

## The Mozartian Realism. *Così fan tutte* – notes from the director's handbook

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**Abstract:** *Così fan tutte*, a work of extraordinary complexity and beauty, which was long considered "misunderstood", continues to be the subject of many controversies today. The article starts from Bernard Paumgartner's statement that *Così* is "an opera of the future whose hour will come" and proposes some avenues for reflection on the themes, as well as on the literary references that the libretto of the opera *Così* contains, the novelty of the genre to which it belongs, as well as the nature of the characters, which differ substantially from those of other seria or buffa operas of the 18th century. Also evoked is the Mozartian conception of the spectacle performance and the stage play of the singers, as evidenced from some letters that Wolfgang wrote to his father, Leopold, a conception which reveals the modernity of the Austrian composer's dramaturgical and theatrical thinking.

**Keywords:** Mozart; correspondence; dramaturgy; realism; initiation; fidelity;

### Introduction

Mozart is not only a great composer, but also a very great dramatist. He was an avid reader of Shakespeare, Molière, Goldoni, his fine comments on the side of these readings revealing the versed eye and sensitivity of a genuine theater man<sup>2</sup>. Mozart was a fan of performances of various genres, as his correspondence shows, and he himself enjoyed acting in plays of the *Commedia dell'Arte*. For example, for the Vienna Carnival in 1783, Mozart wrote *Musik zu einer Faschingspantomime für zwei Violinen, Viola und Baß* KV 446 (416<sup>3</sup>) in which he cast himself as Harlequin, Aloysia Weber as Columbine, Joseph Lange (Aloysia's husband) as Pierrot, and Merk, the dance master, as Pantalone<sup>3</sup>. At the time, such shows were frequent and highly palatable forms of entertainment.

On the other hand, Mozart's letters to his father from November 1780 to January 1781, during his time in Munich, where he would compose and participate in the staging of his opera *Idomeneo Ré di Creta*, and then those of June 1781, from Vienna, in which he talks about working on his Singspiel *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, reveals to us his good knowledge of the metastasian style<sup>4</sup>, the composer's exacting standards towards librettos, his intense concern with the dramaturgical coherence of the works, as well as the care for the psychological and

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<sup>2</sup> In the letter dated 29 November, 1780, from the time he was in Munich working on *Idomeneo*, Wolfgang asks his father's opinion about the text that the subterranean voice (of Neptune) should sing and says: "tell me, do you not find that the speech by the subterranean voice is too long? Consider it thoroughly. – Imagine the stage, the voice must be terrifying – it must penetrate – one must believe that it really is so – how can it achieve this if the speech is too long, a length which will increasingly convince the listeners of its emptiness? – If the speech of the ghost in Hamlet were not so long, it would have an even better effect. – The speech here can furthermore be shortened easily, it gains more from that than it loses". In Mozart *Correspondence complète*, Édition de la Fondation Internationale Mozarteum Salzbourg, réunie et annotée par Wilhelm A. Bauer, Otto Erich Deutsch et Joseph Heinz Eibl, éditions française et traduction de l'allemand Geneviève Geffray, Paris, Éditions Flammarion, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Sophie Zadikian. 2007. *Così fan tutte de Mozart. L'Opéra incompris*. Paris: L'Harmattan, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> See Wolfgang's letter to Leopold dated 15 February 1783 and especially the one dated 12 March 1783 in Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit., 2011, p. 1177 and pp. 1179–1180, respectively.

emotional accuracy of the characters and, respectively, for their interpretation. In other words, if the operas themselves are living proof of an extraordinary dramaturgical sense, the information about their composition, which we can glean from his correspondence, makes us understand Mozart's passion and theatrical vocation even better.

In Mozart's operas, disguise and transvestite scenes abound, in which the characters are led musically and dramaturgically with the greatest mastery. These scenes constitute real and tasty moments of a play within the play, a typical procedure in the Baroque era, but still very much alive in 18th century dramaturgy and opera. It is enough to think only of three great mature operas of the composer, written together with the brilliant librettist Lorenzo da Ponte: *Nozze di Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787) and *Così fan tutte* (1790), to see how frequently this procedure is used. If in the first two, episodes of a play within the play are sprinkled throughout the unfolding of the action, in the third, the procedure is extended over nearly the entire length of the work. In other words, *Così fan tutte* is a play within the play, almost from start to finish, unprecedented in the world of opera (with the possible exception of Richard Strauss's *Ariadne in Naxos*).

## Purpose

The play within the play scenes, which denote a virtuosity of writing, complex and refined dramaturgical thinking, Mozart's fantastic ability to transpose action into music tempted me to focus on this opera and attempt to find equivalents for it in the theatrical repertoire, while also formulating a series of arguments related to the realistic aspects of Mozart's theatrical thinking.

## Research methods

Thus, firstly I reviewed the libretto and score of the opera *Così fan tutte* with the greatest attention, in order to find arguments regarding Mozartian realism in the textual and musical elaboration of the characters and stage situations. Secondly, I re-read Wolfgang's *Correspondence* with his father, looking in particular at what he says about the way he thinks about certain scenes and the manner in which he interprets his own operas. Equally, I consulted the studies of some exegetes (Hermann Abert, Bernard Paumgartner, Ernst Lernt, Alfred Einstein, Th. de Wyzeva and G. de Saint-Foix, Jean-Victor Hocquard, G. Tchitchérine, B. Massin, S. Zadikian), all regarded today as landmarks in the critical study of Mozart's work. Last but not least, I turned to one of the composer's favorite authors, namely, Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793), whose play *La Cameriera brillante* exhibits obvious similarities to the plot of *Così* and in whose work there are features that can be considered "realistic". It is known that Goldoni enjoyed great fame in Austria during the composer's lifetime, and that both his plays and his numerous librettos, set to music by various composers of the time, were widely known. It is obvious that Da Ponte esteemed him and knew his work, as evidenced by, as we will see, the many Goldonian contaminations that can be detected in *Così fan tutte*.

However, prior to discussing aspects of realism in *Così*, I believe a few clarifications are in order, both regarding the history and subject-matter of this opera, but also regarding the preferred themes that circulated in the era.

## 1. Short history of the opera *Così fan tutte*

From the letter dated 29 December 1789<sup>5</sup> we learn that Mozart invites Haydn and his friend and protector Puchberg to a rehearsal of *Così fan tutte*. The general rehearsal took place on 20 January, 1790, and the premiere on the 26th of the same month, in Vienna. The first performers were: Adriana Ferrarese del Bene (Fiordiligi), Louise Villeneuve (Dorabella), Francesco Benucci (Guglielmo), Vincenzo Calvesi (Ferrando), Dorotea Busani (Despina) and Francesco Busani (Don Alfonso). The novelty of the opera consists, first of all, in its "spicy" subject-matter, but also in a new perspective in which it discusses feelings and fidelity. This could not have happened until 1780, the death year of Empress Maria Theresa, a reputed puritan and defender of conjugal fidelity. In the first years of Joseph II's reign, the chastity commission – *Die Keuschheitskommision* - a police institution tasked with guarding Viennese public morality, is also abolished. The death of Joseph II, on 20 February, 1790, interrupted, for several months, the performances of this opera, which were, however, resumed from June to 7 August of the same year.

