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JENNIFER GILLIS
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THE SOUBRETTE CHARACTER AS AN AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE IN 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY OPERA BUFFA AND SINGSPIEL

A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BY

_____
Dr. Sanna Pederson, Chair

_____
Dr. Leslie Flanagan, Co-Chair

_____
Dr. Roland Barrett

_____
Mr. Lorne Richstone

_____
Dr. Carsten Schapkow

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ABSTRACT

The secondary female role of lower class status in comic opera, designated by the term soubrette, is often given a diminutive value to match her diminutive name ending. As a result, the origins of the soubrette figure and how the role developed and changed throughout the history of comic opera have not been studied in detail. While Italian soubrette characters from eighteenth century opera buffa productions have been recognized, little attention has been paid to the soubrette characters of German Singspiel despite their strong representation. Scholars have assumed that this archetypal role is superficial and insignificant to the plot, but nothing could be further from the truth. In most plot scenarios, the soubrette character contributes to the plot complications and resolutions more than the primary heroine. Because the soubrette role stems from the action-based medium of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition, the character thrives through action while the primary heroine wallows in introspection. Soubrette roles are often described as having music that contributes a superficial image, such as shorter phrases, smaller ranges, and bubbling rhythms. However, these traits coincide with the active musical topics, or topoi, that are associated with the activities of peasant life, such as peasant dances.

This document will trace the origins of the soubrette role in opera buffa to the stock character Colombina as depicted by Caterina Biancolelli, an actress who performed with the seventeenth century Gelosi Commedia dell'Arte troupe. The purpose will be to define the archetypal characteristic and musical qualities of the soubrette of opera buffa and German Singspiel in order to advocate for the soubrette's value as a key figure for understanding the social climate of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This document will pursue a hermeneutic approach of particular

soubrette repertoire by interpreting the use of specific musical topics by composers, which define, question or deny the social stratification and gender relations of the soubrette.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE SOUBRETTE

Summary of Chapters and Review of the Literature

Although the soubrette, or secondary female role of lower class status, is featured throughout comic opera literature, a limited amount of scholarship has studied the origins and development of the soubrette role both characteristically and musically. Even less attention is paid to the soubrette roles outside of Italian opera buffa despite a strong representation of soubrette characters in German Singspiel. A reason for lack of scholarship is due partly to an over emphasis on the shallowness of this stock figure. However, the greatest and most scandalous truths are often expressed through comedic genres. In addition to the notion that soubrettes are superfluous characters, soubrette arias are often misconceived as being more simplistic and devoid of significant meaning due to their limited ranges, shorter phrases, or capricious texts.

The purpose of providing a study of the characteristics and musical features of eighteenth and nineteenth century soubrette figures is to reconfigure the perception of the stereotyped "stock" role by teachers, singers, directors and scholars as one of political and social significance. This historical and analytical study begins by tracing the origins of the operatic soubrette role to Colombina, a stock character from seventeenth century Commedia dell'Arte theatre. By analyzing how Colombina influenced the personal traits of the eighteenth century Italian soubrette, it provides a point of departure for depicting the transformation of the soubrette in German Singspiel. Throughout this study, the standard musical topics *(topoi)* that are associated with eighteenth century soubrette roles are identified for use as analytical resources for comparison and commentary. Significantly, when composers deviate from the

archetypal musical topics of the soubrette, it provides a *hermeneutic window* (an example of significance or meaning) into the subversive nature of the soubrette. Some scholars argue that insubordination from the servant characters throughout comic opera functions as pure entertainment as opposed to social commentary. Whether taken seriously or not by aristocratic audiences of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the soubrette role was subversive in her defiance of the existing social and gender boundaries. The soubrette became a symbol of revolutionary change during a period of social unrest through her disguises and clever manipulations used to outwit authority figures. Chapter one provides an overview of the document chapters and a review of the related literature.

Chapter Two: COLOMBINA AND THE SOUBRETTES OF OPERA BUFFA

Chapter two of this document will show how the seventeenth century stock character Colombina from Commedia dell'Arte theatre influenced the origins of the Italian Soubrette of opera buffa, which first appeared in comic intermedii between the acts of plays or serious operas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Specifically, this chapter associates the creation of a standard soubrette figure with the mid-seventeenth century actress Caterina Biancolelli (1665-1716), who achieved notable recognition for her portrayal of the stock character Colombina with the traveling Gelosi Commedia troupe. Caterina Biancolleli's portrayal and codification of Colombina greatly impacted the standardization of characteristics for the operatic soubrette of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These characteristics included personality traits, ambitions, occupations, and body type. Typically a soubrette character exhibits one or multiple traits of being flirtatious, manipulative, witty, sexual, coquettish, or intelligent.

Similar to Colombina, soubrette characters often have an agenda to rise from the class structure of lower class servants or peasants. This challenge to an extremely stratified society became part of the pre-French Revolution narrative focused on the lower to middle classes. The motivation behind the soubrette's actions can indicate the restless nature of the oppressed classes during the eighteenth century. The comparisons of the Italian soubrette to Colombina in this chapter will center around three general plot devices: overcoming social stratification, manipulating through disguises, and displaying capriciousness and shrewdness when resisting men. By analyzing and comparing musical excerpts associated with these soubrette plot devices, this chapter will consider how composers used specific musical topics (topoi) to either represent the soubrette's social immobility or her defiance of social norms.

Chapter Three: AN ANALYSIS OF THREE REVOLUTIONARY ITALIAN SOUBRETTE ROLES OF THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY

Chapter three provides an in-depth analysis of three significant soubrette roles from eighteenth century repertoire: Serpina from Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's intermezzo *La Serva Padrona* (1733), Susanna from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786), and Despina from Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (1790). These comic productions clashed with the fixed ideals of the aristocracy because of their revolutionary musical styles, scandalous plot content, and bourgeois themes. At the heart of the insurrection was the soubrette figure, who exposed social truths concerning class and gender inequalities in these productions.

La Serva Padrona sparked a war over preferred aesthetics and operatic style when it premiered at the Paris Opera in August of 1752. This controversy became known as the *Querelle des bouffons* ("Quarrel of the Buffoons,") which consisted of

two opposing sides: those who preferred the old French tragédie lyrique style of Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) against those who preferred the new opera buffa style presented by foreign Italian comedy troupes. By satirizing lofty themes and noble characters, *La Serva Padrona* became the newfound symbol of the public sphere. Viennese audiences also became familiar with Pergolesi's comedic style since Italian comedy troupes traveled and performed *La Serva Padrona* throughout Germany and Vienna. Although it did not cause a war of aesthetics in Vienna, *La Serva Padrona* became a primary source of inspiration for the future of comic opera throughout eighteenth century Vienna.

One of the most relevant and controversial aspects of Pergolesi's intermezzo *La Serva Padrona* is the questioning of social hierarchy by lower class characters. Where French tragédie lyrique and Italian opera seria promoted royal power and strict conventions, the new opera buffa style encouraged Bourgeois themes that promoted class and gender equality. Serpina is described as a "stock" soubrette character derived directly from her ancestor, Colombina of Commedia dell'Arte theatre. The word "stock" suggests that Serpina is not a role with depth or originality, but rather a carbon copy of a comedic "fixed-type." However, Serpina's final achievement of upward social mobility became a symbol of revolutionary change within the confines of the social and cultural climate of the eighteenth century.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* was not without controversy. The original play that Lorenzo Da Ponte based the libretto on, Pierre Beaumarchais's *Le Mariage de Figaro* (1778), created concerns for Emperor Joseph II of Vienna. Emperor Joseph II (1741-1790) initially banned Beaumarchais's play in Vienna due to his

anxiety over the corrupt depiction of the leading authority figures.[1] Most significantly, the protagonist characters of the plot are low status servants who plot to thwart their corrupt and immoral master. In addition to her role as a primary protagonist, it should be noted that the role of Susanna contributed to a new type of soubrette figure in the late eighteenth century (1786). Susanna became one of the first soubrette characters to spend more time onstage than the leading prima donna figure. Her role is crucial to the plot's complications, as well as its outcomes. Her character also represented a much more complex and intelligent type of soubrette compared to the previous more superficial soubrettes of opera buffa repertoire.

While disguises to test fidelity date back to sixteenth century Commedia dell'Arte Lazzi routines, the subject of infidelity in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* seemed quite controversial in the eighteenth century. Despina plays the catalyst in the scandalous plot by manipulating the two primary heroines, Dorabella and Fiordiligi. While Don Alfonso designs the initial scheme, Despina helps execute it by using disguises and persuasion. The role of Despina relates the closest to Colombina out of all of Mozart's soubrette characters. Since the second chapter evaluates Despina's musical qualities during her disguise scenes, this chapter will focus specifically on the musical topics within both of Despina's arias, "In uomini, in soldati" and "Una donna a quindici anni". Mozart gives Despina musical qualities that are standard of a soubrette character in "In uomini, in soldati"; however, he also gives her unusual features compared to his other soubrettes' arias.

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[1] Daniel Heartz, *Mozart's Operas (Cenntennial Book)*, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990), 136.

Chapter Four: SOUBRETTES OF SINGSPIEL

Chapter four elaborates on the establishment of Singspiel within Northern Germany and Vienna during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Singspiel was strongly influenced by Commedia dell'Arte and opera buffa (particularly in Vienna at the Burgtheater); the soubrette role derived from Colombina maintained a strong presence within this genre. Because of his strong desire to promote German nationalism in Vienna, Emperor Joseph II advocated for the genre of Singspiel in Vienna with the opening of the National Singspiel in 1778 at the Vienna Burgtheater.[2] One of the first notable Singspiels produced at the National Singspiel was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782), which features a widely recognized soubrette character, Blondchen. While the Italian opera buffa genre served as a primary source of inspiration for the plots and characters of the Singspiel tradition, German composers began to establish their own national identity by using German dialogue between musical numbers and action-based musical forms. The focus of this chapter will be on the musical topics and overall characteristic traits of the soubrette role from Singspiels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries beginning with Blondchen from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782) and ending with Gretchen from Albert Lortzing's *Der Wildschütz* (1842).

This chapter addresses the question of how the soubrette role may have evolved or retained similar traits within German Singspiel when compared with the archetypal Italian opera buffa soubrette. Because Singspiel was not influenced solely by Italian

[2] John Warrack, *German Opera: From the Beginnings to Wagner,* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 128-136.

opera buffa, the Singspiel soubrette was enriched by additional sources such as spoken German plays, folk songs, and French and English plays. Finally, this chapter elaborates on Emperor Joseph II's struggles to maintain a successful Singspiel company in Vienna with aristocratic audiences, who preferred opera buffa. After the disbanding of Emperor Joseph II's National Singspiel in 1783, the majority of the Singspiels that thrived in Vienna premiered within middle-class Bourgeois theatres for audiences of combined social classes. Most notably, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* premiered in 1791 at the suburban Theater auf der Wieden, which made affordable productions available to the general public. Because suburban theaters were not controlled by the tastes of the Viennese aristocracy, Singspiel productions included diverse influences beyond opera buffa. These stylistic influences must be taken into account when evaluating the soubrettes of Singspiel repertoire.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definition of *Soubrette*

International Phonetic Alphabet Source describes the German Fach System as a manner of classifying singers into specific voice categories and roles based on a number of factors such as: range, voice size, tone color, physical appearance or acting style. Soprano voices are typically divided into three vocal categories: Soubrette, Lyric, and Dramatic. Additionally, coloratura abilities or an extended range can further distinguish the three voice types. The term Soubrette can be difficult to pinpoint and define because the category is not always distinguished by the size or quality of a singer's voice. *IPA Source* notes: "A Soubrette will always be a Soubrette even if her voice picks up size with age. Her physical size and way of moving on stage keeps a forty-five or fifty year old Soubrette singing the younger sister roles."[3] This statement is somewhat exaggerated and would not apply to all roles due to unrealistic age depiction; however, it proves the point that a soubrette often has a petite physicality, which is typically associated with youth. Over the span of at least two centuries, the soubrette role in comic opera developed several standard features including: personality traits, ambitions, occupation, voice type, body type, and musical qualities. In opera productions, soubrette characters are often played by lighter, younger voices with a smaller range. However, not all soubrette characters are played by lighter voices with smaller ranges. In certain instances, coloraturas, light-lyrics, or even mezzos might play a soubrette role if a fuller sound or a higher extension is desired for the role, which is

[3] Bard Suverkrop, "Soprano Arias (Soubrette)", *IPA Source Soprano*, Accessed January 28, 2018, https://www.ipasource.com/soprano#Deutschesoubrette.

known as Zwischenfach (between voice categories/fachs).

