duet between Paolino and Carolina, as they are attempting to sneak out of the house and run away together to avoid any further conflict. Paolino begins, coaxing Carolina to follow him despite her reservations and fears, and Carolina shares her nervous feelings. They then sing together in homophony about the promise the future brings for them. They are able to exit, and Elisetta comes in having heard voices from another room.

Elisetta heard voices and a door quietly shut, and she is absolutely convinced that the Count is in Carolina's room seducing her. She must tell everyone, and she wakes Fidalma and Geronimo to include them in the drama. When she makes this decision, the texture of the orchestra shifts from *sforzando* lilting triplets to ascending and pounding eighth notes marked at Allegro. The staccato eighth-note clusters of three at the end of every other measure mimic the knocking noise of Elisetta knocking on doors.

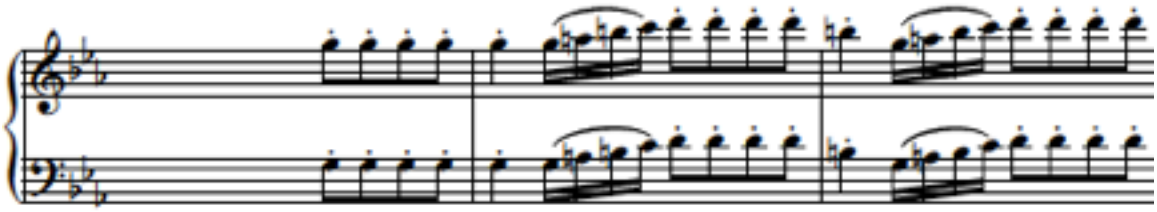
There are then individual statements from the three, Elisetta explaining the situation, Fidalma trying to clear up her confusion, and Geronimo unable to believe this shocking story. These individual statements then move to homophony in tutti for the three, all of them shouting to get the Count to come out and explain himself, with rather strong words:

Tutti	**All**
Conte, Conte perfido malnato!	Count, Count treacherous inbred!
Conte, Conte indegno, scellerato,	Count, Count unworthy, wicked,
fuori, fuori vi vogliamo	out, out there we know
che scoperto siete già.	that you are discovered.

This section ends when the Count enters, the articulation for the beginning of a new passage. When the Count enters from the balcony rather than from Carolina's room, as they believed he would, they are all quite shocked. He demands an explanation, to which the three join in homophony to apologize and ask for forgiveness for their mistake. The Count is not amused, and asks: "Ubriachi voi sarete! / You must be drunk!" Elisetta insists they are not, and that although they were wrong about the Count, something suspicious was going on in Carolina's room.

Now Elisetta is on her own, as Fidalma, Geronimo, and the Count say she must be dreaming. But up until this point, Carolina has not proved her innocence, and they agree they ought to check just to be sure. They make this decision in a homophonic statement together, and go to Carolina's door to confront her. The knocking figure returns once again as Elisetta bangs on the door (see Fig. 18).

Fig. 18 Act II Finale, scene 19



Elisetta, Fidalma, and Geronimo demand Carolina comes out and explain herself by singing together in tutti, while the Count stands by and curiously observes. There is a dramatic shift to Largo when Carolina comes from her room with Paolino.

They can hardly believe it, Elisetta, Fidalma and Geronimo are completely aghast:

Or che vedo io resto estatica!	I am amazed!
Quest'è un'altra novità.	This is a new situation.

There is no way that Carolina and Paolino can continue to hide their secret now. They immediately ask for forgiveness, and explain that they are in love and have been married for almost two months now. Everyone is quite surprised at this new revelation, which the couple confirms is indeed the truth. Geronimo is infuriated, and launches into a statement of his disappointment, that he has been disgraced and they must leave his house forever.

They ask for leniency, but Geronimo refuses. Even when placing the blame on

love, he will not budge. Fidalma interrupts the couple's requests to state that they deserve no mercy. By revealing their truth, Fidalma has discovered she will not be able to marry Paolino as she wished. She hopes to punish them just as Geronimo does. They are shocked at her callous response, and the Count joins in to support them. Because he has loved Carolina, he has sympathy for her plot, and announces that he will marry Elisetta if Geronimo will forgive them in full.