But even in 1790, portraying infidelity on stage was no easy feat. It had to be done with great care and artistic refinement. Mozartian genius, combined with Da Ponte's skill gave rise to a codified writing with which the audience of the time was familiar. Codified writing or expression was in use, as we can see, once more, in the Mozartian correspondence. For example, it frequently happened that Wolfgang would write to his father about confidential matters in a coded manner, using foreign language words or numbers. The complicity of the two authors, Mozart and Da Ponte, consisted in offering the audience a multitude of hints to the comedy or tragedy performances of the period - which function like just as many metacommentaries – which the audience had to detect and put together to notice the subtleties of the plot. If, for the viewers of the era, this was not a difficulty, but even a very pleasant game which increased the pleasure of reception, for the viewers of today, understanding and following the tracks laid by the authors becomes a test with many unknowns. As Sophie Zadikian stated in her extensive study, *Così* is a true "virtual library" because in it we find, on the one hand, influences from authors such as Ariosto, Metastasio, Goldoni, through which reference is made, further, to other authors, and on the other hand, in the opera we find self-citations, as well as references to the *Commedia dell'Arte*, the theater repertoire or opera *buffa* of the 18th century.

Théodore de Wyzewa and Georges St. Foix mention, in their extensive work on Mozartian opera<sup>6</sup>, that a German translation of the opera appeared during the composer's lifetime under the title *Eine wie die Andre, oder, die Schule der Liebhaber*. Its initial performance took place in Dresden on 5 October 1791.

*Così fan tutte* is a work that has caused a lot of controversy. This comes as no surprise, considering that, later in the course of the 19th century, not only other German translations appeared, but also about another ten to twelve versions of the opera, each bearing different titles. The conclusion we can draw from this is that the negative reactions to this work and its unfair judgment by some critics stem from the simple fact that the 19th century audience could not, in fact, appreciate its original version. Sophie Zadikian also shows that the opera was rediscovered relatively recently, being put back into circulation by Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss<sup>7</sup>. The

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<sup>5</sup> Letter dated 29 December 1789, in Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit., pp. 1656–1657.

<sup>6</sup> Théodore de Wyzewa, Georges de Sf. Foix. 2010. *Mozart 1777–1791. Le grand voyage. L'épanouissement. Les dernières années*. Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, p. 637.

<sup>7</sup> Sophie Zadikian, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

author mentions the fact that the restoration of recitatives is due to Mahler, thanks to whom, starting in 1906, these replaced the spoken text that slowed down the action. Paradoxically, the act of justice done to the Mozartian score was met with a wave of hostility from the audience and the critics, as evidenced by a pamphlet that appeared a year later in *Neue Freie Presse*. Unfortunately, this is not surprising and reflects how dangerous habit, inertia and ignorance are. Richard Strauss conducted *Così fan tutte*, keeping the opera in his own repertoire throughout his life. The qualities of the opera would gradually be noticed. It would be included by Sir Thomas Beecham (1879-1961) in the 1910 Mozart Season at Covent Garden, in 1930 at the Basel Mozart Festival, and in 1948, it would go on to open the Aix-en-Provence Festival. From here, the opera was to regain its well-earned place in the repertoires of opera houses.

## 2. Main themes of the opera *Così fan tutte*

The objections raised against *Così fan tutte* appear entirely unfounded nowadays. They refer either to the fact that it is written on a bad and incoherent libretto, to the fact that the subject-matter and language are immoral, or even to the fact that the score does not rise to the level of previous creations.

For a long time, the idea was circulated that the subject of the opera was suggested to Mozart by Emperor Joseph II, as a result of a similar incident that would have happened among the Viennese aristocracy. Some critics believe this to be just an anecdote. Others, such as Guéorgui Tchichérine - the author of an exceptional study dedicated to Mozart's thought and work<sup>8</sup> – confirm the fact that Joseph II, seriously ill, almost dying, would have wanted the real adventure, experienced by two Austrian officers, to be translated into an opera buffa, which might have amused him. Tchichérine, deploring the reductive, often caricatured approach and overcoming clichés (which we sometimes find difficult to get rid of even today!) says about the characters in *Nozze di Figaro* that they "have nothing funny, but are inspired by the reality of life (...), something unprecedented before Mozart's music"<sup>9</sup>. He would also say about *Così* that "Da Ponte wrote the text of a true opera buffa, but Mozart wrote on this text something that had no buffo about it, which was in perfect contradiction with the buffo spirit, but which needed this buffo text and revealed its depth precisely through the contrast with it. No one understood what all this meant, the work being like a hermetically sealed book, a book sealed with seven seals and for a long time, which did not amuse the emperor"<sup>10</sup>.

What can be said is that the subject as well as the script of the opera in question have their origin in the ancient myth of Cephalus and Procris, two husbands who test their respective fidelity, a myth that also inspired Ovid. The bet on fidelity is also found in the works of Boccaccio (*The Decameron*), Cervantes (*La novela del curioso impertinente*), Shakespeare (*Cymbeline*) and Ariosto. In *Orlando furioso*, the latter's famous novel of chivalry, the characters Fiordiligi, Doralice and Fiordespina appear, in the company of the witch Melissa. Not by chance, we will find in *Così fan tutte* the three female characters embodied by the two lovers - Fiordiligi and Dorabella – and their servant, Despina. The witch Melissa, an experienced character, endowed with occult powers, but also a figure of the initiator, will be replaced, in Da Ponte's libretto, by Don Alfonso. Tested fidelity, mutual exchange of partners between members of

<sup>8</sup> Guéorgui Tchichérine. 2003. *Mozart. Étude*, traduction du russe, préface et postface de Gérard Conio, suivi de Gérard Conio, *Tchichérine, Mozart et la Révolution*. Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme.

<sup>9</sup> Letter dated 14 November 1929, written by Guéorgui Chicherin, from Wiesbaden, to his brother, Nikolay, in Guéorgui Tchichérine, *Mozart. Étude*, ed. cit., p. 226.

<sup>10</sup> Guéorgui Tchichérine, *Mozart. Étude*, ed. cit., p. 186.

couples, sentimental education are typical subjects of the Age of Enlightenment and were illustrated throughout the 17th and 18th centuries by Molière's lively dramatic creations, as well as by Goldoni, Gozzi and Marivaux. As can be seen, Da Ponte probably exploited the multiple sources at his disposal, and his libretto is part of this current with distant origins and multiple ramifications.

The theme of fidelity is one of the privileged themes of opera *buffa*. In the period, Antonio Salieri (1750–1825) approaches it in *La scuola de' gelosi* (1778) and *La grotta di Trofonio* (1785). It is also approached by Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) in *Le pescatrici* (1769), *L'infedelta delusa* (1773), *La vera costanza* (1779) and *La fedelta premiata* (1780). The opposition/confusion between desire (*eros*) and love (*agapē*) and the process of love's purification through trials are recurring themes in Mozart's operas, beginning with *Bastien and Bastienne* and ending with *The Magic Flute*, passing through *Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* and culminating with *Così fan tutte*.