According to **Richard Bouldrey in his anthology *The Singers Edition Operatic Arias: Soubrette* (1992)**, the variation in vocal types proves that the word soubrette describes a character's personality and circumstance more than a specific voice type. One of the reasons why a soubrette role might be played by a lighter and younger voice is because the character is supposed to be youthful and vivacious. Similarly, smaller body types typically play Soubrette roles because the character must be believable to the audience as youthful. In the opening chapter of *Singer's Edition Operatic Arias: Soubrette,* Richard Bouldrey and Robert Caldwell note that voice categories may differ from country to country. For example, Germans emphasize acting styles and focus more on vocal range rather than weight, which is a focus of the Italian school. Bouldrey and Caldwell also list features or circumstances that help determine how voices and roles are categorized:

1. Voices: Range, Tessitura, Weight, Agility, Timbre, Registration, Passagio, Singer's Personality or Acting Abilities
2. Roles: Weight, Agility, Character, Range, Tessitura, Role Traditions, Overlapping Voice Categories, Size of Theatre, Availability of Voices, and National Differences.

In his second chapter "The Soubrette Voice Category," Richard Bouldrey defines the Soubrette as a character that "evolved from Columbine of Commedia dell'Arte, epitomized in 18th century opera by Serpina." (13) He notes that at the turn of the nineteenth century, Soubrette primarily meant "a cunning servant girl, such as Despina", or a "clever young girl, such as Zerlina." Throughout the rest of the

anthology, Richard Bouldrey provides the music for one to two arias of notable seventeenth to eighteenth century soubrette roles of Italian, French, German and English repertoire. Before each character's aria(s), he includes: the background and plot of the opera, historical perspective, musical perspective, dramatic perspective, and a word-by-word translation and phonetic reading of the aria(s).

Leslie Melita Jean Dennis-Rigney defines the soubrette figure and discusses the significance of the role within the first and second chapters of her dissertation titled: **"The Significance of the Soubrette: From Commedia dell'Arte's Colombina to Early 21st Century Comic Opera Sopranos." (2007)** Similar to the problem listed in the introduction of this document, Dennis-Rigney notes a limited amount of scholarship on the origins and development of the soubrette role. She attributes the lack of scholarship to "derisive labels and disparaging characterizations of the soubrette in the 20th century [which] lessen her artistic standing." **Diana M. Gamet** states a similar problem in her article **"Exploring the Soubrette Roles of the Mozart-Da Ponte Operas: Defining Susanna, Zerlina, and Despina." (2011)** She states: "these typically lighter female roles are often treated as second-tier, superficial characters." Dennis-Rigney attributes the "derisive labeling" of the soubrette to a lack of understanding of the significance of the role throughout the years. Similarly, Diana M. Gamet suggests that a deeper understanding of soubrette characters is necessary and attainable through exploration of the social context in which they were created.

The overall purpose of Dennis-Rigney's dissertation is different from the argument within this document. Her goal was to provide a historical understanding of the origins and development of the soubrette role from the eighteenth century through

the twentieth century in order for singers, directors, voice teachers and coaches to better comprehend the significance of the role within operatic repertoire. This document will dig deeper and focus on how the soubrette role developed from a stock archetypical role into a subversive figure with more complex features both musically and characteristically. By displaying when composers deviate from musical archetypes associated with the stock role, this document will depict the denial of social stratification and gender inequality. Lastly, this document will evaluate notable soubrette roles from German Singspiels from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. In her second chapter, Dennis-Rigney only briefly discusses the Singspiel genre, and includes *Papagena* from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* as an example.

Commedia dell'Arte Traditions

Commedia dell'Arte was a popular tradition of improvised theatre in Italy and France during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. In this style of theatre, actors portrayed stock characters during small plays and improvisational comedy routines called Lazzi. According to **Henry F. Salerno in *Scenarios of the Commedia Dell'Arte: Flamino Scala's Il Teatro Delle Favole Rappresentative* (1997)**, Commedia dell'Arte began in Italy during the second half of the sixteenth century and developed from various sources such as: jugglers and mimes, jesters and court performers, minstrels and jongleurs, streets performers, Carnival, medicine shows, comedies of Plautus and Terence, and Atellan farces in ancient Rome. Unlike its counterpart commedia erudite, which used scripted dialogues, Commedia dell'Arte used sketches of scenarios. These scenarios were played by dozens of stock characters that wore masks or specific makeup to help the audience identify them. While each scenario varied, the

stock characters kept their personality traits and ambitions between each new scenario consistent. Some of the various plot concepts used in Commedia dell'Arte scenes consisted of: disguises, mistaken identities, two men in love with the same character, girls dressed as men, characters of unknown origin that end up being related to each other, or a lover posing as a servant to save the woman he loves.

Although stock characters of Commedia dell'Arte retained specific traits throughout performances, **Emily Wilbourne** argues that recent research emphasizes more flexibility with the stock roles, plots, and theatrical forms. In the introduction to ***Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sounds of the Commedia dell'Arte*** **(2016)**, Wilbourne states: "The new focus on historical specificity makes it easier to conceive of the original performers as individuals rather than merely character types, and to think seriously about what and how they might have performed." (3) She includes a broad range of theatrical forms such as: improvised comic scenarios, scripted plays, intermedii, sacred dramas, musical works, and short skits. Contrary to other sources on Commedia dell'Arte theatre, Wilbourne notes that improvised dialogue was predominantly based on previous poetic or literary texts as opposed to new texts. She states: "It was the spontaneity of delivery and the virtuosity and eloquence with which actors combined material that delighted their audiences and inspired such esteem, not the wholesale production of something new." (5) Commedia actors incorporated their previous knowledge of literary forms as well as their wealth of talents into the depiction and creation of characters. Part of the rigid stereotyping of Commedia dell'Arte characters over several centuries has resulted from the immense popularity of specific actor's interpretations.

Another element of Commedia dell'Arte was the use of Lazzi routines by the Zanni (plotting slave) characters. In **Mel Gordon's book *Lazzi: The Comic Routines of the Commedia Dell'Arte* (1983)**, he describes the purpose and significance of Lazzi routines. These small comedic scenarios were often inserted within the middle of performances if the audience seemed bored, or if actors dropped their cues. They were also used in order to further the plot development of a play. These Lazzi included: mock fights, disguises, tumbling and falling, hiding, mistaken identities, vulgarity and mockery.

John Rudlin discusses the origins, elements, and stock characters of Commedia dell'Arte in his book ***Commedia Dell'Arte: An Actor's Handbook* (1994)**. Rudlin notes in part I that the porters of the Venetian market, who used loud voices and large gestures to attract a crowd and to sell their services, largely inspired the portrayal of the Zanni (servants) of Commedia dell'Arte. Because most of the scenes were performed outside in the piazzas and fairgrounds, the actors also had to use large gestures and loud projected voices in order to draw the attention of the public crowd. Unlike Mel Gordon, Rudlin describes Lazzi routines as superfluous additions that are "inspired by the action but do not further it." He reveals that Commedia dell'Arte scenarios were filled with constant interruptions. Some of these interruptions included songs and musical interludes placed in-between the action and dialogue. Rudlin explains Commedia dell'Arte as "inherently musical and constantly on the brink of tipping over into operetta." He also notes that frequently the Zanni would carry instruments with them to further emphasize their communications during a scene.

Emily Wilbourne reiterates the notion of musical occurrences within Commedia

dell'Arte performances in her book *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sounds of the Commedia dell'Arte* (2016). Many scholars attribute the origins of seventeenth century opera with these musical performances. However, Wilbourne argues that: "music alone…fails to account for the enormous sonic inheritance that opera took from the Commedia dell'Arte." (7) She adds that several linguistic factors create intertextual references to the poetic structures and musical qualities of seventeenth century opera such as: volume, accents and gestures, pitch, speed of enunciation, and contrasting dialects of each character (the lovers articulated in Tuscan; the Captain spoke Spanish; the Zanni communicated in Bergamasco or Neapolitan; and Pantolone in Venetian). Further, "the play of intelligible words and distinctively regional sounds carried a wealth of social implications exploiting the stereotypes of early modern urban society. The sound of performance itself meant something, conveying contextual information that was absent from the words alone." (10) Similarly, in eighteenth century opera buffa, the musical sounds often convey "contextual information that [can be] absent from the words alone." The composer's choice of meter, range, rhythms, tempo or key often coincide with the social status or gender of specific characters, thus creating archetypical implications that became familiar to eighteenth century audiences.

Colombina: *The First Soubrette*

In **Part II of John Rudlin's book Commedia *dell'Arte: An Actor's Handbook* (1994)**, he describes the following key features for each Commedia dell'Arte stock character: name, status, origin, physical appearance, costume, mask, props, stance, walk, movements, gestures, speech, relationships, relationship to audience, and plot function. He also provides an improvisation exercise, prologue, monologue, and

dialogue for each character. His analysis of the role of Colombina can be compared to the characteristics of the opera buffa soubrette figures (see Figure 1.1). He describes Colombina as a "personal maid to the prima donna *innamorata* [Isabella]." Her character originates from early street performers, which were given the diminutive names Franceschina (1570) and Ricciolina (1593-1659). These characters were originally more sexually coarse than the seventeenth and eighteenth century version of Colombina (1683?), who was "younger and more graceful and engaging" and less "overtly sexual." Her earlier physical appearance is described as "strong and attractive, like a circus artiste, later petite and pretty."

In terms of relationships with other characters of Commedia dell'Arte, Colombina is in love with Arlecchino (the Servant to Pantolone, Il Capitano, or Il Dottore). Similar to the behavior of the soubrettes of comic opera, Colombina frequently enjoys scolding, punishing or chastising Arlecchino for his inability to make rational decisions. Rudlin describes Colombina as torturing him by being affectionate with other male characters. As a result of her flirtacious nature, Colombina is frequently hassled by Il Capitano and Pantalone. Lastly, Rudlin emphasizes Colombina's intelligence and self-sufficiency. He states: "whereas Arlecchino thinks on his feet, Colombina uses her brain and thinks things through." (130) This description of Colombina greatly resembles the same attributes found in Mozart's Susanna from *Le nozze di Figaro,* as she is always one step ahead of Figaro with her plans to outmaneuver the Count. The chart below lists some of the features of notable Commedia dell'Arte stock characters, which John Rudlin describes in-depth in the second part of his book:

Character	Status	Characteristics	Relationships	Plot Function
Colombina (*zagne: female servants*)	Maid or servant to the prima donna	Petite and Pretty; "the only lucid, rational person in Commedia dell'Arte"; Self-sufficient and intelligent; Desires to be rich; Able to read and write through self-education; Likes to dance and sing for the audience	In love with Arlecchino but often scolds him and punishes him; Flirtatious with Il Dottore, Pantalone and Il Capitano; Sympathetic and helpful to the lovers	The center of the plot and crucial to its outcome.
Arlecchino (*zanni: male servants*)	Servant to Pantalone, Il Capitano or Il Dottore	Carries a peasant stick (slapstick); Wears a Carnival mask; Unable to read	In love with Colombina, but very sexual in general	Some plot complications arise due to his mistakes and quick reactions
Pantalone *(The wealthy old man)*	Top of the social order; Very wealthy; Controls his servants and children	Short and lean; Wears a mask, has a beard and moustache; Believes that he can buy everything	Unkind to his servants; small-minded with his children; schemes with Il Capitano; Bothers Colombina	Complicates the plot by trying to marry his daughter to a wealthy man
Il Dottore (*The old Doctor)*	A bachelor or widower; A father to one of the lovers	Huge in size; Wears a mask; Walks with tiny steps; Stingy; Physically abusive; Sexually crude	Neighbor and friend or rival of Pantalone; Master of Pedrolino	His age and size provides the other characters with a break from physical activity when he is onstage

The Lovers (*Innamorati)* Male names: Silvio, Ottavio, Orazio, Lelio, Lindoro, etc.; Female names: Isabella, Vittoria, etc.	High status but lowered by their obsessive infatuation with each other.	Young and attractive; No mask but heavy makeup; Highly literate and educated in poetry; Fickle and jealous at times; Vain and impatient; Headstrong and Flirtatious	Blindly in love with each other; Relate to their servants by pleading for their help.	The reason for the plot because of an inability to solve their own personal problems without the help of the servants.
Il Capitano	The Outsider: Never from the town where the plot takes place; An imposter who pretends he is of high status	Wears a military costume with a feathered hat and huge boots; Wears a mask with a long nose; Wears a long sword; Loud bass-voice, but squeaks when he is frightened; Prideful and shallow	Employed by Pantalone to do his dirty work; Views Colombina as a sexual conquest (she uses him to humiliate Arlecchino)	"Exists to be 'de-masked' by the plot"; Always loses in the end
Pedrolino (a young boy)	Lowest on the pecking order; Played by the youngest son of a Commedia troupe.	Wears second hand, baggy clothes; Does not show emotion in difficult situations; Only vents when he is alone.	Faithful to his master and to Colombina, who he secretly loves.	He warms up the audience with his youthful charm, jokes, and pranks.