Geronimo and Fidalma consider the offer, to which they decide they must agree. Geronimo is disgraced, but this way his daughter can marry a Count and bring honor and prestige to their family. Geronimo does not go lightly, though:

Fuffantacci! Briconacci!	Swindlers! Rascals!
Son offeso, son sdegnato,	I am offended, I am angry,
ma vi voglio perdonar.	But I want to forgive you.

Now the conflicts for every character are resolved. Carolina and Paolino have revealed their secret and can live in happiness. Elisetta can indeed marry the Count and become a Countess. Fidalma is the only one who does not get what she desires, but by aiding in Elisetta's marriage she is satisfied. Geronimo, although disgraced, is happy at the prospect of marrying his daughter to a Count.

Having tied up all loose ends and providing a happy ending, the finale ends in an extended and joyous tutti section. Geronimo resists at first, but quickly joins in to celebrate. They have a wedding to look forward to, and they will celebrate greatly. Long melismatic passages and imitative canons create an exciting and exuberant ending. As

they all say, “io mi sento giubilar / I feel happy.” And we as the audience all do as well, seeing every secret revealed and every conflict resolved.

A close reading of *Matrimonio* makes it all the more disappointing that it is the only of Cimarosa’s operas to be regularly performed in modern opera houses. Even still, it is a wonderful thing that this opera still receives regular performances each year. With a light and funny, but truly enjoyable plot, Cimarosa created a work that provides a glimpse into not only musical convention but cultural convention of 1790s Vienna as well. Unlike Mozart, Cimarosa fits into Rabin’s ‘ensemble principle’ to a tee. While Mozart has been celebrated as being musically unique, Cimarosa’s conventional techniques enhance a story that is rife with cultural convention as well. Taking into account the drama and character relationships makes the choice of using conventional ensemble styles all the more fitting. We should not forget, either, that this opera was the very first Cimarosa wrote as the new *Kappelmeister* for the new Emperor, Leopold II. For this very reason, it is likely that Cimarosa was also choosing to stick to convention in order to please his new audience, namely the Emperor and his employer.

CHAPTER VI

THE 'ENSEMBLE OPERA': *COSÌ* AND *MATRIMONIO* AS VARYING TYPES

Dramatic Comparisons

As two opera buffa performed at the Burgtheater in Vienna just two years apart, there are natural points of comparison with some basic similarities. Each plot relies on a major secret (the secret of *Così* is certainly more devious) as the point for much of the humor. The Count rejecting Elisetta and requesting to marry Carolina, as well as Fidalma expressing her unrequited love for Paolino, are hilarious because of the entire premise of the secret marriage. The audience is in on this joke from the very beginning, just as in *Così* where we learn of the bet in the first minutes of the opera, and the characters who orchestrate the hoax often let the audience in on their thoughts of the situation as well.

The moral element of the stories differ greatly, however. In *Matrimonio* we have a light-hearted comedy about love and marriage, whereas *Così* could be taken as a lesson that women are fickle and unfaithful, but potentially also that men are equally at fault for lying and subjecting their lovers to such a test. *Matrimonio* ends with a happy ending and two marriage unions. Although the marriage of the proper couples in *Così* may be considered as implied, all characters and potentially the audience as well end the show wondering about the very decency of human nature.

One major fundamental difference in the ways these stories unfold is the presence of social hierarchies. In *Così* there is a great deal of ambiguity as to the social rank of its

characters, with the exception of Despina as the servant to the ladies. The entire story seems to exist in a social vacuum. Fiordiligi and Dorabella are sisters, but we know nothing of their parents or family. The men are soldiers, but their rank or position is never revealed, nor are their familial backgrounds mentioned. There is no indication as to how Don Alfonso is related to or even knows the rest of the characters. It is essentially up to the director to decide how to present these characters and where they fit in society.