*Così* gives the composer the opportunity to approach this controversial theme from a different perspective than the traditional one practiced in opera *seria* or even opera *buffa*. In the opera *seria*, emotions, feelings, issues of conscience, fidelity appear more like abstract concepts, the characters indulging more in philosophizing on their subject than in authentic emotional experience. The characters' behaviors – inspired, most often, from mythology – are regulated by moral and ethical principles according to which good must always triumph over evil, reason over instinct, virtue over vice. They express themselves in a pathetic but very conventional manner, in the tone of a vibrant declamation. On the other hand, in opera *buffa*, the characters and dramatic situations are closer to everyday people's way of being. But even here, we are dealing, in most cases, with standardised, schematic characters, who act by virtue of predictable scenarios.

*Così* is a special case and we will see why. Firstly, *Così*, as Nikolaus Harnoncourt<sup>11</sup> also notes, no longer follows the traditional pattern of a play or opera from the period. In *Così* there is no leading role, so there is no hero who stands out and with whom the viewer can identify, judge or approve, sympathize or even hate. It is quite possible that this fact also contributed to the bewilderment of the audience and the cold reception of the opera. Suddenly, the viewer, instead of having a single landmark to relate to, comes face to face with six characters, all confusing in their versatility. As when one who is used to taking aim at a single target, suddenly finds himself having to follow several moving targets simultaneously. *Così* is an opera in which, between the six characters, mutual relationships are established. Unlike in Pirandelli's play, *Così's* characters are not in search of an author, but in search of love, of each other and, finally, of their own identity, akin to a game of Blind Man's Bluff. Here, I believe one of the sentences regarding love that Ariosto enunciates in *Canto I* of his chivalrous novel, mentioned above, and which could even constitute a motto of the opera, fits very well:

"*Quel che l'uom vede, Amor gli fa invisibile,  
E l'invisibile fa vedere Amore*"<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> In the interview titled *L'école de l'amour ou la confusion des sentiments*, given to Anca-Monica Pandealea and published in the notebook which accompanies the recording from 1991, made with The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam and De Nedrelandse Opera Chorus (dir. Winfried Maczewski); lead singers: Charlotte Margiono (Fiordiligi), Dolores Zeigler (Dorabella), Gilles Cachemaille (Guglielmo), Deon van der Walt (Ferrando), Anna Steiger (Despina), Thomas Hampson (Don Alfonso).

<sup>12</sup> Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, Canto I, *apud* Francesco de Sanctis, *Istoria literaturii italiene*, traducere, studiu introductiv și note de Nina Façon, 1965. București: Editura pentru literatură universală (*History of Italian Literature*, translation, introductive study and notes by Nina Façon, Bucharest, Publishing house for universal literature), p. 495.

In the end, this Blind Man's Bluff game turns out to be a charade, both literally and figuratively. "*Cos'è tal mascherata?*", the two sisters exclaim in unison, at the moment when things seem to have completely gotten out of hand (act II, scene 4, Recitativo). By adopting this new dramaturgical configuration, Mozart's second-to-last lyrical creation constitutes a new form of theater and opera. Then, the multiplicity of the poses in which the characters appear, the complexity of their states, the mystery that surrounds them, the authenticity of their reactions all grant realism to this opera. *Così* is one of those masterpieces that, on the one hand, closes a great stage, synthesizing the most important ideas and conquests, and, on the other, harbours the seeds of multiple tendencies which will later crystallize, as the genre evolves. *Così* is the last creation belonging to the *dramma giocoso* genre, directly influenced by the opera of the *heroic-comic* type, as the Venetian opera of the 17th century was also called, and René Jacobs shows that "there is a thread linking the *dramma giocoso* with the 16th century Venetian opera. There is a Shakespearian comedy: it is that permanent ambivalence between the serious and the comic. In all of this theatrical and musical production one is never quite sure where the serious begins and the comic ends. In this sense *Così fan tutte* descends in straight line from a world to which, at the time, it puts an end. (...) *Così* bids farewell to a period, and it also contains the most beautiful farewell music imaginable. (...) And finally how tempting is it to feel in this music a sort of premature farewell of the composer to life, a sentiment confirmed by the similarities between the farewell quintet and certain pages of the *Requiem*"<sup>13</sup>.

Perhaps we could speak of disguise even from this level, because, as can be seen, Mozart manages to "camouflage" a new dramaturgical formula and a new way of being of the characters – i.e., a modern theatrical conception - under the "mask" of conventions which the characters abide by.

The Italian subtitle, *La scuola degli amanti*, cannot be overlooked either, as it tells us a great deal about the content of the opera and the concern for education and training prevalent during this century. Along with love and (in)fidelity, one of the highly debated themes of the era is that of initiation. In Vienna, during the 1780s, there was a flourishing genre of comedy whose subject was the school, i.e., the training process, the apprenticeship. In other words, initiation. The "rebel" poets, coming from the ranks of the cultured bourgeoisie, members of the *Sturm und Drang* movement (which also exerted a considerable influence on Mozart), claimed the right to express their feelings openly, to talk about the emotions and states of mind that are the prerogative of human beings. There was a need here for an opposition to rationally governed behavior (established as a model by the aristocratic society), for a sentimentally driven challenge against the power of the nobility and the very rigid social hierarchy. The desire to replace an old world, stiff in conventions, with a new world full of life, animated by a new breath, was evident. But this transition to another stage of civilization required the birth of a "new man," and this could only be accomplished through an initiation, mediated by a figure who possessed the wisdom, power, and authority necessary to successfully complete this process. Thus, in the German space, the term "*Bildung*" (re)appears more and more frequently - this can be translated as "training" or "education" - which, in the 18th century, acquires a secular connotation<sup>14</sup>. In this

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<sup>13</sup> In Priviri asupra *Così fan tutte – între trecut și viitor* (*Glances over Così fan tutte – between past and future*), in the notebook accompanying the recording with Concerto Köln and Kölner Kammerchor (dir. Peter Neuman) from 1999; lead singers: Véronique Gens (Fiordiligi), Bernarda Fink (Dorabella), Werner Güra (Ferrando), Marcel Boone (Guglielmo), Petro Spagnuoli (Don Alfonso), Graciela Oddone (Despina).

<sup>14</sup> *Bildung* has its origin in the educational concept (*paideia*) of the Greek classical period, which aimed to cultivate the human spirit through the study of philosophy and science. Later, in the early 17th century, Protestant pietists saw it as a process of personal, religious, spiritual and moral growth in the image and likeness (German: *Bild*) of Christ. After 1775 and until around

effervescent atmosphere, Goethe begins to write, in 1777, a first version of his novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship: The Theatrical Mission of Wilhelm Meister*, on which he will work until 1788. At Schiller's urging, Goethe will resume the writing of this novel in 1794, thus marking the birth of a new genre, that of the *Bildungsroman* (the novel of formation), just as, through *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, the writer signs the birth certificate of the sentimental novel.