Figure 1.1: Stock Characters of Commedia Dell'Arte[4]

Between 1593 and 1769, the Servetta (servant) or Fantesca (maid) went by numerous names such as: Ricciolina, Diamantina, Olivetta, Colombina, Spinetta, Violetta, Corallina, and Smeraldina. However, it was Caterina Biancolelli's

[4] John Rudlin, *Commedia Dell'Arte: An Actor's Handbook*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 91-127.

performance of Colombina with the *Ancienne Troupe de la Comedie Italienne* in 1683 that influenced characteristics in the soubrette characters of opera buffa repertoire. In **Virginia Scott's book *The Commedia Dell'Arte in Paris: 1644-1697* (1990)**, she describes Colombina as someone who is "successful and never gets caught." She believes that Colombina "has no antecedents in the earlier repertory." Caterina separated the character Colombina from her servetta predecessors with her defiance of class and gender structure, her use of frequent disguises and mimicry, her coy deception of lovers, her self-assurance, and her incredible wit.

In an article by **Domnica Radulescu ,"Caterina's Colombina: The Birth of a Female Trickster in Seventeenth-Century France" (2008)**, she states that "critics largely credit [Caterina] with giving the role unprecedented psychological complexity and comic vibrancy." (88) Because Commedia dell'Arte relied exclusively on improvisation as opposed to an imposed script, Caterina Biancolelli receives most of the credit for creating the stock character. Even Caterina's physicality affected the desired look for the soubrettes after Colombina. Caterina Biancolelli was described as a petite brunette woman with a pleasant voice and physical demeanor. Radulescu attributes Caterina's popularity as Colombina with having an effect on the overall desired look and size for the proceeding soubrette roles. It is also likely that Caterina merged part of her own private life with her stage personality, which created a well-defined, more complex character. As an actress, she was able to offer a variety of skills in her performances such as singing, dancing, playing instruments, and speaking with ease and proficiency in both French and Italian. In the second half of her article, Radulescu argues that Caterina and the generation of actresses before her (such as her grandmother

Isabella Franchini Biancolleli) challenged the traditional roles assigned to women in society through their creation of these roles. She elaborates:

> Colombina takes the improvisational comedy of her Italian predecessors in the genre of Commedia dell'Arte to a new level of emancipation in which the female protagonist negotiates gender, stage presence, and disguise in order to achieve personal fulfillment despite the obstacles or patriarchal structures and traditional gender roles of seventeenth-century France…the result is a new woman who defies the place that society has traditionally reserved for her and her kind. (88)

Radulescu calls this type of defiant woman an "Italian Renaissance Woman." This is a term she uses to describe a self-educated woman who challenges the norms of society by making her voice heard through multiple entertainment forms, such as dialogues, ballads, dramatic songs, improvisation, jokes, disguises, or cross dressing. Radulescu's article provides an extremely useful resource for the argument that the soubrette role largely functioned as a subversive character within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Radulescu also makes an interesting point that Caterina's Colombina eventually "blurred the distinctions onstage between the zanna and the immorata by being at times the lover of the master or of the inamorato, and not of Arlequin." (101) In opera buffa repetoire there is a similar evolution for the soubrette role from being a clear-cut servant with a secondary role to becoming the leading love interest. This became the case with several nineteenth century roles, such as Adina from Gaetano Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* or Norina from *Don Pasquale*. Although they are educated women of decent status, the characters still largely incorporate features of Colombina, such as coquettishness and intelligence.

Italian Intermezzo and Opera Buffa

Charles E. Troy's book *The Comic Intermezzo: A Study in the History of Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera* (1979) evaluates one of the earliest sources of opera buffa, the comic intermezzo. In his first chapter, Troy discusses the origins and early stages of the comic intermezzo. Troy states that musical intermedii originally functioned as interludes between the acts of Renaissance plays. Intermedii kept the same function during the seventeenth century by acting as entertainment between the acts of ballets and early Italian operas. These intermedii consisted of choral dances, vocal madrigals, arias and duets, and instrumental music. By the middle of the seventeenth century, librettists of Venetian and Neapolitan operas began to regularly introduce comic episodes between the acts of serious operas. These episodes incorporated stock servant characters such as "a young manservant or pageboy, and a lascivious old nurse." For the purpose of comedy, a female portrayed the pageboy, and a male played the old nurse. Eventually the old woman and young boy were replaced in Neapolitan operas with a beautiful young woman and an old man resembling the Commedia dell'Arte characters of Colombina and Pantalone. Troy states:

> The presence of a soubrette, of course, makes possible more varied and "realistic" plots in which it is the man who pursues the girl with amorous intent. The first substantial number of such comic scenes appears in Neapolitan libretti around the turn of the century. Naples also seems to have been the first city where women regularly sang the female comic roles in operas. (22)

The development of a vocal style known as "comic realism" accompanied the establishment of more realistic plots and stock characters during the late seventeenth century. The music for these comic scenes is found in the so-called Dresden Collection, two volumes of comic scenes from early eighteenth century opera located at the

Sächsische Landesbibliothek in Dresden. Troy notes that the realistic style of the Dresden comic scenes includes less complicated rhythms, more repeated tones (vocal patter), a greater number of notes per harmony change, musical onomatopoeia (sobbing, laughing, and sighing), and in general resemblance to animated conversation. These same musical features became prominent in the buffo operas of the eighteenth century.

In his chapter, "Origin and Early Stages," Charles Troy also describes three types of aria styles that were used by stock characters in intermedii. These include the buffa aria, the serious or sentimental aria, and the dance-like aria. This information is important for establishing the musical devices that became standard for soubrette arias of eighteenth century comic operas. Troy notes that the typical buffa aria combines repeated notes with several other devices, including a disjunct vocal line, wide range, constant repetition of rhythmic motives and even occasional coloratura passages to reflect the text. Supporting harmony is limited to simple progressions and cadences constantly. Other than the use of a wide range, these musical features coincide with the standard eighteenth century soubrette aria. Additionally, arias for intermedii were frequently influenced by dance music in their "simple, ternary rhythm, square-cut phrases, and use of binary form." The text setting of these dance-style arias was usually syllabic with no repetition of text. Similarly, many of the soubrette arias of the eighteenth century were inspired by peasant dances through their use of simple forms, triple meters, and dotted rhythms.

Jomarie Alano discusses the controversy (*Querelle des bouffons*) that the intermezzo *La Serva Padrona* caused at the Paris Opera in 1752 in her article from *The French Review* titled: **"The Triumph of the "buffons: La Serva Padrona" at the**

Paris Opera, 1752-1754" (2005). In August of 1752, a traveling Italian troupe performed Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* at the Paris Opera alongside Jean Baptise Lully's *Acis et Galatée. La Serva Padrona* caused "many converts to Italian music in France," which created "a deep split in the French musical culture." On one side of the argument, French loyalists supported the courtly style of Lully's tragédie lyrique operas, which contained "lofty themes and legendary characters that personified royal power." These operas contained "strict rules and stiff conventions [that] left no room for social commentary, satire, or mockery." On the opposite side of the quarrel, the Italian opera buffa style "became a symbol of the emerging public sphere." Unlike French tragédie lyrique, opera buffa often mocked serious subjects and undermined authority figures. The plots incorporated realistic, everyday situations as opposed to unattainable plots and characters.

Additionally, the melodies were much more simple with less embellishments than the da capo forms of the courtly operas. The argument between supporters of the old French regime and the new Italian style came down to taste and control of the public opinion. The supporters of French music were "guided in their opinions by specific standards of taste dictated by L'Academie Royale de Musique," whereas supporters of Italian music "relied on their [own] interest." Therefore, the opera buffa style took the French public from a passive position to an active role as "master of its distinctive taste and aesthetic judgment." Although the Italian comedy troupe was dismissed in 1754, their lasting influence inspired the development of the French opéra-comique genre by composers such as Egido Duni (1726-1795) and Andre-Modeste Grétry (1741-1813).

Italian comedy troupes also traveled to other European territories to perform

their Intermedii. **Dr. Karl Geiringer** notes in his **introduction to Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* (1968)** that intermedii were performed in Germany for the first time in 1740 and Vienna in 1746. In Vienna they influenced the opera buffa style. Pergolesi's musical style included many of the same musical features that became standard within eighteenth century opera buffa productions, such as short phrases, concise musical elements, and musical parodies of opera seria style.

In chapter one, titled **"Opera Buffa as Sheer Pleasure" from *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A Poetics of Entertainment"* (1999), Mary Hunter** discusses how dramatic conventions and musical devices became signifiers of character archetypes within the repertory and genre of opera buffa. Audiences often found pleasure from these familiar plots and character archetypes. She writes: "Opera buffa cannot be understood without reference to archetypes on every level-including plot, character and musical devices both large and small." (34) In regards to the soubrette roles, Hunter even mentions the predictability of the diminutive name endings, such as Serpetta, Despina, Susanna, or Zerlina. Before the opera even begins, the audience knows what to expect from the Fantesca character based on seeing a diminutive name with the status of a servant. In addition to familiar archetypes, librettists used familiar sources for their opera buffa plots. Hunter states: "Many libretti were based on works already known to the majority of literate or theatre-going audience members." (31) Lorenzo Da Ponte's libretti for Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* were based on well-known literary sources, which largely contributed to their success. In regards to plot and character archetypes, Mary Hunter contributes a significant point toward this document's analysis of the soubrette role. She argues that when librettists

deviate from the expectations of plot shape and trajectory, it "provides a measure of pleasurable uncertainty." Similarly, when a composer deviates from the musical archetypes associated with a specific genre or character type, it contributes to a reconfiguration of the character that should not be overlooked.

Chapter two, "Opera Buffa's Conservative Frameworks," Mary Hunter's *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A Poetics of Entertainment* (1999) conveys that opera buffa not only functions as a source of pleasure and entertainment, but it also questions social mobility, the benefits and limitations of power, and the dynamic relations between genders. Eighteenth century audiences would have been able to identify with the status and occupations of the characters in opera buffa even with the incorporation of unrealistic events, which included character attempts toward upward social mobility. In regards to social reconfiguration within opera buffa, Hunter argues that social hierarchy is "immutable." She states: "This is true partly because strong, persistent, and pervasive generic conventions such as character types, plot archetypes, and musical types on various levels create a world that remains very much the same from opera to opera." (67) Hunter notes that many opera buffa productions contain dramatic ternary forms, which are typical of classic comedies. In ternary forms, conflicts resolve and the plot returns to the past before the action took place.

Chapter five, "Class and Gender in Arias: Five Aria Types," discusses the significance of class and gender representation within buffa arias. Hunter argues that the "Serva/Contadina*"* aria sung by lower-ranked women raises questions about social and gender issues. One of the defining attributes of the aria type of the female servant is a focus on men and their relationship to women. Hunter notes that singers of these

arias often "explain the nature of womanhood to audiences both on and off stage, especially in arias complaining about men." (127) Unlike the male buffo arias, women also tend to spend a considerable amount of time during their anti-male rants defending themselves against the opposite sex. Hunter explores the notion that the femininity of the serving-class characters cannot be compared to the femininity of the heroine, but instead is "presented as an "other" to masculinity; it is an "otherness" of which its possessors are fully conscious, and which they are delighted to manipulate in their own interests, which almost without exception have to do with men, as sources of comfort, providers of goods, or thorns in the side." (127) In addition to an "otherness" of gender, Mary Hunter describes the music of the female servant as uncharacteristic and varied compared to the buffo arias of the male servants.

German Singspiel

John Warrack traces the origins of German Opera from the sixteenth century through the nineteenth century in his book ***German Opera: From the Beginnings to Wagner* (2001)**. In the first and second chapters, Warrack notes the presence of various entertainment forms in Northern Germany that incorporated musical excerpts, such as Martin Luther's promotion of the sacred drama or plays put on by the traveling *Englische Komödianten* troupe. The *Seelewig,* "an allegory on the progress of the immortal soul," was another genre featured in the sixteenth century that incorporated strophic songs linked by dramatic recitative. These entertainment forms functioned as the precursors to the eighteenth century Singspiel genre.