Everything in *Matrimonio* relies on social roles and conventions. There is the hope of marrying the oldest daughter to a Count, which would raise the status of the family and potentially give the second daughter a prestigious marriage as well. Geronimo also leaps at the opportunity to pay a lower dowry price for the Count marrying Carolina rather than Elisetta. Carolina marrying Paolino, the servant, is scandalous not only for its secrecy but additionally for the crossing of social borders. As Mary Hunter explains, this opera fits in a tradition of others from the time that take place within a family somewhat lower on the social scale than nobility. But they tend to mirror noble households in that they are headed by a single male (Geronimo) and the authority traces from him to his daughters (Carolina, Elisetta) and sister (Fidalma) and then to the servants (Paolino).[89] *Così*, on the other hand, lacks all these elements. There is no family unit, save for the relationship between the sisters.

Così is not entirely unusual in this way, just starkly different from *Matrimonio*. Each opera represents a certain type and each were rather common. *Così* falls in the

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[89] Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 61.

category of works that "involve a more or less equal group of middle-ranked characters, and one or two characters in obviously dependent relation to them, usually servants."[90] All of these elements are immediately identifiable. *Così*, however, is still rather different than many contemporary works. As Mary Hunter explains, the fact that the sisters have no male relations and are not presented in relation to any figure of authority is what makes *Così* unusual. In this way, "they are, in the context of the repertory, extraordinarily dislocated from the normal social web of hierarchy and obligation."[91] For this reason, it seems that *Così* has been intentionally set up in a situation that is removed from social convention and hierarchies as a way to define it in terms of the social experiment that rests at the center of the story.

Use of Ensembles

Excluding recitatives, of the nineteen numbers in *Matrimonio*, there are eight ensembles (if we include the duets, the number goes up to thirteen). There are thirty-two numbers in *Così* total, thirteen of which are ensembles (not including duets). If we compare based on ratios of number of ensembles to the entire opera, they are essentially equivalent. In *Matrimonio* the ensembles represent 42% of the opera, and in *Così* contains 40%. This does not necessarily reflect the amount of time spent in each of these ensembles relative to the length of the entire opera, but if Rabin can make the assertion

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[90] Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 65.

[91] Ibid, 282.

that *Così* is an 'ensemble opera' purely based on number of ensembles in the show, it seems a safe step to place *Matrimonio* in the same category.

Looking at numbers and ratios, and applying Rabin's 'ensemble principle', *Matrimonio* and *Così* are logically deemed ensemble operas. Rabin's work covers sixty-eight Burgtheater operas, including *Così*. Although his research ends in 1791 and thus does not include *Matrimonio*, Rabin's work can still be considered strong context for understanding these two operas.

Rabin makes clear that the drama was just as important as convention in determining how ensembles would be styled and placed within an opera. In its simplest terms, the music is a tool used to enhance the rhetoric of the text. On a purely textual level, the ensembles hold rhetorical functions based on the drama that unfolds both before and after. In each ensemble, there is a build of situational conflict before, and the ensembles provide space for the characters to either resolve these problems or pour fuel on the fire. Bertati and Da Ponte both wrote the ensembles in the libretti themselves, and Cimarosa and Mozart respectively made choices in order to enhance the textual rhetoric through musical rhetoric. Despite the shift of focus from musical rhetoric in the final years of the eighteenth-century, Mozart and Cimarosa were presumably very well-educated in rhetoric as well as its musical manifestations.

These two operas are dramatically centered around complex relationships. For this type of story, the high numbers of ensembles is fitting. These elements involve planning and conflict, and it takes multiple characters to enact these parts of the story. In both operas, ensembles allow characters to all experience parts of the drama on stage and

share their varying perspectives with the audience who is well aware of the all sides of the story. Mozart finds these opportunities and writes music that aligns characters with each other. A prime example is given in Figure 5 from the Act I Finale of *Così.*

While there are superficial similarities between the two operas as ensemble pieces, these close readings provide a glimpse into strikingly different ways Cimarosa and Mozart wrote for opera. This uniqueness is even more striking when considered alongside Rabin's research. While Rabin focused more generally on what set Mozart apart from other contemporary opera composers, the broad scope of the work allows a solid foundation with which to assess these two works. Rabin begins his chapter on ensemble by stating that "although ensemble numbers in opera buffa are extraordinarily diverse, they almost all end the same way — with tutti singing." [92] What I aim to do, then, is to cast focus specifically on how Mozart may be different in terms of ensemble writing. Rabin is so confident in his findings that he firmly states: "whatever dialogues, disputes, alliances, or configurations take place in the body of the set piece, the participants sing together in homophony or homorhythm at the end, a convention so strong and rarely violated that it might be called the 'ensemble principle'."[93]

Cimarosa must have been a man of convention, because every single large ensemble read here adheres to the ensemble principle. What stands out is the treatment of tutti passages. The ensemble principle is broad enough that the move from individual passages to eventual homophony can happen in many ways. Rabin explains that the move

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[92] Ronald Rabin, "Mozart, Da Ponte, and the Dramaturgy of Opera Buffa" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1996), 242.