This *Bildungsroman* describes the journey from youthful inexperience to individual and social development. The course is, however, marked by a necessary rupture, namely, leaving the world of childhood, departing the family nest and going out into the world, towards the unknown and adventure. The world, seen as a great theater and as a school, will shape the young man through painful but necessary experiences that will give him access to knowledge, make him autonomous and help him integrate socially. The process of initiation is not easy, neither for the one who goes through it, nor for the one who accompanies the neophyte, as young people prove to be, not seldomly, stubborn and rebellious. Annie Paradis points out that, at the time, there was a firm belief that

"one does not become truly autonomous, grown-up, until they have been subjected to the tests of an apprenticeship, the rules and means of which are owned by the society of the fathers. The core of this device is love. (...) It is the moment when the gods leave the stage to make room for the fathers"<sup>15</sup>.

This cultural fact is expressively illustrated, on a personal level, by the very confession that Wolfgang makes to his father in a letter from March 1778:

"Next to God comes papa" was my axiom when a child, and I still think the same"<sup>16</sup>.

Mozart pays special attention to this process of initiation guided by a master, a fact mirrored by his entire opera creation. This can be seen in *Così* on several levels: within the subject, but also within its construction. The earliest copy of the score bears only the subtitle *La scuola degli amanti*, used by Da Ponte when referring to this opera. Approaching the question of love from a pedagogical perspective is, therefore, the core idea of the opera. Thus, the pedagogical purpose of the subject would generate an elaborate rhetorical construction. Without stopping, here, on this aspect that requires a detailed treatment, we will limit ourselves to saying that the two acts of the opera are structured almost in a mirror, with each moment in the first act sharing, as a "reply", an equivalent moment in the second act. Sophie Zadikian notes that the scheme of a scholastic discussion of the type: *exordium, narratio, partitio, propositio, confutatio, confirmatio, peroratio* is superimposed on the network of countless parallelisms. From all these, we find in *Così*:

- *propositio* (statement): Women are not faithful (in the Men's Trio, at the beginning of Act I)
- *confutatio* (counter-argument): They are faithful (in Duet No. 4 in Act I of the two sisters „*Ah, guarda sorella...*”, as well as at the end of Act I)
- *confirmatio* (logical arguments presented as proof): They are not faithful (No. 19-30)

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1810, thinkers such as Herder, Schiller and von Humboldt viewed the phenomenon of *Bildung* from a secular perspective, with reference to emotional, moral and intellectual development, education and access to culture, as well as the exercise of one's civic role.

<sup>15</sup> Annie Paradis. 1999. *Mozart, l'opéra, réenchanté*. Paris: Éditions Fayard, p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> Letter dated 7 March 1778, in Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit, p. 716. Quotes from Mozart's correspondence have been taken from Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, Édition de la Fondation Internationale Mozarteum Salzbourg, réunie et annotée par Wilhelm A. Bauer, Otto Erich Deutsch et Joseph Heinz Eibl, éditions française et traduction de l'allemand Geneviève Geffray, Paris, Éditions Flammarion, 2011. English translation of Mozart's correspondence from the electronic version Mozart Letters and Documents – Online Edition. Retrived May 7, 2024, from <https://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/briefe/search/index.php?l=2>

- *peroratio* (in which the pathos and the *accumulatio* are used): All is revealed and the couples are reunited (at the end of Act II).

Hence, the opera can be read as an extensive demonstration, as a "master class" that Don Alfonso offers to the four young men. It reminds of the old treatises written in the form of a dialogue between the master and the disciple, in which the educational objective and the demonstration are, in fact, part of a long theatrical tradition. It is enough to mention here, for example, Molière with his *École des maris*, *École des femmes*, *Critique de l'École des femmes* or Marivaux with his play *L'École des mères*. In *Così*, Don Alfonso and Despina will not only do theory, but also practical applications of the "learning method".

Love, fidelity, initiation are, therefore, the ingredients that make up the story of the opera *Così fan tutte*, a creation that stands on the border between the past and the future of the opera genre.

### 3. Da Ponte, Mozart and Goldoni

In 1707, when Goldoni is born, *Commedia dell'arte*, considered a national tradition, is still very present in Italian theaters. At first, true to this tradition, Goldoni will, little by little, replace the canvas pieces with pieces written from one end to the other. He also succeeds in removing the masks from the actors' faces, *Pamela* (1750) being the first play performed without masks. For Goldoni, the world is the major source of inspiration. There is nothing contrived or supernatural about his theater. Passions, fashion, human typologies or habits are directly inspired by life and staged. He continues to use the techniques and strategies that help actors and playwrights to amuse and delight audiences, but the major change he makes is in the way the plays are performed. Goldoni restores the importance of the literary text and he gives more importance to the text than to improvisation. These texts are not pompous as in the aristocratic theater, but their language is direct and inspired by the conversation style. He uses dialect, not in a caricature way, but to give even more verisimilitude to the characters. The masks are suppressed and Goldoni captures the psychological complexity of his characters, his comedies being able to hide, often a drama - an aspect that brings his plays closer to Mozart's operas. Goldoni made a major contribution to the reform of the Italian theater sclerosed by the degraded conventions of the *Commedia dell'arte*. The concern for the psychological dimension of the characters, the satire of aristocratic parasitism, the presentation of another feminine conception of life and marriage, the language and the concern for the staging details are some important aspects of his theater.

Having become famous in the North of Italy in the decade 1750-1760, Goldoni will settle in Paris, starting in August 1762, where he will work for three years at the Italian Theater, will collaborate with the French Comedy where he will present the plays *Le Bourru bienfaisant* (1771) and *L'Avare fastueux* (1776), written in French, and he would become the Italian teacher of Louis XV's daughters Adelaïde and Victoire.

Although Goldoni lived in France for the last thirty years of his life, German-speaking countries played a very important role in the reception of his work and their integration into world literature. Goldoni is known in Germany as an important dramatist since 1744, his first German translation appeared in 1751 and since 1764 he has been in correspondence with Count Giacomo Durazzo (1717–1749), an Italian diplomat and director of the Viennese theater. A number of mediating factors contributed to Goldoni's reception in Germany (but also in other countries) such as the impulses given by certain theater specialists, such as G. E. Lessing (1729–

1781) and L. H. von Nicolai (1737–1820), the laudatory chronicles written by Goethe, the translations of Justus Heinrich Saal (1722–1729)<sup>17</sup> and the activity of theater groups such as Ackerman from Hamburg, Koch from Leipzig or Seyler from Gotha. As Wolfgang Theile points out, "Goldoni's period of great Viennese popularity is between 1763 and 1771, when Kurtz, Prehauser, Eisker and the Stephanie brothers translated 14 of Goldoni's comedies for their performance at the Kärntnethortheater"<sup>18</sup>.

A very important chapter in the German reception of Goldoni is the musical theater. Goldoni loved music very much and wrote a great number of librettos to which he did not attach as much importance as his theater plays. His librettos were set to music by composers such as Nicola Piccini (1728–1800), Baldassare Galuppi (1706–1785), Gioacchino Cocchi (1712–1796), Domenico Fischietti (1725–1810), Giuseppe Scarlatti (1723–1777) and Florian Leopold Gassmann (1729–1774).

