



The Presence of Opera Buffa in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787)

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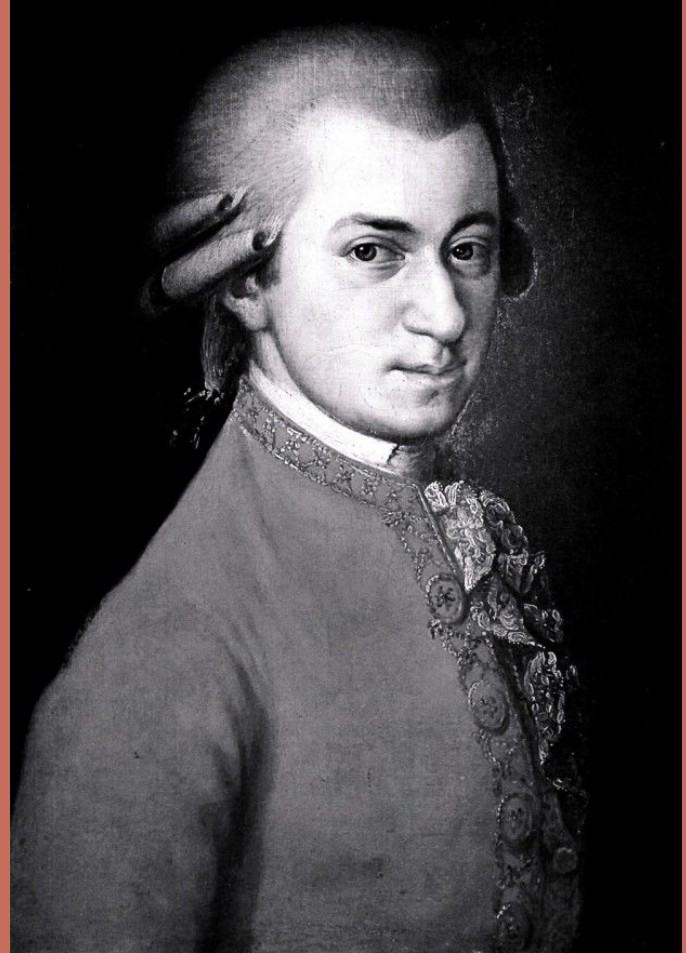
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SOURCE Conference

5/14/2020

RESEARCH QUESTION

Which aspects of opera buffa are present in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* making it the quintessential *dramma giocoso* (cheerful drama)?



METHODS

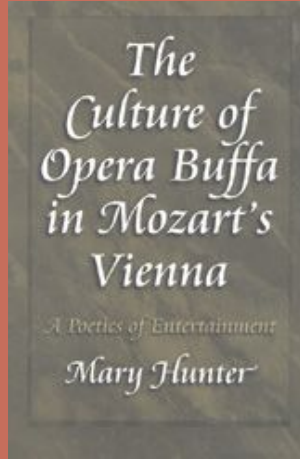
01. HISTORICAL

02. SOCIO-CULTURAL/CONTEXTUAL

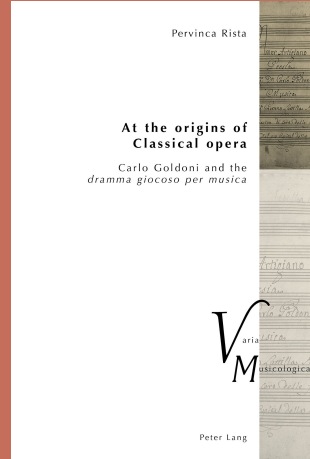
03. MUSIC-ANALYTICAL



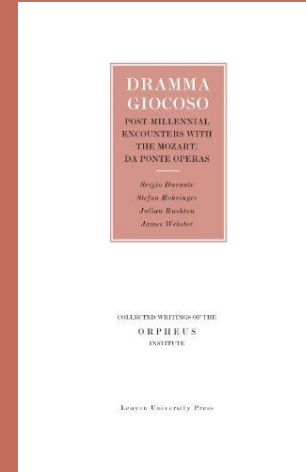
LITERATURE REVIEW



The typical structure of the arias, the hierarchy or the characters, how they are related and the skeletal structure of the plot that was followed. It is then applied to Mozart's opera buffa, *Così fan tutte*.



This talks about the differences between opera buffa and seria, and how dramma giocoso is a combination. It goes into both simple and analytical observations and gives examples from Goldoni operas that can be applied to *Don Giovanni*.



This book analyzes Mozart's dramma giocoso through arias, characters, and performance practices.