[93] Ibid.

towards vocal simultaneity usually marks a shift in focus for the characters or situation.

In *Matrimonio* there are occasional passages of imitation, canon or back and forth, but it is either extremely brief or a pathway leading to pure homophony. Rabin reveals that this is particularly more common in larger ensembles, where allowing longer individual passages would extend an ensemble a ridiculous amount. When characters sing in tutti at the close of ensembles, it is almost exclusively in homophony. This prevalence of homophony can indicate a loss of individuality. An example of this occurs in the opening of the Act II Finale. Paolino and Carolina both have individual statements, but they conclude their opening duet in interlocked thirds, indicating a shift in their relationship. At this point, they have decided to run away together, and the music emphasizes their together-ness.

Additionally, opening passages of individual statements are extremely lengthy. The best example of this technique is the Act I scene 6 Cavatina and quartet. The individual statement is uttered only by the Count, and transitions rather abruptly into a purely homophonic quartet. It may seem odd, but dramatically it fits. This is the scene in which the Count introduces himself for the first time, and the family is responding by welcoming him with joyous choruses. Another example of a lengthy individual statement comes from the Act II scene 17 quintet. Carolina sings for 69 bars before another character interrupts her. Again, this works for the drama. Carolina is begging her family not to send her to a convent, and is asking for just three more days to prove her innocence.

Mary Hunter's description of mid-act ensembles for opera buffa at this time also fits well for this opera: "the endings of mid-act large ensembles are typically also repetitive, and harmonically and melodically spectacularly uninteresting – often almost minimalistic in content."[94] In many ways this is true of *Matrimonio*. Once ensembles reach the homophonic ending passages, text and music is repeated multiple times, such as the end of the Act I scene 8 quartet, or the Act II scene 17 quintet.

There is a comedy in the use of textual and musical homophony, however, that twenty-first century ears may not immediately notice. Since mid-act ensembles in particular so often focus on conflict, and this is certainly true for *Matrimonio*, there is something comedic about seeing characters entwined in these situations to be singing the same music in lovely harmonies. The concluding passage of the Act II scene 17 quintet exemplifies this juxtaposition. Although all five characters sing homophonically with shared text, there are striking differences in the emotions they feel. So it seems that even though Cimarosa adheres to convention and these ensembles align with the principle, the choice is logical in terms of the dramatic placement of ensembles.

On the other hand, characters rarely sing in pure homophony in *Così*. Tutti passages are complex with imitation, dialogue between groups of characters on stage, or partial homophony with specific characters. Mozart is highly intentional in using music to distinguish which character is aligned with whom. The sisters are most often paired in harmony, and the men are the other most common group. Despina and Don Alfonso are the next pairing, but sometimes Despina's text and words differ slightly, which indicates

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[94] Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 177.

her separation from Don Alfonso because he controls the entirety of the plot. Ensembles of *Così* tend to stick to Rabin's principle of individual statements to tutti, but Mozart stays away from pure homophony for these tutti passages. This is the reason the Act I scene 10 trio 'Soave sia il vento' in the first act stands out so much. Not only is the ensemble homophonic from start to finish, which makes it strange, but it is unique in that it contains homophony at all.[95]

One musical moment of brilliance in *Così* occurs in the Act II Finale. When Ferrando and Guglielmo reveal their disguises, Da Ponte and Mozart reference text and music from earlier in the opera. Mozart references music of the Albanians to reveal the elaborate nature of the ruse. Cimarosa does no such thing in the closing finale when secrets are revealed. The recall in *Così* seems a reminder that we as audience members have been in on the joke from the very beginning, and seen all sides of it. Additionally, there are textual and musical references to contemporary works, but it would take an incredible amount of work to become familiar with and cover these connections.[96]