Da Ponte had written, for different composers of the period, several librettos based on plays by Goldoni, whom he greatly admired. Thus, he had adapted a libretto after *Bertoldo* for Francesco Piccchio (?–1800), wrote *Il talismano* for Antonio Salieri and *Le Bourru bienfaisant* (play written in French in 1771) for Martin y Soler (1754–1806), who would compose the opera *Il burbero di bon cuore*, premiered at the Burgtheater in 1786.

Carlo Goldoni's influence is felt in Mozart's work early on. At just eleven years old, Wolfgang writes his first opera *La finta semplice* based on a text by Marco Cotellini (1724–1777), adapted from a libretto by Goldoni.

The closeness to Goldoni's theater, but also the notoriety enjoyed by the Italian playwright in Austria, can be deduced from the concerns that Wolfgang mentions in several of his letters. Thus, in 1783, he confesses to his father:

"I am now writing a German opera for myself: I have chosen for it this play from Goldoni – *Il servitore di Due Padroni* – and the first act has already been translated entirely – the translator is Baron Binder. But it is still all a secret until everything is finished"<sup>19</sup>.

Then, in another letter<sup>20</sup>, Wolfgang expresses to his father his regret that he could not obtain more information about *La Contessina*, an opera *buffa* composed by F. L. Gassmann (1729-1774) on a Goldoni text, revised by Marco Cotellini.

In December 1784, Leopold writes to Nanerl: "Yesterday *Love among the Artisans* was performed, the theatre was full"<sup>21</sup>, and the fact that he does not name the authors proves that the opera was very well known. Its text was written by Goldoni, and the music was composed by F. L. Gassmann. Then, still in December<sup>22</sup>, Leopold announces his daughter that *Cecchina ossia la buona figliuola*, a comical opera in 3 acts by N. Piccini, on a text by Goldoni, will be performed on the 16th of that month.

Of all the Goldonian plays *La Cameriera brillante* (1753)<sup>23</sup> shows the most significant similarities with Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, such as the central role of the soubrette, the double cast of lovers, the marriage, the theater-within-a-theatre procedure, and the disguise<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Saal translated 44 Goldonian comedies, published in 11 volumes, in Leipzig, between 1767–1777.

<sup>18</sup> Wolfgang Theile. 1993. *La fortune littéraire de Goldoni*. In *Revue de littérature comparée* RLC, 67, 3/1993, pp. 383–402.

<sup>19</sup> Letter dated 5 February 1783, in Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit., p. 1176.

<sup>20</sup> Letter dated 24 October 1783, in Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit., p. 1213.

<sup>21</sup> Letter dated 3 December 1784, in Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit., p. 1288.

<sup>22</sup> Letter dated 14 Decembrie 1784, in Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit., p. 1295.

<sup>23</sup> The action takes place at the vacation home in Mestre of the very miserly Venetian merchant, Pantalone. He has two daughters: Flaminia, who loves the nobleman but very poor Ottavio and Clarice, who loves Florindo, a rich peasant. The two sisters are always arguing, each extolling the merits of their lovers. Argentina, the family's housekeeper, by staging, in the house in Mestre,

*La Cameriera Brillante*, a prose play in three acts, having as its theme the servant-mistress who succeeds in winning the hand of the old master, was performed for the first time in Venice in the autumn of 1753 and during the entire Carnival of 1754. As Lucie Comparini shows, the Goldonian piece "is at the crossroads of new and different experiences in the career of the dramatic poet, [...] not just the simple resumption of a traditional improvisational theater procedure, but the exploitation of the metatheatrical element (as a discourse on the theater) and that of the theater-within-the-theater"<sup>25</sup>.

As in *Così*, the theater-in-theatre procedure, the pedagogical, demonstrative and even therapeutic approach of the soubrette Argentina - who has many similar features to Mirandolina from the play *La Locandiera* - frees the four young people's repressed desires, preconceived ideas, thus bringing out the truth in the light. Both in *La Cameriera brillante* and in *Così*, the soubrette (Argentina's and respectively Despina's) disguises and the various staging episodes constitute more than simple entertainment. What seems, at the beginning, like an innocent game turns into a process - in the end very painful - which leads to the revelation of the true characters and intentions, to the awareness of desires and the limits of their realization.

#### 4. Story and characters of the opera

In a letter to his father, many years before the creation of the opera *Così fan tutte*, Mozart expressed his desire to write a new work in which he would bring on stage three couples from three different lyrical backgrounds: one from opera *seria*, one from opera *buffa* and another belonging to the *mezzo carattere*<sup>26</sup> category. These couples would be made up, in the opera, of: Fiordiligi-Ferrando, Despina-Don Alfonso and Dorabella-Guglielmo.

The plot is simple. Two couples of lovers who resemble, from certain points of view, those in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, are put to the test by two other characters, in complicity.

The story could be summed up in a few words. Ferrando and Guglielmo, chatting with the philosopher Don Alfonso in a café, vehemently defend the honor of their fiancées, whose fidelity is questioned by their older friend. Furious and ready to draw their swords, they are calmly disarmed by Don Alfonso, who promises them a series of proofs, designed to prove him right, and proposes a bet that stakes the loyalty of Dorabella and Fiordiligi. The stake of the bet is one hundred zecchini. Don Alfonso suggests that the two young men fake going to war, then return in disguise to try to seduce their girlfriends. Guglielmo and Ferrando agree, convinced of the fact that they will win the cause and cheered by the idea of a masquerade where they can have a lot of fun. Thus, after a fake goodbye and the staged departure to war, which leaves their fiancées prey to despair, Ferrando and Guglielmo reappear, shortly after, disguised as Albanians. Despina does not recognize the fake foreigners, whom, upon some financial stimulation by Don Alfonso, she will agree to introduce into the house, at the same time mediating for them the

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a comedy - in which the actors will be the two couples in love - manages to bring out the true characters and qualities of the young people and calm the spirits. The comedy in which young people play a role opposite to their character is very similar to the anti-role play in psychodrama, which makes this play have the character of a true individual and group behavioral therapy. Thanks to Argentina's cleverness, both couples will marry, and she she manages to marry Pantalone.

<sup>24</sup> Alessandro di Profio, *Così fan tutte e i suoi codici di letteratura*, unpublished thesis, defended at the Università degli studi di Roma "La sapienza", Facoltà di lettere e Filosofia, Dipartimento di Musica e Spettacolo, 1990/91, p. 61 and Sophie Zadikian, *Così fan tutte by Mozart. L'opéra incompris*. 2007. Paris: L'Harmattan, p. 33, 36.

<sup>25</sup> Lucie Comparini, « Les miroirs croisés de *La cameriera brillante* de Carlo Goldoni. "El capriccio de far sta commedia... per un'altra ragione" », in FRIGAU MANNING (Céline) (dir.), *La Scène en miroir : métathéâtres italiens (XVI -XXI siècle)*. Études en l'honneur de Françoise Decroisette, pp. 93-110.