During the destructive period of the Thirty Years War, Warrack notes that Northern Germany suffered from a lack of musical progress. However, Italian musical

traditions were maintained in southern Germany as well as other areas least affected by the war, such as Vienna. Emperor Leopold I (1658-1705) of Vienna invited singers and musicians from Mantua to perform Italian operas for the courts during Carnival and other important occasions. Although German Singspiels were still performed in courts, they were typically performed in courts with less financial resources. In chapters five and six, Warrack discusses the growing interest in German national opera in Berlin and Vienna during the late eighteenth century. Much of the interest in German opera in Vienna came from Emperor Joseph II, who was "determined to strengthen national unity by the promotion of the German language, and to use the stage as one means of achieving this end." (128) This national ideal led to his formation of the National Theater Singspiel in 1778.

In **Mary Hunter's book *Mozart's Operas: A Companion* (2008)**, she lists four roots of Viennese Singspiel:

1) *Jesuit Dramas:* Strong in Southern Germany and Austria; Operatic dramas on religious subjects that included a mixture of sung numbers with spoken dialogue in Latin; Included machinery and stage effects; Contained some elements of improvised comedy.
2) *Improvised Comedies:* Centered on the comedic servant character named Hanswurst (Jack Sausage); Similar to Commedia dell'Arte in that actors impersonated and parodied the culture of aristocrats and used disguises as part of their plots; Hanswurst comedies included instrumental and sung music.
3) *Northern German Singspiels*: Emperor Joseph II admired the nationalism

of the Northern German Singspiel, which included experimental works by Wieland.

4) *Traveling English, French and Italian Productions*: Included plays with incidental music put on by traveling English players or visiting Commedia dell'Arte troupes; Additionally, French plays, opera comiques, and opera buffa productions were performed in Vienna by traveling troupes.

Musical Meaning: A *Hermeneutic Study of the Soubrette*

Lawrence Kramer defines hermeneutics, or "the art of interpretation" in his book ***Interpreting Music* (2011)**. Throughout the first chapter, he provides an extended definition of "interpretation" that is both vague and highly specific. In the vague sense, he states: "Open interpretation aims not to reproduce its premises but to produce something from them. It depends on prior knowledge but expects that knowledge to be transformed in being used." (2) In the act of interpretation, prior knowledge provides points of intersection, which can "activate" and "modify" the subject of interpretation. More specifically, Kramer states that interpretation must be "analytical, articulate, and reflective," which often brings the interpreter into contact or even conflict "with the subject(s)-both agents and the topics-of what is interpreted." In other words, interpretations are often influenced by subjectivity but become plausible with adequate analysis, reflection and articulation. In chapter four, Kramer defines points of meaning within music as "hermeneutic windows." He states: "Meaning comes from negotiation over certain nodal points that mobilize the energies of both text (image, dramatic action, musical unfolding) and context." (68) Scholars have provided several hermeneutic tools

in which to produce or "mobilize" strategic interpretations, such as musical topics (topoi*)*, markedness, or intertextuality.

Robert Hatten describes how musical topics (conventional labels and signs) and markedness (the unexpected) can be used as resources during the interpretive process in his book ***Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation and Interpretation*** **(1994)**. In chapters two and three, he discusses how musical tokens represent specific expectations that manifest in stylistic types. Because tokens and stylistic types elicit expectations for the listener, they allow for a growth in meaning when expectations begin to diverge into something new or different. When specific qualities no longer meet the listener's expectations, Hatten calls it "markedness," or a "valuation given to difference." Markedness can be useful as a hermeneutic tool when interpreting a piece of music because it displays underlying motivations and correlations associated with meaning. In chapter three, Hatten discusses the display of formal and expressive genres. For the purposes of analyzing how the soubrette evolved from a caricature stock figure into a subversive "renaissance woman," this document intends to evaluate the influence of old musical forms and dance types within the soubrette arias. Dances are often displayed in high, middle and low styles. These distinctions help define the social status of the characters within opera buffa productions. For instance, Mozart's female servant characters (Serpetta, Blondchen, Susanna, Zerlina, and Despina) often have arias within the style of a peasant dance in triple meter. Several of the arias sung by these characters also have the same key of F major, which is most likely attributed to the key of previous peasant or pastoral dances. By establishing the musical types that are prominent within the soubrette repertoire, this

document aims to correlate "stylistic markedness" (diversions from conventionality) with meaning and significance.

In chapter two of her book *Mozart's Operas: A Companion* (2008), Mary Hunter focuses on the stereotypical aria types found in Mozart's comic operas, such as the "Serving Girl" aria. On an important note, she states: "eighteenth century composers also combined the elements of different aria types in less obviously conventional arias. This matrix of meanings gives arias (as well as characters and plots) exceptional richness and depth." (14) Hunter argues that aria forms and categorizations not only imply social conventions within opera, but they can also defy those conventions when a composer strays from the expected form. Further, ensembles and duets often provide social connotations with the display of particular rhythms or other conventional musical devices.

Wye Jamison Allanbrook describes the meaningful role of musical topics within eighteenth century music in chapter three, **"The Comic Surface" from *The Secular Commedia: Comic Mimesis in Late Eighteenth-Century Music* (2014)**. She discusses the search for musical meaning in the 1980s by musicologist Leonard G. Ratner, who proposed "the existence of an expressive code for the late eighteenth-century repertoire represented in musical "topics" or expressive commonplaces." Musical topics become "expressive codes" with their connection to human behavior or social elements such as: social dances, worship practices, ceremonies, the military, or the life habits of the higher and lower classes. Further, Allanbrook provides a useful list of "musical commonplaces" found in the compositions of the late eighteenth-century, which serve as familiar references or associations between multiple works. This list

includes: characteristic styles, social dance types, vocal and instrumental effects, musical textures, and musical genres. She asserts:

> Music invokes many *musical* texts, or rather contexts, that is, musical gestures that qualify as texts because they come already colored by rhythmic and melodic associations with the ordinary lives of human beings, their dancing, their music making, their worship, their protocol; the motions of daily human activities have stamped these gestures with meanings. (108)

In her book ***Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: "Le nozze di Figaro" and "Don Giovanni"*** **(1983)**, **Wye Jamison Allanbrook** uses musical gestures as an analytical tool. She studies the dance topics found in Mozart's comic operas and relates them to their social meaning. As specific dance topics become symbolic of class and status over time, composers either rearticulate the social placement of characters or defy their social stratification through the denial of appropriate musical topics.

Similar to Wye Allanbrook, **Michael Klein** notes the importance of inter-relationships between musical works, known as intertextuality. In his book ***Intertextuality in Western Art Music*** **(2005)**, he defines intertextuality as referring to the intersection of two or more texts (text and/or music), which display similarities or allusions between the multiple texts. For instance, musical topics become intertextual between works over time with conventional and repetitive use. When a composer exhibits a pastorale within a piece, the work will inherently be compared to all previous pastorales through association. Michael Klein defines five forms of intertextuality in his first chapter: "Eco, Chopin, and the Limits of Intertextuality."

1) Poietic: Previous texts that the author has brought to new writings
2) Esthetic: Texts society brings to its reading
3) Historical: Texts of its own time and study

4) Transhistorical: Text of all time and study
5) Aleatoric: Text that moves freely across time

For the purpose of this document, poietic readings will be helpful because "such studies follow the familiar path of proving connections between the works." In this intertextual light, the interpreter focuses on the borrowing of musical material between two composers. If Mozart's Despina from *Così fan tutte* sings "In uomini" with similar dotted rhythms and in the same key and meter as Lisetta's "Una donna come non vi fu" from Joseph Haydn's *Il mondo della luna,* these two texts become inherently inter-related through their striking similarities.

CHAPTER TWO:

COLOMBINA AND THE SOUBRETTES OF OPERA BUFFA

The Soubrette of Commedia dell'Arte

Commedia dell'Arte theatre served as an important symbol for the mutability of symbolic class structure in Europe during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Each stock character, or fixed-type, within Commedia dell'Arte represented a distinct class status through the social codes of manner of dress, vocal dialects, daily customs, and physical mannerisms. These archetypal social conventions within Commedia dell'Arte helped audiences to quickly recognize each stock character, but they also revealed the potential freedom to construct other symbolic social orders.[5] The servant characters (known as *Zanni*) in Commedia dell'Arte played the most significant role in the disruption of social conventions through their "comic refusal to accept the logic of power itself."[6] Commedia dell'Arte performers often used subversive comedic devices, such as mockery and disguises, as an avenue to expose the unjust hierarchies of medieval feudal systems.

During the Renaissance to the Pre-Enlightenment period (1400-1700), medieval institutions formed by the clergy and nobility began to slowly unravel with increasing secularism, professional and mercantile classes, and literacy. Europe was also still recovering in the fifteenth century from the Black Plague, which had decimated populations from all classes in Europe. Despite this considerable social reconstruction during the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries, women did not experience substantial

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[5] Scott McGehee, "The Pre-Eminence of the Actor in Renaissance Context: Subverting Social Order", Edited by Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick, In *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell'Arte* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 9-16.
[6] Ibid.

social changes as men still had authority over their wives and daughters. For this reason, the Servetta and Fantesca (female servant and maid) of Commedia dell'Arte were significant for their defiance of social suppressions and stereotypical gender roles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The female servant/maid was able to become her own authority figure within Commedia dell'Arte theatre by using calculated manipulations and disguises against the men who oppressed her or sexually tormented her. The soubrette type in eighteenth century opera buffa resembled the servant/maid character from Commedia dell'Arte in that she also used manipulations and disguises to subvert patriarchal and gender structures. The next section will evaluate two servant characters from Commedia dell'Arte who highly influenced the soubrette characters of opera buffa through their personalities, physical mannerisms, and relationships with other characters.

Franceschina and Colombina

Two significant types of servant women developed in Commedia dell'Arte from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century: Franceschina and Colombina. Franceschina was an earlier female servant character that was portrayed by Silvia Roncagli with the traveling Gelosi comedy troupe in 1570.[7] Silvia Roncagli played the role of Franceschina within plays and improvised comedy routines, or "Lazzi," during street performances with her comedy troupe.[8] Franceschina was described as "the

[7] Rudlin, *Commedia Dell'Arte,* 128, (see chap. one, footnote 3).
[8] Lazzi were small improvisatory scenes inserted between acts of a play if the audience seemed bored. These scenes often included: mock fights, disguises, cross-dressing, mistaken identities, vulgarity, and mockery of the nobility or authoritative figures.

housekeeper with seniority and a set of keys to everything."[9] Colombina similarly worked as a personal maid to the innamorata, which was the leading female character of noble status. Franceschina and Colombina shared many personal traits, including their intelligence, coquettishness, and servant livelihood. The primary differences between Franceschina and Colombina were their age and choice of men. Unlike her more youthful successor Colombina, Franceschina had previous life experience with men and relationships as a result of her older age. Franceschina's relationships often involved rich old men like Pantalone, whereas Colombina typically ended up with her low status Zanni counterpart, Arlecchino.[10] Several soubrette characters from eighteenth century buffa style productions share attributes with Franceschina. For example, Serpina from Pergolesi's intermezzo *La serva padrona* (1733) and Despina from Mozart's opera buffa *Così fan tutte* (1790) coquettishly interact with rich old men, who resemble Pantalone in their aged physical appearance and buffoonish personality. Similar to Franceschina, Despina indicates in *Così fan tutte* that she has had previous experiences with men and romance. One key difference between Serpina/Despina and Franceschina is that Franceschina is described as an older and voluptuous woman, whereas more youthful and petite singers tend to play Serpina or Despina. By the late seventeenth century, Colombina replaced Franceschina as the new and improved Servetta character due in part to the popularity of actress Caterina Biancolelli.

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[9] Julie Goell, "Le Servette in Commedia Dell'Arte ", Edited by Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick, In *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell'Arte*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 93.

[10] Pantalone is a wealthy and greedy man, who wears a Venetian costume and has the bent over posture of an elderly person. He is rather self-involved and transparent. Arlecchino is a servant for Pantalone or Il Dottore. He is physically quick, but mentally slow. He can be graceful and charming but also ignorant and naïve.

Caterina Biancolelli's Colombina

Isabella Biancolelli portrayed the first version of Colombina with Fiorelli Locatelli's comedy troupe in the seventeenth century.[11] Isabella Biancolelli's immediate family members were also actors for the same Commedia troupe. Isabella's son, Domenico Biancolelli, was one of the most famous Arlecchinos, and her daughter-in-law Orsola Cortesi depicted Eularia, an inammorata role.[12] While Isabella portrayed the first version of Colombina with Fiorelli-Locatelli's troupe, it was Caterina Biancolleli (her granddaughter) who created the most popular version of Colombina within the seventeenth century. In Radulescu's essay, she states: "critics largely credit [Caterina] with giving the role unprecedented psychological complexity and comic vibrancy."[13] Since Commedia dell'Arte relied predominantly on improvisation instead of an imposed script, Caterina Biancolelli largely created and standardized Colombina's personal qualities herself. In order to create a well-defined and complex character, Caterina Biancolelli merged part of her private life experiences with her stage personality. She was able to bring a variety of skills to her performances such as singing, dancing, and playing instruments. Caterina further enriched Colombina's use of tricks and disguises through her ability to mimic various dialects as well as the vocal and physical mannerisms of other characters. She also spoke French and Italian with ease and proficiency as performances were often translated from Italian into French to please French audiences. As a result, Caterina grew up speaking fluent French and Italian with

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[11] Called the *Ancienne Troupe de la Comedie Italienne* in the late seventeenth century.
[12] Domnica Radulescu, "Caterina's Colombina: The Birth of a Female Trickster in Seventeenth-Century France", *Theatre Journal* 60.1 (2008): 88, Web. 11 Nov. 2017, http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/stable/pdfplus/25070159.pdf?acceptTC=true&jpdConfirm=true.
[13] Ibid.

her family and troupe.