The complexity of the ensembles of *Così* aligns rather well with the complex nature of the story. The relationships in the opera are confusing and rich, just as the music of the ensembles. Sisters against pursuers against Don Alfonso against servant along with new elements added to each and every scene. The bland and repetitive element of

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[95] Edmund Goehring offers a fascinating perspective and background on this trio. There are many references to literature and theater in this ensemble that are not immediately apparent, and Goehring delves into a detailed description of the pastoral element and its role in the opera, largely through this trio. The trio 'Soave sia il vento' has puzzled many musicologists and deserves attention on its own. See Edmund Goehring, *Three Modes of Perception in Mozart: The Philosophical, Pastoral, and Comic in* Così fan tutte, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[96] Mary Hunter covers this topic in her book, which is highly recommended for further reading. See *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999),

ensembles that Hunter describes above is just not present in *Così*. These ensembles sparkle with musical and textual witticisms that the ensembles of *Matrimonio* lack.

That is not to say that *Così* is any better than *Matrimonio*, but rather that they are fundamentally different in their ensembles. Often Mozart is lauded as a musical genius, which results in other composers of his day being brushed aside. Cimarosa sticks to convention, but a closer examination of how the characters development and the drama shows that the conventions mesh quite well with the plot. On the other hand, Mozart strays from convention in the ways ensembles are musically structured, and that technique is more appropriate for the drama and character relationships of *Così*. In other words, each composer engages with the ensemble principle in strikingly different ways that honors the drama of two very different stories.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

When we take on a more flexible lens for study, these operas may actually reveal themselves to be even more thoughtful and dramatic than we may have initially considered under the guise of form as value. While convention is certainly at play in the opera buffa tradition of Vienna during this time, there was clearly a level of flexibility, which is apparent in the differing approaches that Mozart and Cimarosa took in their ensemble writing.

A closer reading of each large ensemble reveals specific ways in which Mozart wrote opera ensembles in different ways than his contemporaries. Rather than making blanket statements that Mozart is unique, I have used Rabin's work as a foundation to compare Mozart and Cimarosa's work specifically in ensembles.

What reveals itself through this study is the strikingly different ways in which Cimarosa and Mozart approached ensembles in these two operas. It is worth noting that both Mozart and Cimarosa were highly prolific opera composers, and thus there are numerous other operas and ensembles that may contain other techniques. For these two specific operas, however, the differences are quite obvious. And what seems to be the basis of this diversity boils down to an issue of drama.

The characters of *Matrimonio* are rather individualistic. Although characters are aligned in regards to the various secrets (i.e. Paulino and Carolina as spouses, the Count and Elisetta as betrothed, the Count as he pursues Carolina, Fidalma as she pursues

Paolino, Fidalma and Elisetta team up with Geronimo against Carolina). Essentially, every character seems to be entangled in at least one of a handful of secrets that fuel the comedy and drama at the center of the plot. Extended individual musical passages allow characters to make longer solo statements. And additionally, the common practice of concluding ensembles in pure homophony creates an added layer of comedy. As each character plots against all the others, the irony of joining together in beautiful aligned harmonies becomes all the funnier.

The characters and relationships are quite different in *Così*. While there are multiple secrets and layers of trickery, the characters team up and stay aligned with each other for the duration of the opera. The soldiers are working together to prove Don Alfonso wrong, and simultaneously work with him in carrying out the ruse. Don Alfonso employs Despina and they work together to give the sisters the extra nudge to accept the new men. And the unbreakable bond between sisters never falters from start to finish. These strong relationships are then enhanced through musical alignment. Mozart almost entirely avoids pure homophony, more often choosing to have isolated and brief passages of homophony between aligned characters groupings as outlined above.

Ultimately, the drama of the stories reveals the musical choices of each of these composers. What that displays is the true sensitivity both Mozart and Cimarosa had for bringing a story to life on the operatic stage. For Cimarosa, that meant adhering to the ensemble principle, which may make the music seem boring. But understanding the convention and a more intimate understanding of the characters and drama gives the convention more clout in this case.