<sup>26</sup> Letter dated 7 May 1783, in Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit, p. 1190.

favors of her mistresses. At first, Fiordiligi and Dorabella reject them vehemently. But the exotic lovers, spurred on by Don Alfonso and increasingly caught in this game, will not be discouraged. With insistence, step by step, using various stratagems and going through difficult situations - set up by Don Alfonso in complicity with Despina - they will succeed in weakening the resistance of the two sisters. Moreover, the sisters end up falling in love with their new lovers and their marriage is quickly arranged. In the middle of the party, after the signing of the so-called marriage contracts, in a great uproar, also directed by Don Alfonso, the unexpected return of the former lovers from the war is announced. The "Albanians" are led into another room by Fiordiligi and Dorabella. There, they leave the costumes they had been disguised in and then sneak out of the house unseen. They return shortly, as Guglielmo and Ferrando, and justifying their quick return by a counter-order from the king. They find the fake marriage contracts, exposed by Don Alfonso. He accuses the lovers of treason, but they blame Don Alfonso and Despina. Don Alfonso does not deny the accusation and points to the room where the evidence of the staging is found. Ferrando and Guglielmo enter the room from which they emerge half-disguised, revealing everything. The women, stunned and offended, continue to accuse Don Alfonso. He justifies himself, saying that by cheating he only opened the eyes of the two young men to show them how important it is that, in life, you let yourself be guided by reason in order to gain peace of mind. He then exhorts the four young men to forgiveness and reconciliation.

As Guéorgui Tchithérine shows, Mozart incarnated, in this opera, four types of love represented by the young people who make up the couples of seria and buffa inspiration. Thus, „Fiordiligi represents passion-love and pride; Dorabella, spontaneous love, quick, strong, but liable to quickly change its object; Ferrando embodies visionary love, the most intoxicating dream inspired by Eros; Guglielmo is hedonism and cheerful optimism”<sup>27</sup>.

The four young people are manipulated, as if by a puppeteer, by „Don Alfonso, the cynical, the ironic, the seducer, like Mephistopheles, while Despina is frivolity taken to an incredible Hellenic grace; she is primitive femininity, understood as a universal force”<sup>28</sup>.

## 5. Realist elements in Mozart's thought and opera

The mirror structure made up by the opera's scenes, as well as this very clear definition of the types of love embodied by the characters, make Ernst Lert say that, to understand *Così* "we have to start from the love duets and the role exchanges between the two couples - from the duets in all the combinations that are formed"<sup>29</sup>. These amorous permutations send us, once more, to Goethe, this time to his novel *Elective Affinities*, which "does not include a line that has not been lived" and in which the characters are pushed "in the direction opposite to that which they desire (...) like by a contrary, irresistible current"<sup>30</sup>.

The analysis of the duets reveals the complexity of the experiences of these characters, who are no longer silhouettes or typologies engaged in a frivolous and free game as in the garden-variety Italian comedies, but "incarnations that make Mozart a second Shakespeare and bring him closer to the novel of the 19th century"<sup>31</sup>. Perhaps, more than in any other opera, the coincidence of opposites, i.e., the ambiguity that characterizes Mozart's thinking and opera is

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<sup>27</sup> Guéorgui Tchichérine, *op.cit.*, p. 186.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> Ion Roman, *Preface to J.W. von Goethe, Afinitățile electivă (Elective Affinities)*, translation by Eugen Filotti, preface and chronological table by Ion Roman, Bucharest, Minerva Publishing House, 1975, p. XVI.

<sup>31</sup> Guéorgui Tchichérine, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

present through the alternation of contradictory feelings and states of attraction-repulsion, sadness-pleasure, wariness-temptation, regret for the old love and the desire to know a new love. Revealing from this point of view are the farewell quintet (*Bella vita militar*, sc. 5) and the "resurrection" of Ferrando and Guglielmo after the "poisoning" (*Dove son?*, sc. 16) in the first act, the Guglielmo-Dorabella duet (*Il core vi dono*, sc. 5) or Fiordiligi's aria (*Per pietà, ben mio, perdona*, sc. 7) from the second act. Act finales – not only those of *Così*, but of all Mozartian operas – are so difficult and often so difficult to manage musically and directorially, because they constitute a concentrate of real life, encompassing the multitude of experiences and points of view expressed by the characters, their diversity natures, as well as their deep motivations, sometimes extremely divergent. All the levels and moments of this "*tranche de vie*" condensed in the final act are no longer presented in sequence, but in simultaneity, which creates an extraordinary intensification of tension.

If Jean-Victor Hocquard<sup>32</sup> speaks of Mozart's "deep, timeless search of the gaze" - which the composer's various portellos betray - the musicologist Hans Mersmann notes his "power of penetration", "perfect justness", "force of demystification" and Mozart's ability, by which "in few words, he was capable of embracing and revealing somebody's entire nature (...) a clairvoyance which stands out in the introductions to the Arias from [*Nozze di Figaro*] and those of *Don Juan*"<sup>33</sup>.

The ability to dive into the depths of the being gives mystery to these operas, but more often than not, the depth, painful feelings, inner tension or even the tragedy of a situation are hidden under the mask of buffoonery, which often made Mozart wrongly or superficially accepted and labeled as "Italian-Mozart" or "Rococo-composer Mozart". The coincidence of opposites, which in the field of the history of religions is considered an attribute of the sacred - which can only be defined as the sum of all potentialities, a totalization that reveals its secret only in certain circumstances – becomes in Mozart's opera a way of bringing together and merging all tendencies to create the whole and living man: "in Mozart, the fusion of opposites translates a perception of the world of great beauty, of great harmonic richness and deeply pessimistic. Sometimes the tension is achieved by Mozart through extremely unexpected breaks, harmonic leaps, sudden dynamic changes that make the transition, without transitional passages, from the strongest brilliance to extreme delicacy"<sup>34</sup>.

While the composers of the 17th century tried to transcribe in music the movements of the soul, i.e. the affects – sung in opera *seria*, declaimed in lyrical tragedy, transposed into actions, in opera *buffa* – Mozart manages to create multifaceted characters, psychological individualities of great diversity, to musically transpose their deep motivations and render their ever-changing thoughts, moods and feelings. Tchichérine will also say that "Mozart is the most realistic composer of musical dramas, for his characters operate exclusively on the terrain of reality and relate only to it. (...) He mixed the tragic and the comic in a very original way, he brought together the noble and the vulgar (...). That is why Mozart was considered to have dynamited the genres [*Zersprenger der Gattungen*], exploding the genre of "seria" and "buffa" in place of which he put *the drama of real human life*. (...) He presents us every living character as a knot of contradictions: every being is problematic. This life wisdom brings Mozart closer to the 19th century novel, especially Balzac and even Dostoevsky"<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Jean-Victor Hocquard. 1958. *La pensée de Mozart*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, p. 24.

<sup>33</sup> Hans Mersmann. 1926. *Mozart*. Berlin: Im Verlag von Julius Bard, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Guéorgui Tchichérine, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 172.