Caterina's Physical Appearance, Manipulative Disguises, and Coquettishness

Caterina Biancolelli mesmerized audiences by constantly changing personalities onstage to her advantage. In addition to her stage personae, seventeenth and eighteenth century critics praised Caterina for her charming physical appearance. She was described as a petite brunette woman with a pleasant voice and physical demeanor, which assisted her in manipulating men with coquettish tendencies. Before Caterina, the female servant character, Franceschina or Riccolina, was physically described as a woman who is "strong and attractive, like a circus artiste"; however, the stock character was later described as someone who is "petite and pretty."[14] Caterina's popularity as Colombina likely affected the desired look of the succeeding soubrette roles in opera buffa during the eighteenth century, since smaller or more youthful singers tend to play soubrette roles.

During the Renaissance period, female performers often deployed comedy as a means for social emancipation. It is interesting to note that women in Commedia troupes had an equal role with men both onstage and behind the scenes.[15] They broke social and gender taboos in making their voices heard through the shroud of comedic stock characters. Caterina Biancolelli utilized traditional Commedia devices to her advantage, so that they might question the imposed restrictions on women of society. One could even argue that Caterina's Colombina awakened pre-Enlightenment principles by defying "the place that society has traditionally reserved for her and her

[14] Rudlin, *Commedia Dell'Arte,* 129.
[15] Domnica Radulescu, *Women's Comedic Art as Social Revolution: Five Performers and the Lessons of Their Subversive Humor*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012), 81.

kind."[16] Caterina separated Colombina from her Servetta predecessors through several subversive actions. Colombina made attempts to improve her low social status and gain financial security. However, she typically only succeeded at increasing her social standing by either marrying a rich man or dressing in disguise as someone else. Caterina's ability to use disguises and mimicry as part of her act gave Colombina a sense of empowerment particularly with male characters in that she was able to outsmart and outmaneuver them. Her moments of cross-dressing as male authoritative figures also showed the audience a mutability of gender roles within society.

Caterina's capricious nature helped Colombina survive in a patriarchal society. While she flirted with her social superiors, Colombina always kept herself at an unattainable distance from them. Not only did her coquettishness keep suitors interested, but it also protected her from their true advances. The following sections of this chapter will show how the soubrette characters in eighteenth century opera buffa also subverted social structures through the incorporation of plot devices inherited directly from Colombina, notably: defying social stratification and patriarchal gender structures, manipulating with disguises and mimicry, and using capricious actions to survive unwarranted male advances. Musical gestures will be associated with these subversive actions as part of a hermeneutic approach of relevant soubrette repertoire from eighteenth century opera buffa productions.

[16] Radulescu, "Caterina's Colombina", 88.

Transcending Social Stratification and Patriarchal Structures

Soubrette characters of eighteenth century opera buffa have a pressing agenda to transcend social positions associated with peasantry or servitude; however, this goal is not always attainable despite their best attempts. When soubrettes do experience reversal of social or gender roles by using disguises or other manipulative tactics, the new social order is often only temporary. Several soubrette characters from eighteenth century buffa productions also desire financial security above marriage or even love. Radulescu notes: "The subtext of many of Colombina's teachings about marrying rich men, even if they are not young or handsome, is that once one is financially secure, romance is possible outside of marriage."[17] One of the most influential buffa comedies composed during the eighteenth century was Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's intermezzo *La Serva Padrona* (1733). This comic intermezzo is comprised of only three characters: Uberto (an elderly bachelor), Serpina (Uberto's youthful maid), and Vespone (Uberto's mute servant). The two primary characters come directly from stock characters of Commedia dell'Arte. Serpina emerges from the maids Franceschina and Colombina.[18] Similarly, Uberto derives from a combination of Pantalone and Il Dottore.

Serpina's name ("little snake") describes her deceptive personality and impertinent nature. She is a strong-willed and self-reliant woman, who knows exactly how to attain what she desires by using various manipulative tactics. Gordon describes Colombina as "the maid of one of the Old Man or the wife of Arlecchino, [who] was a

[17] Radulescu, *Women's Comedic Art*, 94-95.
[18] The servant stock type in Commedia dell'Arte also was also known as Ricciolina, Diamantina, and Olivetta.

happy-go-lucky and successful schemer."[19] In *La Serva Padrona* Serpina is determined to rise from her status as maid of the house to mistress of the house by marrying her elderly employer, Uberto. Despite Uberto's anger and impatience with Serpina's arrogance, she convinces him to marry her in the end. She accomplishes this goal through provoking, tormenting, and tricking Uberto. In *La Fille de bons sens,* Colombina tells her mistress Angelique "from whatever side may the money come, it always smells good."[20] Similarly, Serpina views marriage to Uberto as a necessary means for financial comfort and social growth.

In the opening scene, Uberto notes how Serpina has been his maid since she was a young child, but now she has turned into the ruler of his household. He sings: "And now because of this, she has so much arrogance, she has such a good life, that now the servant will become the master! I must resolve this in good time."[21] Uberto senses that his power over Serpina is dwindling. Serpina also recognizes her newfound power over her master. She proclaims: "No sir, I want to be respected, I want to be revered, like I was mistress, arch-mistress, grand mistress."[22] Serpina's shrewd admonishment of her male superior is rather audacious for female behavior in the eighteenth century. However, audiences had already been subjected to this assertive female type with Colombina. In *La femme vengée,* Colombina says: "I want for all women to learn from me today, the manner in which to put in his place a husband who gives himself airs of

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[19] Mel Gordon, *Lazzi: The Comic Routines of the Commedia Dell'Arte,* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983), 61.
[20] Radulescu, *Women's Comedic Art*, 89.
[21] Original Text: "Or ella ha preso per ciò tant'arroganza, fatta è si super bona, che alfin di serva diverà padrona. Ma bisogna risolvermi in buon'ora."
[22] "No, signore, voglio esser rispettata, voglio esser riverita, come fossi padrona, arcipadrona, padronissima."

authority in the house."[23] The symbolic redistribution of power between men and women became an underlying theme in seventeenth-century Commedia dell'Arte performances, which is found within Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*.

Pergolesi's music for *La serva padrona* (1733) typified the new opera buffa style of the eighteenth century through his incorporation of short phrases, repeated texts, vocal patter, and large intervallic leaps. Although Serpina and Uberto have musical qualities in their arias that are associated with opera buffa style, Pergolesi gives each character distinguishing musical gestures that further define their class status and occasionally deny it. Wye Jamison Allanbrook acknowledges that eighteenth century composers frequently borrowed musical gestures from social dances to distinguish noble characters from the rustic.[24] During the ancien régime, dances with stricter rhythms tended to express noble and distinguished emotions (the minuet, march or sarabande), whereas dances with freer rhythmic gestures like the passepied, gigue, pastorale, or siciliano represented more natural or commonplace passions. As the aristocracy began to mix with bourgeois classes for social dances in the eighteenth century, other dance forms developed that blurred the historical distinctions of class associations. These dance types, the contradanse and waltz, left more room for individual interpretation. The contradanse form opposed the sophisticated style of the minuet dance because it was more carefree and socially inclusive.

In Serpina's aria "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso," Pergolesi gives her a lively tempo in

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[23] Radulescu, *Women's Comedic Art*, 95; "Je veux que toutes les femmes apprennent de moi aujourd'hui la manière de ranger un mari qui se donne des airs de maîtrise dans sa maison."

[24] Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 31-70.

2/4 meter and rhythmic gestures that originate from the contradanse form. The contradanse anglaise, contradanse français and contradanse allemande were three types of contradanse forms that became popular during the eighteenth-century. Serpina's aria employs the allemande dance type, which tends to have a livelier tempo than the contradanse française and angloise. Allanbrook states:

> The allemande is quicker, more energetic, and according to some critics, all too undignified. Its country of origin is of course Germany. It appears in both duple and triple meters- 2/4 and 3/8. As a class the allemandes differ from françaises and angloises in their quicker tempo and customary downbeat opening.[25]

The smallest rhythmic values in the contradanse are typically sixteenth notes. It is often defined by its fluidity and constant motion. The quick and rhythmic nature of this dance genre tends to evoke merry or comedic expressions. Figure 2.1 shows additional features that define the contradanse form.

Lively tempo	Clear melodic organization	Swinging gait	4-8 measures
Major mode	Simple rhythms	Duple meter: 2/4 or 6/8	Clearly marked divisions

Figure 2.1: Musical features of the contradanse[26]

The word contradanse comes from the English word for "country-dance." This dance form is commonly associated with images of folk life due to its rustic origins in England. The contradance eventually made its way into the repertoire of French courts by the end of the seventeenth century. It was celebrated for its active, carefree spirit. Unlike graceful noble dances, the contradanse required minimum technique and focused on simple pleasure and amusement. Leonard Ratner surveys the use of dance forms in

[25] Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, 55.
[26] Danuta Mirka, *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 173-174.

the eighteenth century both as styles within an entire work and types within sections of a larger work. He states: "Dance topics saturate the concert and theater music of the classic style; there is hardly a major work in this era that does not borrow heavily from the dance."[27] The most significant aspect of dance forms is that they serve as expressions of cultural and social functions through their references to social activities and indications of class. It is interesting that Allanbrook references how critics viewed the contradanse allemande type as "undignified", which would serve well for an unrefined servant character like Serpina. (Figure 2.2) Allanbrook further contributes to the idea of refined versus unrefined dance genres of the eighteenth century by locating them on a metrical spectrum. She defines the contradanse meter as one for "terrestrial passions" as opposed to "exalted passions."[28] Dances that fall on the end of the spectrum labeled with "exalted passions" are typically reserved for ecclesiastical or noble activities, whereas the dances labeled under "terrestrial passions" function as carefree entertainment and often have rustic connotations. The social origins and historical associations of dance forms became symbolic of a character's class representation within buffa arias during the eighteenth century.

[27] Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style,* (NYC, NY: Schirmer Books, 1980), 18.
[28] Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, 67.

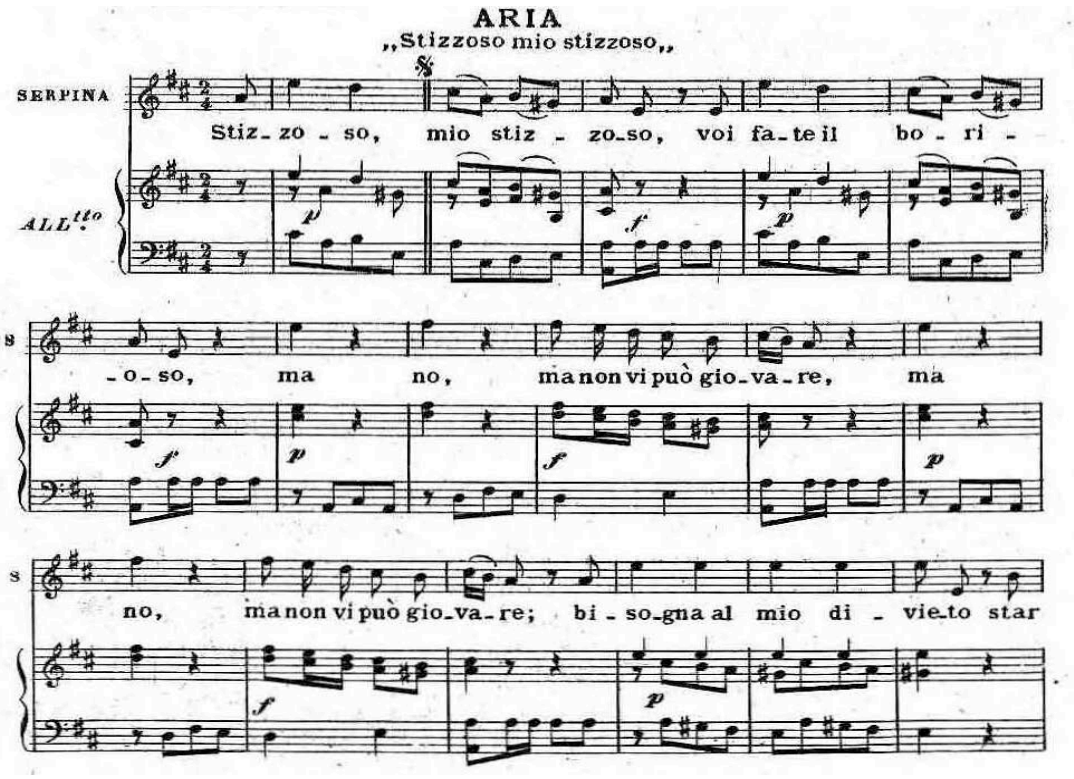

Figure 2.2: Serpina, "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso" (mm. 1-17)
Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*
(Milano: Florio & C., ca. 1910)

Uberto's preceeding aria, "Sempre in contrasti," contrasts in meter and key with Serpina's "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso." (Compare Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3) Throughout *La serva padrona*, Uberto sings in flat keys, while Serpina's music is often presented in sharp keys. While Serpina's aria presents a musical paradigm of her lower class status through its freer dance form of rustic origins, Pergolesi gives her the key of A major that would be more common for noble characters. Pergolesi further reverses the archetypal key relationships associated with the status of the characters by giving Uberto an aria in F major. F major was a key that was consistently associated with the pastoral, rustic lifestyle in the eighteenth century. Many soubrettes of the eighteenth century have at least one aria in the key of F major. Serpina is defined to her class in "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso" by an "undignified" contradanse form. However, she resists

her social position by singing in the key of A major, which elevates her above her flat superior in F major.