Opera Buffa **Plot**

“Viennese opera buffa seems in many ways to be continuous with those of the opere buffe produced from Naples to St. Petersburg, which omitted (or translated) regional dialect, eschewed violent slapstick and gross obscenity, and often included a substantial dose of sentimentality.”

—MARY HUNTER

The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: a Poetics of Entertainment (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 15.



Opera Buffa **Music**

- Use of “Basso buffo” (low register) male comedian
- Patter Song (rapid rhythmic patterns, each syllable of text corresponds to one note)
- Short staccato articulation (customary since the genre's origin in *LA Serva Padrona*, 1733)
- High - low clash of register
- Short phrases
- Imitation and repetition

—Grove Music Online

Weiss, P., & Budden, J. (2001). Opera buffa. *Grove Music Online*. Retrieved 29 Apr. 2020.

DON GIOVANNI PLOT

Spain, mid-18th century. Leporello, servant to the nobleman Don Giovanni, keeps watch outside the Commendatore's home at night. Suddenly, the Commendatore's daughter, Donna Anna, rushes out, struggling with the masked Giovanni and followed by her father. The Commendatore challenges Giovanni to a duel and is killed. Giovanni and Leporello escape. Anna asks her fiancé, Don Ottavio, to avenge her father's death. In the morning, Giovanni and Leporello encounter one of Giovanni's former conquests, Donna Elvira, who is devastated by his betrayal. Leporello tells her she is neither the first nor the last woman to fall victim to Giovanni and shows her his catalogue with the name of every woman Giovanni has seduced.



Madamina, il catalogo è questo
delle belle che amò il padron mio;
un catalogo egli è che ho fatt'io;
Osservate, leggete con me.



“MADAMINA, IL CATALOGO E QUESTO”

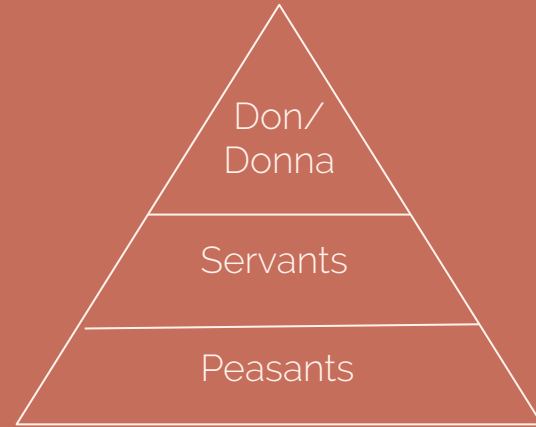
DON GIOVANNI ACT I

COMEDY IN THE PLOT



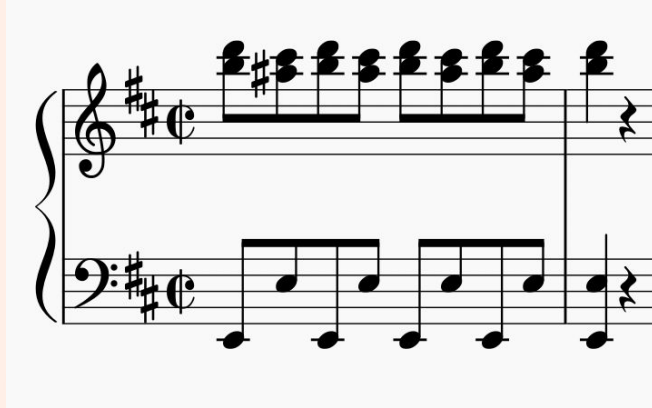
1.

The social hierarchy is seen in "La ci darem la mano" and Giovanni's relationship with Zerlina, the peasant bride he wants to seduce. A "Don" with high status is trying to seduce a peasant for most of the opera. Furthermore, Zerlina has the same number of arias as the two "Donnas" in the opera.



2.

The social pyramid of *Don Giovanni* which is also a prominent characteristic of opera buffa is followed, but also made fun of.



2. Register

Continuing with comedic registral aspects, the juxtaposition of the Baritone/Bass vocalist with the 1st violins is very comical. This is even present in just the orchestration with the violins and the cellos/basses.

Leporello

marche sa-ne prin-ci-pes-se e v'han don-ne d'og-ni gra do d'og-ni for-ma, d'og-ni

3. Patter Song

- Repetition
- Syllabic text setting
- Fast tempo
- Imitated in the other orchestral instruments.

CONCLUSION



I have analyzed Don Giovanni from the standpoint of Opera Buffa and how it contributes to one of Mozart's most famous operas, "Don Giovanni"

However, there is still much more to be done regarding this opera. It is categorized under *Dramma Giocoso* which means that there is also aspects of *Opera Sera* that need to be accounted for.