The individualized, living, ever-moving characters are one of the aspects by which Mozart revolutionized opera. That is why it can rightly be said that the reform initiated by Nicola Jomelli (1714–1774) and Ch. W. Gluck (1714–1787) was perfected by Mozart. In opera *seria* the drama was, in fact, absent, and the characters, very conventional, did not embody real human beings, but heroes who pathetically expressed their affections, while in opera *buffa* they embodied typologies, often becoming mere masks or caricatures.

A first level at which the individuality of the characters can be "read" is their vocal line, characterized, in Mozart, by economy of means, intensification and illustration of inner complexity. The vocal line functions as a "seismograph" that reflects not only the nature of the character, but also the subtle changes produced by the movement of his thoughts and feelings. But even before the vocal line unfolds, in the introduction of the aria, Mozart usually creates an "inner picture", an "x-ray" of the character's psyche and feelings, as is, for example, the 17 measures before the aria of The Countess (*Porgi amor*) from the second act of the opera *Nozze di Figaro*. In moments of great emotional upheaval experienced by a character, the instrumental introduction is also replaced by a *recitativo stromentato* that illustrates the intensity of their feelings, as is, for example, Dorabella's recitative, "Ah, scostati!", before the aria "Smanie implacabili" (act I, scene 9) or that of her sister, Fiordiligi, "Temerari, sortite fuori di questo loco!" before the "Come scoglio" aria (act I, scene 11), to summarize these two examples from *Così*.

If, with composers like Gluck or Wagner, the music serves the drama, and the stage action is a priority, with Mozart, the essence is represented by the musical logic, i.e. the ability of the music to say what the text cannot say. The focus on the musical dimension is illustrated at three levels of the writing: the vocal line of the characters, the harmonic language, and the orchestration. As a rule, the orchestra completes what the voice does not say, "unmasking the duplicity of the speaker and, most often, revealing the depth of the psychological life behind the canvas of the singing voice (...) When in the thoughts of the speaker something that was discussed in a previous scene appears, in the orchestra there is often the reminiscence of that episode"<sup>36</sup>, as happens at the end of the second act, in *Così*, when Ferrando sings "A voi s'inchina, bella damina, Il Cavaliere dell'Albania", throwing at the feet of the frightened women the Oriental garments in which they had disguised themselves, or when Guglielmo hums a fragment of his duet with Dorabella, "Il core vi dono", ("Il ritratino pel coricino/Ecco io le rendo, Signora mia"), which in this context sounds more than painful.

The priority given to music, the concern for its eloquence and dramaturgical efficiency also emerge from a letter that Wolfgang, who was working on *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, addresses to his father, to whom he says that

"And I must speculate: – the poetry in an opera must quite simply be the obedient daughter of the music. – Why, then, are the Italian comic operas so liked everywhere? – With all the wretchedness as far as the libretto is concerned! – even in Paris – of which I was a witness myself – because there the music reigns [30] – and for that one forgets everything – All the more clearly, then, an opera in which the plot of the piece has been worked out well must please, but where the words are only written for the music and not with words placed here and there for the sake of a miserable rhyme |: which indeed, by God, contribute nothing at all to the value of a theatrical performance, whatever it may be, but certainly work rather to its detriment [35] :| – or whole stanzas which spoil the composer's idea. – Verses are no doubt the most indispensable element for the music – but rhymes – for the sake of rhymes is the most damaging; (...)The best

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 94.

thing is when a good composer, who understands the stage and is capable of suggesting something himself, and a clever poet, as a true Phoenix, come together"<sup>37</sup>.

The letter includes a true aesthetic program of Mozart's work. First of all, the statement - which has become famous and is the counterpart of the Monteverdian one<sup>38</sup> - according to which "poetry must be the obedient daughter of music" - indicates that the text must be an *emanation* of the musical conception, and the librettist is the one who must obey the composer and not vice versa. But it is worth emphasizing the specification that Mozart makes, namely, the one about "a good composer who knows the theater", a *sine qua non* condition for the good structuring and functioning of a drama. Secondly, the insistence with which he combats the gratuitousness of rhymes, the inadequacy and even the danger they represent for the value of a theatrical performance can only lead us to think of the aesthetic struggles of the naturalists, who, at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, advocated for the naturalness of expression and stage play and for the transition from the romantic versified dramatic repertoire to the prose dramas, which they considered more appropriate to the spectacular style they were promoting. The need for the composer himself to be able to make fair proposals and for the librettist to be an "intelligent poet" make us think of the theory of the total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) that Wagner would formulate approximately seventy years later<sup>39</sup>.

The correspondence he carries from Munich, through his father, with the abbot Gianbattista Varesco (1735-1805) during the composition of the opera *Idomeneo ré di Creta* is further evidence that illustrates Mozart's desire to create a stage performance as realistic as possible, namely his concern for the coherence and unity of the libretto, but also for the quality and expressiveness of each word. Mozart relentlessly revises the text, asking for the reduction of too many "i" vowels<sup>40</sup> (which sound bad, especially in acute passages), the cutting of *secco* recitatives, devoid of dramaturgical justification, the change of some lines, the shortening of the oracle's prophecy in order to intensify the effect, etc.

If, until Mozart, the action was concentrated in the *recitativo-secco* fragments, and the arias expressed a moment of effusion, an affective intensification, being built on an idea and centered on an affect, Mozart's operas will reflect a different vision of the function fulfilled by the recitative-aria doublet. In fact, it can be said that Mozart puts *the whole action* into music – not just in recitatives, but also in duets, in larger ensembles and even in arias. Simplifying, we can consider that, in Mozart's works, the arias are of two types (in a way quite similar to the typologies "*I am*" and "*I want*" in the musical): those in which the character's individuality is described in depth (such as Ferrando's, *Un'aura amorosa*, from Act I, scene 12) and those that could even be called "action arias" (such as Don Giovanni's, "*Metà di voi qua vadano*", from act II, scene 4). *Secco* recitatives continue to be very effective from a dramaturgical and musical point of view, being one of the preferred means of individualization and "radiography" of the character. Also, they play a decisive role in regulating the tempo of the action - sometimes slowing it down, relaxing it, sometimes, on the contrary, boosting it, accelerating it. The recitative is, therefore, an essential element in the construction of the Mozartian drama. That's

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<sup>37</sup> Letter from Vienna, dated 13 October 1781, in Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit, p. 1088.

<sup>38</sup> "*Prima le parole dopo la musica*".

<sup>39</sup> His work *Opera and drama* would be published in 1851.

<sup>40</sup> In the letter dated 27 December 1780, Wolfgang writes to his father that one of the singers, Anton Raaff, is unhappy about the words *rinvigorir* and *ringiovenir* in his third aria (*Sazio il destino*, later replaced by *Torna la pace* no. 30a). The line *Vienmi a rinvigorir*, which has five "i"s, is unpleasant to sing at the end of an aria, as Wolfgang also believes. In his reply dated 29 December 1780, Leopold confirms that it is not easy to sing five times "i", but not impossible either, and gives as an example some words from Metastasio's text in *Achile in Sciro*: "*il pesso alleggerir*" or "*lo vede rinfiiorir*". Leopold says that of all the words, *rinfiiorir* is the most awkward because of the three "i"s and the fact that it starts with the consonant "r".

why the truncating or even the cutting of the recitatives - as happens too often! – or their inadequate execution mutilates and disfigures the drama, depriving it of suppleness and meaning.