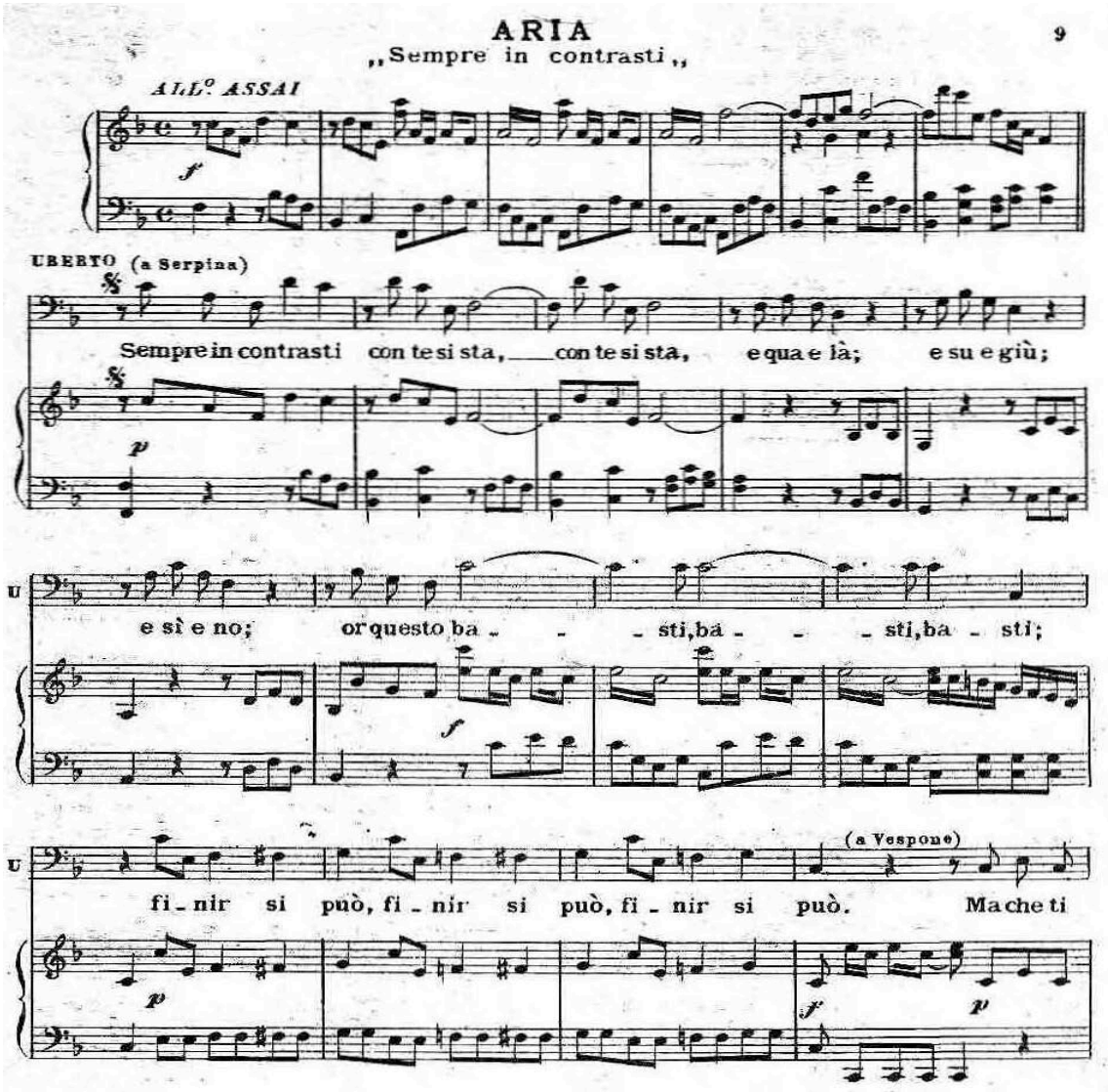

Figure 2.3: Uberto, "Sempre in contrasti" (mm. 1-19)
Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona*

The soubrette's desire to rise in class status extends to additional eighteenth century soubrettes such as Zerlina from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787) and Despina from his *Così fan tutte* (1790). In Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Zerlina dreams of a better life for herself. Despite becoming recently engaged to the young peasant Masetto, Zerlina becomes enthralled with the idea of being the wife of Don

Giovanni, a wealthy nobleman. Giovanni tries to seduce Zerlina away from her fiancé by offering his hand in marriage in the second act duet, "Là ci darem la mano." He emphasizes in the opening recitative that Zerlina is not meant to be a peasant because "her lips are too lovely" and "her hands are too fair and delicate." Giovanni flatters Zerlina with the idea that her hands are not rough like the hands of a peasant, but rather smooth and delicate like a noblewoman. At first Zerlina anxiously questions Giovanni's sincerity; however, when he proposes to her, she consents to his advances. Brown-Montesario claims: "Earlier Don Juan stories reveal that this kind of class-conscious flattery is typical, particularly when he is seducing a woman of low birth."[29] Although Zerlina loves her fiancé Masetto, Giovanni evokes illusions of grandeur and wealth. Zerlina's betrayal of Masetto shows her strong desire to become more than just a country peasant.

Despina in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* makes it particularly clear from her first entrance onstage that she despises a life devoted to service. She states in her opening recitative: "Being a chambermaid is a horrible life! From morning to night you work, you sweat, you toil, and after all is done there is nothing for one's self!"[30] Leporello makes a similar statement in his entrance from Mozart's *Don Giovanni.* He complains, "Night and day I slave for one who does not appreciate it. I put up with wind and rain, eat and sleep badly. I want to be a gentleman and give up my servitude."[31] Servants have vocalized complaints about their social positions as far back as Commedia

[29] Kristi Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas,* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2007), 62.
[30] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Così Fan Tutte*, Ed. Ruth Martin and Thomas Martin, (New York: Schirmer, 1951).
[31] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Don Giovanni*, (Milan: Ricordi).

dell'Arte in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Similar to Despina and Leporello, Colombina challenges her role as a servant. In a sample of dialogue, she remarks about her own disapproval of the lifestyle of a servant. She states:

> I am a serving maid, it's true! But the status of a servant does not condemn me to working like a slave: cleaning rooms, killing myself in the kitchen, carrying wood, drawing water, doing the shopping, washing the shirts, starching collars, mending clothes, etc.[32]

Throughout *Così fan tutte*, Despina finds sources of empowerment despite her limited place in society by directing and commanding her mistresses. Both of Despina's arias "In uomini, in soldati" and "Una donna a quindici anni" express her authoritative force over the young women. Remarkably, Dorabella and Fiordiligi become the students and Despina becomes their instructor and personal mentor.

Despina's aria from the first act, "In uomini, in soldati," encourages the young women to enjoy the company of foreign men while their lovers are presumably away at war. She convinces the women that "men are made of the same material: branches that move with the fickle breezes are more stable than men."[33] Despina's negative commentary on men is typical of the soubrette, which believes that "men have wronged [women] by appropriating all positions, but these positions can serve use every day as a place of vengeance."[34] Despina views women's sexuality as a tool for vengeance against men to reclaim power from them. She further suggests to the noblewomen in "In uomini, in soldati" that women should "pay back the evil and indiscreet breed by loving for convenience and vanity." Colombina proclaimed a similar message in *La Fille de*

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[32] Rudlin, *Commedia Dell'Arte*, 131.
[33] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Così Fan Tutte*, Ed. Ruth Martin and Thomas Martin, (New York: G Schirmer, 1951).
[34] Radulescu, "Caterina's Colombina", 87-113.

bons sens: "We have to beat men at their own game, serve them their own medicine."[35]

Although Despina only plants the initial seed of betrayal in the women's minds in "In uomini, in soldati," she effectively provokes their final actions of infidelity in "Una donna a quindici anni." Despina must persuade the women to accept the advances of the foreign men in order to receive her prize in gold from Don Alfonso. She begins the aria by scolding the women for behaving so naïvely with men. Despina's behavior toward the women is typical of Colombina, who was known for giving her mistress relationship advice and reprimanding men for their foolish tendencies. Radulescu proclaims: "Colombina had no qualms in trying to persuade [her mistress] that for all the evils of society, women need to learn how to turn their unequal position to their advantage."[36] After chastising the women, Despina convinces them to flirt with the foreign men. The duet between Dorabella and Fiordiligi that follows Despina's aria shows her ability to successfully manipulate the mistresses because the young women decide to consent to the foreigners' advances. The naïve young women allow Despina to have a major influence over their decisions, thereby subconsciously making her their authoritative figure.

While Despina's first aria, "In uomini, in soldati" was in the typical soubrette key of F Major, Mozart gives "Una donna a quindici anni" an unusual key for a soubrette. Similar to Serpina's "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso", this aria is in a sharp key of G major; however, it still retains a rustic dance form as indicated by 6/8 meter. (Figure 2.4) Bouldrey proclaims that the key of "Una donna a quindici anni" demonstrates how

[35] Radulescu, *Women's Comedic Art,* 91-92.
[36] Ibid, 89.

Despina must be taken more seriously by the women than in "In uomini, in soldati."[37] Mozart cleverly moves Despina's music up a step from her first aria in F major to G major for "Una donna a quindici anni." Perhaps sharp keys better depict when the soubrette character successfully reprimands and manipulates the nobles above her in class status.