Implications for Future Study

In a broad sense, having a deeper understanding of the ensembles of these works helps place them in the cultural and musical context for 1790s opera buffa of Vienna. One might speculate that *Matrimonio* gained more popularity during its time because of its more obvious and vocal adherence to convention the way that Rabin and Platoff describe. *Così* does not ignore or reject convention, but could be considered a dialogue with these practices. This, combined with its considerably racier topic for the day, could have been the cause of its obscurity for so many years until Mozart was raised on his pedestal of musical brilliance by German musicologists of the nineteenth century. And on the other side of the coin, while *Matrimonio*'s tendency to follow musical and dramatic convention made it well loved at the end of the nineteenth century, as cultural discourse and convention shifted, audience desires did as well. Thus *Matrimonio* and Cimarosa slipped into the cracks and did not enter the canon of 'classical' works.

Both of these shows reveal layers of complexity with deeper knowledge of convention and musical language for opera buffa in Vienna during the 1790s. The intentional conversation with convention of *Così* becomes all the more hilarious. Meanwhile, *Matrimonio*'s alignment with these conventions allows the story and musical choices to make more sense, giving more weight to the work as a whole. Armed with this information, we can create more informed performances and hopefully provide more accurate and precise translations that allow the textual subtleties to enhance the music and vice versa.

I chose to pair these two operas against specifically due to their frequency of ensemble, and the striking differences in the way the music was set by each composer warrants further study. There is no way of knowing how unique *Così* may be in its number of and use of ensemble in comparison to Mozart's other opera buffa works as well as other contemporary composers without an extended and comprehensive study. Rabin's research begins this work, but he focuses specifically on dramaturgical issues, where ensembles is a ripe field for study.

Because musicologists are abandoning the tradition of using sonata form and other forms invented after the time to analyze operas and their ensembles, hopefully there is more room in scholarship for the exploration of other elements of ensemble in opera buffa of the late eighteenth century. Additionally, there is hope that this work will also bring light to other composers and works of the time that have received little to no attention because of modern obsessions with Mozart. These two operas of 1790 and 1792 in Vienna are just the tip of the iceberg. There are so many composers, operas, and ensembles to consider. As Rabin says, ensembles of the Burgtheater operas are highly diverse, even within the ensemble principle. There is surely more to uncover through further study.

APPENDIX

CHART OF ENSEMBLES

Così fan tutte		*Il Matrimonio Segreto*	
ACT I		**ACT I**	
La mia Dorabella	Trio	Intro: Cara, non dubitar	Duet
È la fede	Trio	Io ti lascio	Duetto
Una bella serenata	Trio	Udite, tutti udite	Aria
Ah guarda sorella	Duet	Le faccio un inchino	Trio
Vorrei dir	Aria	È vero che in casa	Aria
Sento oddio	Quintet	Senza, senza cerimonie	Sextet
Al fato dan legge	Duet	Sento in petto un freddo gelo	Quartet
Bella vita militar	Chorus	Signor, deh, concedte	Duet
Di scrivermi	Quintet	Perdonate, signor mio	Aria
Bella vita militar	Chorus	Finale	
Soave sia il vento	Trio	**ACT II**	
Smanie implacabili	Aria	Se fiato in corpo avete	Duet
In uomini, in soldati	Aria	Sento, oimè!	Trio
Alla bella Despina	Sextet	Pria che spunti	Aria
Come scoglio	Aria	Son lunatico, bilioso	Aria
Non siate ritrosi	Aria	Cosa farete?	Trio
E voi ridete	Trio	Deh! lasciate ch'io respiri	Quintet
Un'aura amorosa	Aria	Se son vendicata	Aria
Finale		Il parlar di Carolina	Duet
ACT II		Finale	
Una donna a quindici	Aria		
Prenderò quel bruno	Duet		
Secondate aurette	Duet and Chorus		
La mano a me date	Quartet		
Il core vi dono	Duet		
Ah lo veggio	Aria		
Per pietà	Aria		
Donne mie la fate a tanti	Aria		
Tradito schernito	Aria		
È Amore un ladroncello	Aria		
Fra gli amplessi	Duet		
Tutti accusa	Trio		
Finale II			

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