Another means by which Mozart aimed at the accuracy and truthfulness of the performance was related to the acting of the singers.

In a letter dated December 1780, referring both to the vocal and instrumental way of singing, Wolfgang tells his father that "there is nothing finer than when one states one's position clearly"<sup>41</sup>. Clarity and appropriateness are two aspects that have always concerned Wolfgang. In the thirty-six letters from November 8, 1780 to January 22, 1781, the exchange of ideas between father and son reflects a constant concern of both for the quality of the music, but equally for that of the spectacular performance. Wolfgang shows a constant concern for the truthfulness of the stage action and the effect it can have on the audience. He also always refers to the accuracy of the singers' performance. For example, Wolfgang complains to his father that

"Raaff and del Prato sing through the recitative completely without spirit and fire, in such an absolute monotone – and are the most miserable actors that the stage has ever borne. (...) Raaff is the best, most honest man in the world (...) does not consider the expression. Now I have had a difficult situation with him in the quartet<sup>42</sup>. – The more often I hear it, the more often I imagine it on stage, the more effect the quartet has on me. – and also has on everyone who has heard it so far on the clavier. – Raaff is the only one who thinks it will not have an effect. He said it to me completely alone. – *non c'è da spianar la voce*<sup>43</sup> – it is too restricted – as if one should not rather speak in a quartet than sing – things of this kind he does not understand at all."<sup>44</sup>.

On the other hand, Leopold participates very actively in the elaboration of the opera and suggests certain musical procedures or even gives certain indications that we could call today "directorial" to enhance the effect of certain scenes<sup>45</sup>.

Mozart creates objective situations, living characters, whose transformation and destiny he follows with a precision and an analytical spirit typical of the realist novel.

In Mozart's time, the scheme of musical drama consisted of a series of obligatory sections: overture, musical dialogues (duets), musical monologues (arias), ensemble scenes, choruses and finale. In general, he will follow this "recipe", operating, however, a series of inner enlargements and gradations whose purpose it is to reveal more deeply a character or a situation. Tchitchérine notes that in his operas, "Mozart dwells on one actor or another, as in the novel. In

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<sup>41</sup> Letter dated 13 December 1780, in Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit, p. 970.

<sup>42</sup> It is the quartet "*Andrò ramingo e solo*", no. 21, from the third Act of the opera *Idomeneo*.

<sup>43</sup> "One cannot sing [here] with a soft voice." Anton Raaff was clearly unhappy – like many other singers of the era – that the passage in question did not allow him to display his vocal qualities. This type of "*spianato*" singing - "smoothed", "stretched", "flat", "velvety" – will later give rise to that *legato*, very fashionable from the 19th century onwards, which will hypertrophy the subjective character expressed by the romantic type melodic/vocal line.

<sup>44</sup> Letter dated 27 December 1780, in Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit, p. 989.

<sup>45</sup> See in this regard the letter dated 18 November 1780, in which Leopold makes five important and detailed suggestions to Wolfgang regarding the dramaturgical and scenic coherence of certain moments in *Idomeneo*. Among them is the one concerning the Ilia-Idomeneo recitative (from scene 10, act three) which replaced the original duet. Leopold says that "this recitative must have very lively declamation at the end where she [Ilia] walks to the altar but he [Idomeneo] holds her back, then she turns with great fervour to the priest himself [Arbace], falls to her knees and, before she has finished speaking, during the words a te sacro ministro – the subterranean noise prevents their speaking and fills everyone with astonishment and fear. If it goes properly, one thing on the heels of another, it will have a great effect on the spectators, especially since the subterranean voice comes immediately afterwards. For the spectators all of this is unexpected and most extremely striking and surprising". (Mozart, *Correspondence complète*, ed. cit, p. 941). Leopold's indications reflect several aspects: the fact that he also possesses a very fair theatrical sense; that by what he says he is, of course, in total agreement with Wolfgang; that both are concerned with a most truthful, I might say, *realistic* acting of the singers; that they both believe that "special effects" can only excite when inserted into a suite of logical actions (which can't help but remind me of the "chain of logical actions" theorized and practiced by K. Stanislavski a hundred and thirty years later).

*War and Peace*, for example, Volkonsky is analyzed, his actions and situation are represented, then there is a jump to Natasha, who is in turn analyzed; then comes an ensemble - a ball... or a fight... The same principle is present in Mozart's work, where a character is analyzed; in a big scene, in a recitative, in an aria, their whole inner world is revealed, then the composer moves on to another character, then to the ensemble, i.e. to the deepening of a situation (...) In opposition to late romanticism and the hypertrophied subjectivism of the expressionists is the «new objectivity» (...) at the antipode to the taste for the miraculous and, especially, to the late romanticism of Wagner. (...) There is in Mozart this tendency to reproduce concrete life, the everyday, the anecdotal, the exemplary model in this respect being *Così fan tutte*<sup>46</sup>.

It could therefore be said that Mozart, more than any other composer, by transposing the action into music, succeeds in generating an objective, sustained, live stage action. A director reading a Mozartian score finds in every musical passage, in every chord, in every rhythmic formula, timbre, tonality or modulation, the actions that he just needs to transpose into space. Mozartian operas contain an implicit staging.

## 6. Conclusions

*Così fan tutte* can be considered the most modern and certainly the most complex Mozart opera in terms of dramaturgy and staging.

The myth of marital fidelity that underlies this work gives it a symbolic dimension and universal meaning, while the particular subject matter gives it its realistic character.

*Così* is an eloquent example of the fact that the essence of Mozart's opera resides in psychological truth and not in an illusion; his work is a *spiel-opera* (in the sense of theatrical action) in which the main ways of realizing the individuality of the characters are the profile of the vocal line, the instrumental introductions of the arias, the recitatives, whether *secco* or *stromentato*, the harmonic language and, of course, the orchestral writing .

The characters in *Così*, as in other Mozart's operas (especially those written in collaboration with Da Ponte) are not heroes, nor do they aspire to this status, but reveal themselves in all their complexity, with their qualities and flaws, with the moral highness or lowliness and weakness inherent in the human condition.

If, to the Italians, the masquerade scenes are very important, to Mozart, the disguises, the play within the play scenes and the *qui-pro-quo*s constitute games of inner, spiritual forces. The opera performance thus becomes, to Mozart, a microcosm, a reflection of the world that he observes with a rare faculty of observation and intuition.

The essence of the reform (even the revolution) which Mozart produces in the opera - very similar to the Goldonian one – and which is unprecedented in the musical theater consists in "creating the musical drama of the living, real man"<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Guéorgui Tchichérine, *op.cit.*, pp. 20–209.

<sup>47</sup> Guéorgui Tchichérine, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

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