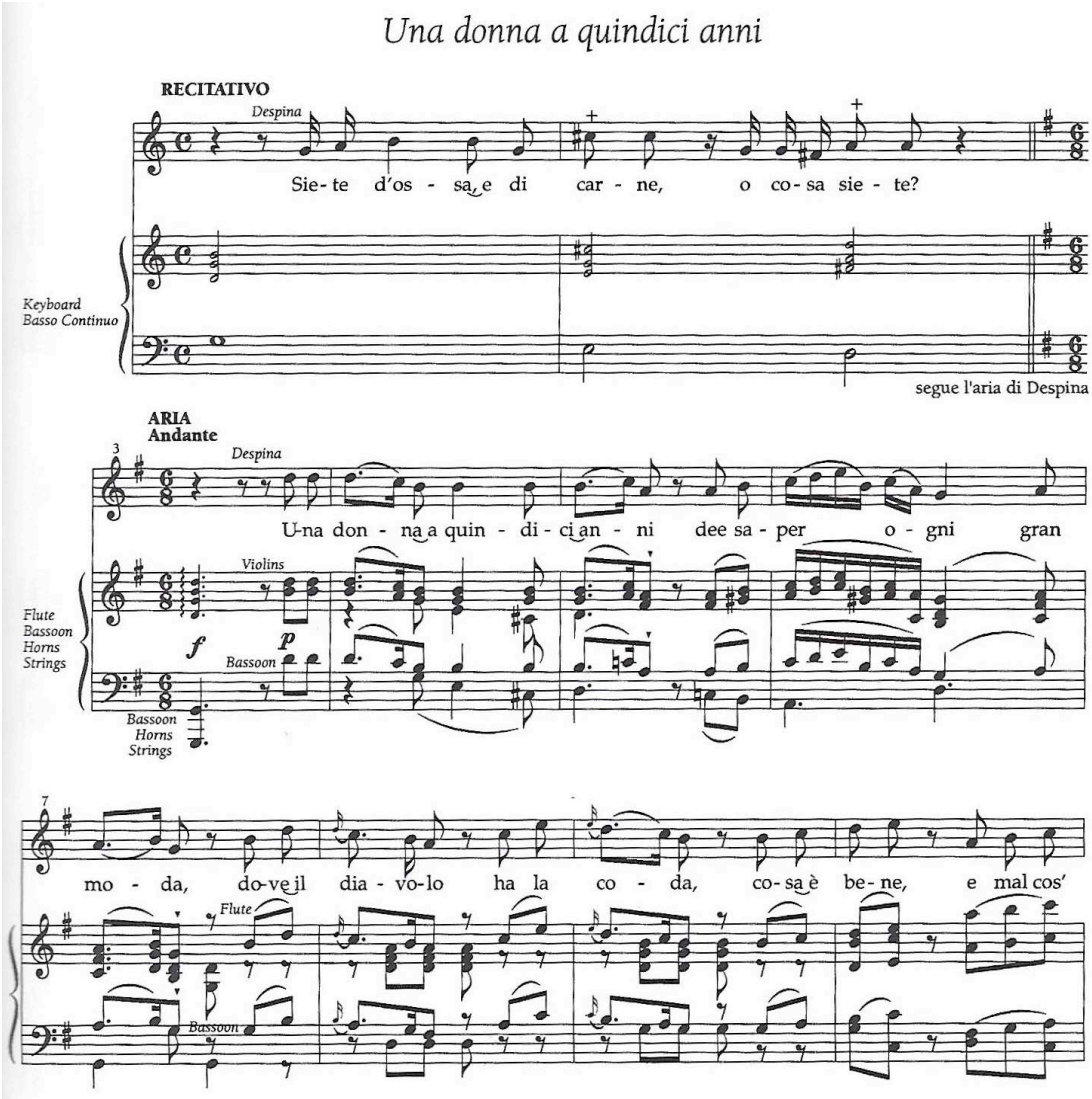

Figure 2.4: Despina, "Una donna a quindici anni" (G Major and 6/8 meter)
Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (mm. 1-10)
(Ricordi Opera Vocal Score Series, 2005)

[37] Richard Bouldrey…[et al], Ed. Robert Caldwell, *Singers' Edition: Operatic Arias, Soubrette*, (Dallas, TX: Pst…Inc, 1992), 164.

Manipulations Through Disguises

In the plots of seventeenth century Commedia dell'Arte, disguises were often used by the Servetta as a main source of manipulation with noble characters or lovers. One of Colombina's most useful skills was her ability to successfully mimic others by using disguises or changing her voice and dialect. In Domnica Radulescu's article on Colombina, she remarks:

> Colombina's irony and sense of superiority reflect the strategies of a trickster who knows how to use each situation to her advantage; her main survival strategy is the disguise, and her anger at the abuses of power in a patriarchal society is channeled into cunning ways of negotiating that power.[38]

Caterina Biancolelli's Colombina often used disguises as a manipulative tactic to achieve temporary emancipation from gender roles or class social structures. Typically Colombina took on disguises of male-designated occupations, such as: "a long-winded author, a doctor, a lawyer, a peddler, a knight, a captain, and even a government representative."[39] Although cross-dressing had been a standard element of comedy in Commedia dell'Arte for both men and women, Colombina used the comedic improvisational tradition to negotiate her own gender obstacles. She was able to achieve the improbable statuses only designated for upper-class males of society by disguising her identity. These disguises in return tricked her male superiors into obeying her commands. Joan Schirle observes: "the women characters of traditional Commedia nonetheless often adopted physical disguises to be able to move safely in

[38] Radulescu, "Caterina's Colombina", 106.
[39] Ibid, 89.

their world with the same agency as men."[40] In this sense, disguises became a crucial weapon for actresses to use against strict social oppressions. In addition to taking on improbable statuses and occupations, Colombina was able to fight against the rules of the patriarchal system through her biting irony. Colombina uses disguises as a weapon to assume male power, and then "subverts it by exposing the great abuses of the same power."[41] Her ironic mockery during disguises provided a reflection of social corruption for the audience.

When depicting disguised characters in the seventeenth century, Caterina Biancolelli often altered her voice to fit the disguised character types. Thereafter, similar manners of altering vocal qualities and/or wearing disguises became a staple for the soubrette characters of the eighteenth century. Mozart's soubrettes often use disguises to help further plot complications. As part of her scheming with Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte,* Despina dresses up in disguises in order to manipulate Dorabella and Fiordiligi. In the first act finale of *Così fan tutte,* Despina enters with Don Alfonso disguised as a multi-lingual miracle doctor. In the style of a farce, Despina revives the poisoned men by using a large magnet. Hunter describes the events of most comic operas as thoroughly unrealistic, depending on a combination of improbable coincidences and implausible disguises, expressed in modifications of traditional Lazzi.[42] Part of the comedy behind disguises is the unrealistic notion that the deceived characters cannot recognize the identity of the manipulator behind the disguise, which

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[40] Joan Schirle, "Commedia Women On Stage and in the Wings", Edited by Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick, In *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell'Arte*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 461.
[41] Radulescu, *Women's Comedic Art*, 105.
[42] Mary Kathleen Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A Poetics of Entertainment*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 55.

often entails a change of costume, musical style, and voice. While Mozart does not demand that Despina change her voice in the score during the doctor scene, singers often choose to altar the timbre of their voice for comedic effect.

In a 1988 production of *Così fan tutte* directed by Jean-Pierre Ponelle with the Wiener Philharmoniker, Teresa Stratas gave Despina's voice a piercing nasality while disguised as the doctor.[43] This choice of vocal timbre contributes to Despina's mockery of the male doctor figure, which is typically depicted as buffoonish by male buffo singers. Although Mozart does not specify a voice change for Despina's first disguise, he alters her musical qualities and dramatic idioms to reflect the character-type of her disguises, such as: Latin phrases, syllabic text setting, melodic repetition that creates vocal patter, large leaps between phrases, and incoherent musical forms. These musical idioms would be typical for a male buffo singer, who might portray doctors, notaries, or buffoonish servant figures. In the doctor disguise scene, Despina's music contains vocal patter and syllabic text setting that are comparable to Doctor Bartolo's musical traits in "La vendetta, oh la vendetta!" from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786). (Compare Figure 2.5 and 2.6)

Additionally, Despina mocks the fixed doctor type with her false Latin proclamations. Goehring deliberates: "Cloaked in long robes, improvising her part using the typical lazzo device of fake poison, and –most of all- mangling her Latin, Despina is simply putting on the mask of the Dottore, the Commedia dell'Arte fool of

[43] Jean-Pierre Ponelle, dir., *Mozart: Così fan tutte,* Featuring Gruberova, Ziegler, Stratas, Lima, Furlanetto, Montarsolo, DVD-ROM, (Weiner Philharmoniker, 2006).

pedantry."[44] Often the buffo character is the only one to speak in dialect or to proclaim pseudo-Latin phrases. Because Despina lacks the status and traditional education of a doctor, she imitates the Latin phrases that she has picked up from doctors visiting her mistresses. The resulting product is Despina's disfigured, meaningless Latin as she first enters proclaiming: "Salvete, amabiles, bones puelles."

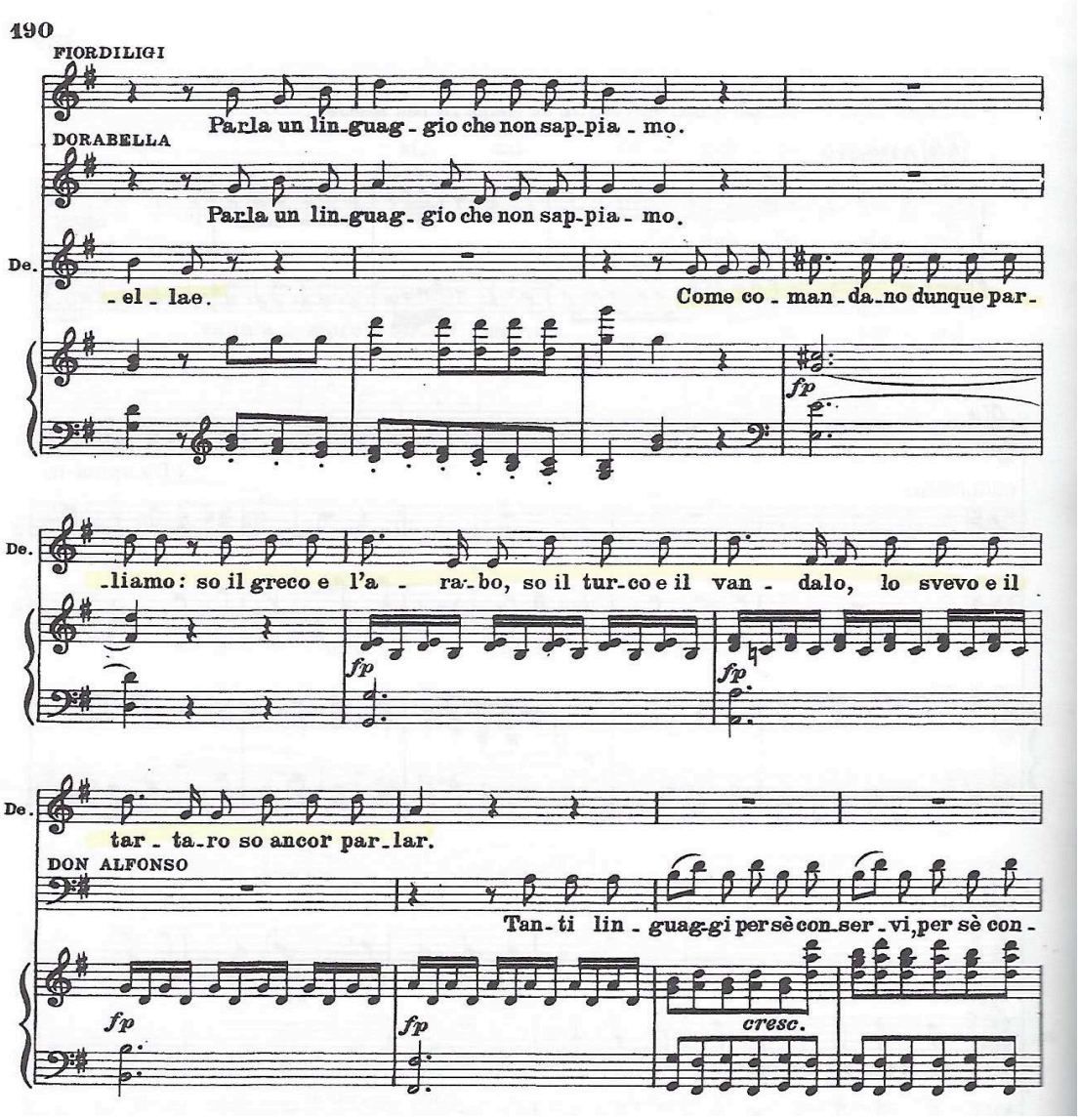

Figure 2.5: Despina in disguise as "Il Medico"
Finale, *Così fan tutte* (Act I, scene XVI)

[44] Edmund J Goehring, "Despina, Cupid and the Pastoral Mode of Così Fan Tutte", (*Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1995), 107–133.

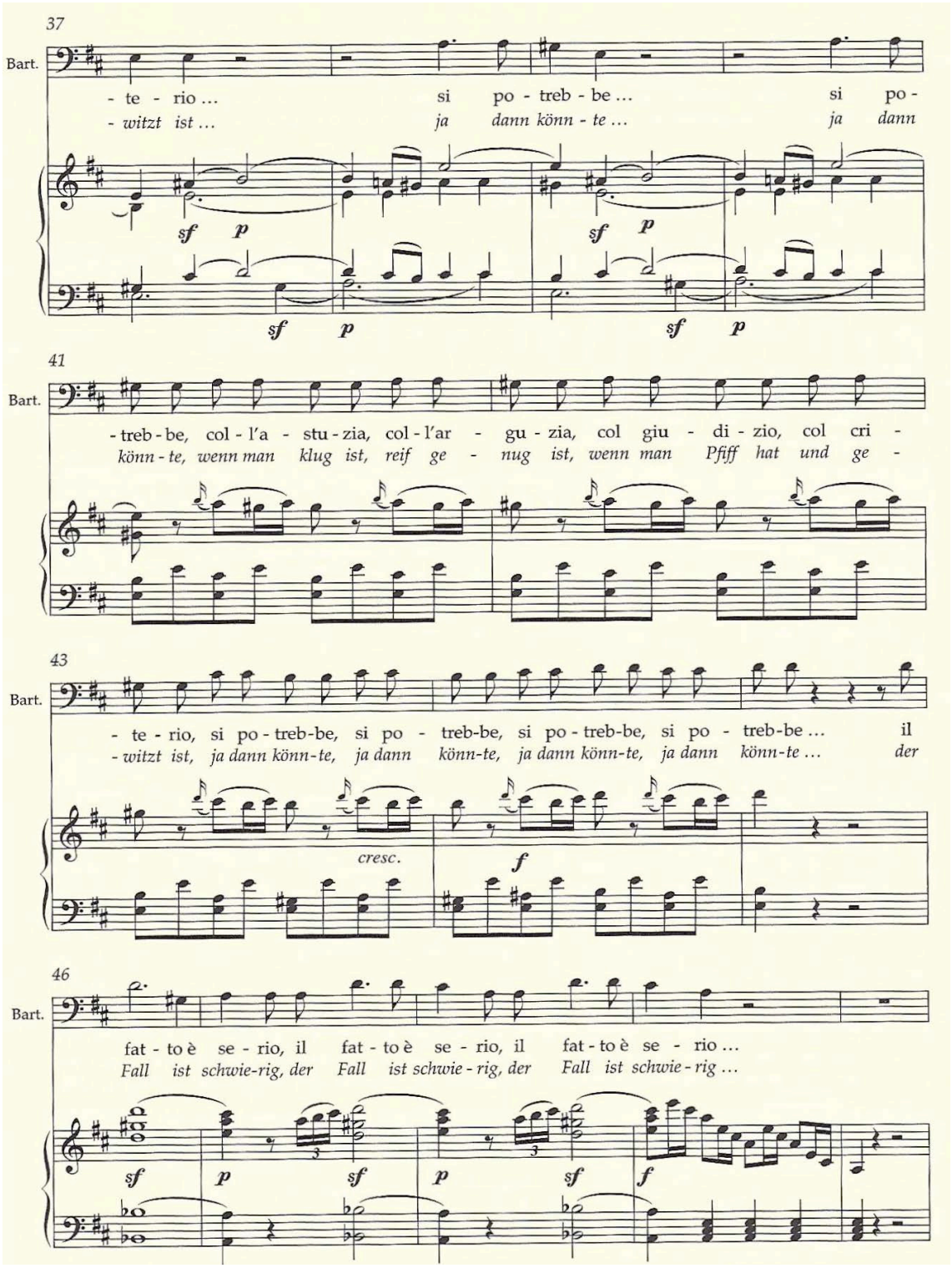

Figure 2.6: Dr. Bartolo, "La vendetta, oh, la vendetta"
Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (Act I, Bärenreiter Edition) (mm. 37-50)

In the second act of Mozart's *Così fan tutte,* Despina enters dressed as a notary to presumably officiate the marriage contracts of the two couples. Just as the women sign the counterfeit contracts, they hear the trumpet sounds of the returning army. The marriage contracts complete the final step of Don Alfonso's experiment that substantiates his belief in women's unfaithfulness to men. Similar to the disguise scene from the first act, Despina's music contains vocal patter with repetitive pitches. Beyond the distinguishing buffo musical qualities, singers often choose to distinguish the doctor from the notary by creating two vocal timbres for each disguise. Unlike the disguise scene in the first act, Mozart gives specific instructions for Despina to sing *"*con voce nasale,*"* or *with a nasal voice*. (Figure 2.7)

In the same 1988 production of *Così fan tutte* with the Wiener Philharmoniker, Teresa Stratas added to the nasal quality by creating a feeble sound during her portrayal of the notary.[45] In addition to changing Despina's voice for the notary, actresses often wear a mask. The idea of the mask originates from Commedia dell'Arte when Colombina would dress in disguise as Pantalone. Rudlin describes Pantalone's mask as a "long, hooked nose with bushy eyebrows, sometimes [with a] moustache."[46] Pantalone was known in Commedia dell'Arte traditions for his financial fixations, decrepit movements, and Venetian-style costumes (black pantaloons and a woolen bonnet). Similarly, Teresa Stratas wore a Venetian-style mask and replicated Pantalone's feeble posture in the 1988 production of *Così fan tutte.*

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[45] Jean-Pierre Ponelle, dir., *Mozart: Così fan tutte,* Performed by Gruberova, Ziegler, Stratas, Lima, Furlanetto, Montarsolo, DVD-ROM (Weiner Philharmoniker, 2006).
[46] Rudlin, *Commedia Dell'Arte*, 93.

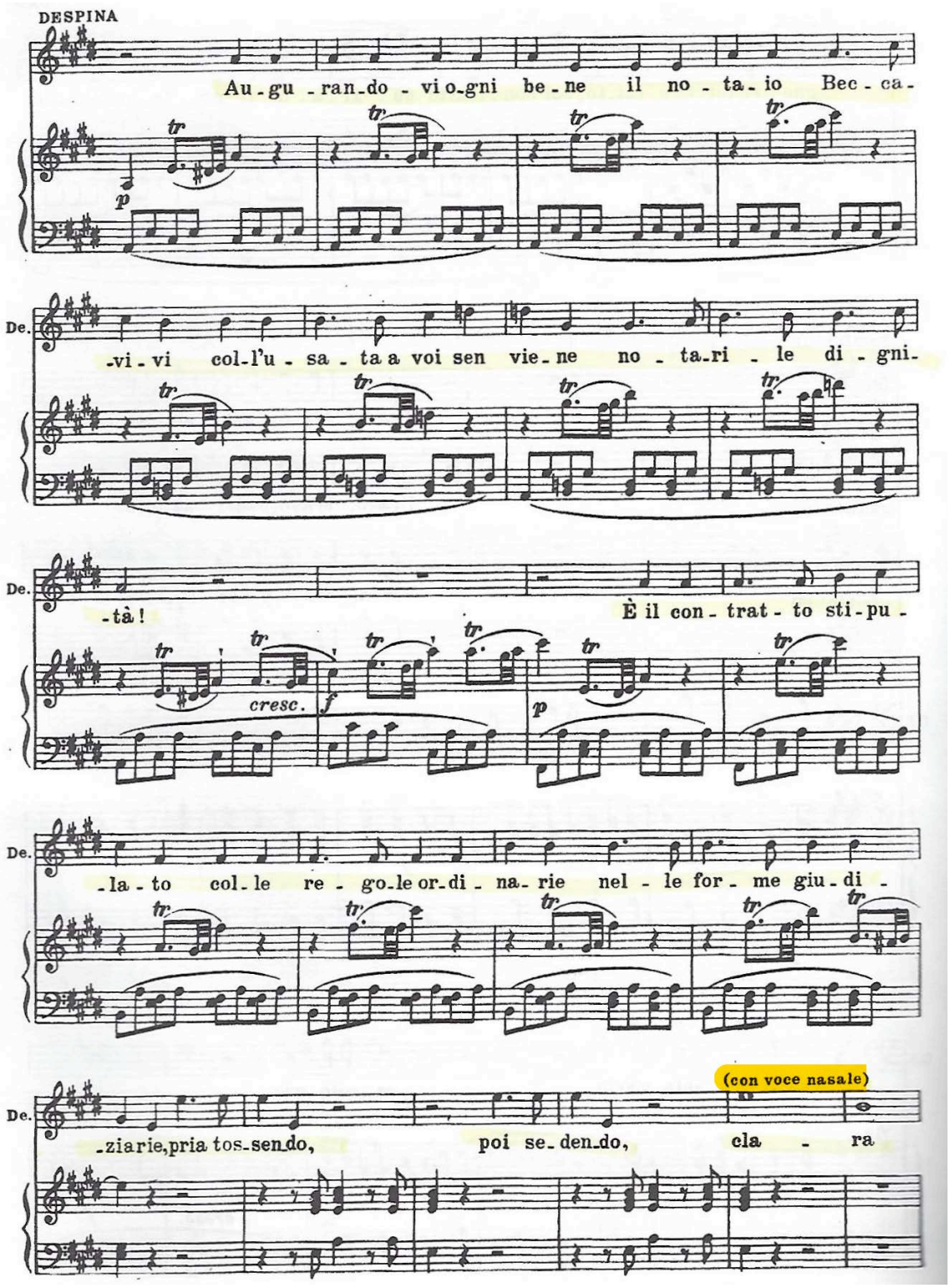


Figure 2.7: Despina in disguise as "The Notary"
Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (Act II, scene iv)
"Con voce nasale" (with a nasal voice)

Disguises to test fidelity as well as couple swapping were standard of the Lazzi routines of Commedia dell'Arte. These Lazzi devices became prominent in opera buffa as methods of "reconfiguring social tensions through stock dramatic formulae, which allowed them to be absorbed into the comforting domain of the familiar and controllable."[47] In the final act of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786), Susanna and the Countess dress in disguise as each other to mislead the Count and expose his infidelity. As Susanna dresses and mimics the Countess's voice and noble mannerisms, the role reversal gives Susanna a sense of temporary social mobility and power over the Count. Typical of opera buffa and Commedia dell'Arte, all other surrounding characters mistake the women for each other, which causes the plot to thicken. In the end, the women succeed at humiliating the Count through their scheme. The Count in his embarrassment apologizes to his wife and seeks her forgiveness.

Similar to Despina's notary scene from *Così fan tutte*, Mozart requests that Susanna changes her voice when depicting the Countess. He writes "cangiando la voce" (*change the voice*) over her vocal entrance, "Ehu Figaro: tacete," in scene thirteen from the final act. When Figaro first encounters Susanna dressed as the Countess, he mistakes her for the Countess; however, Susanna briefly forgets to altar her voice, which makes Figaro recognize her despite her noble attire. Mozart writes: *"*si mentica di alterar la voce*"* (*She forgets to altar her voice*). (Figure 2.8) As soon as Figaro recognizes Susanna, he decides to tease Susanna with some of her own tactics by flirting with her while she is dressed as the Countess.

[47] Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa,* 52.

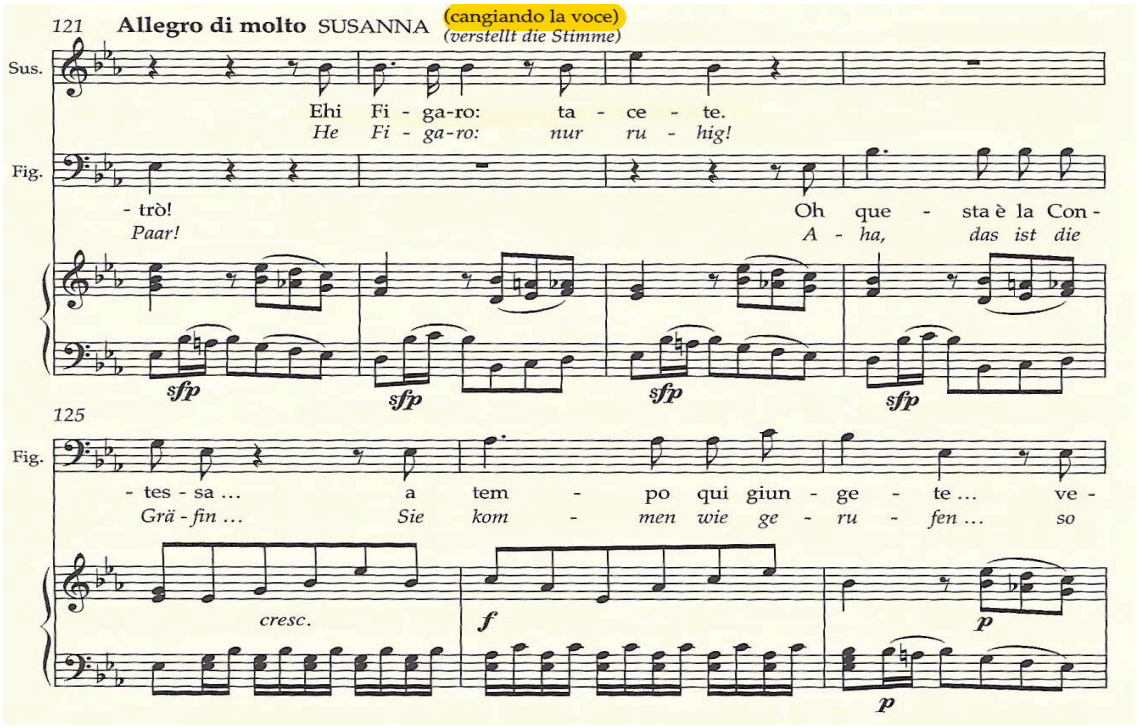
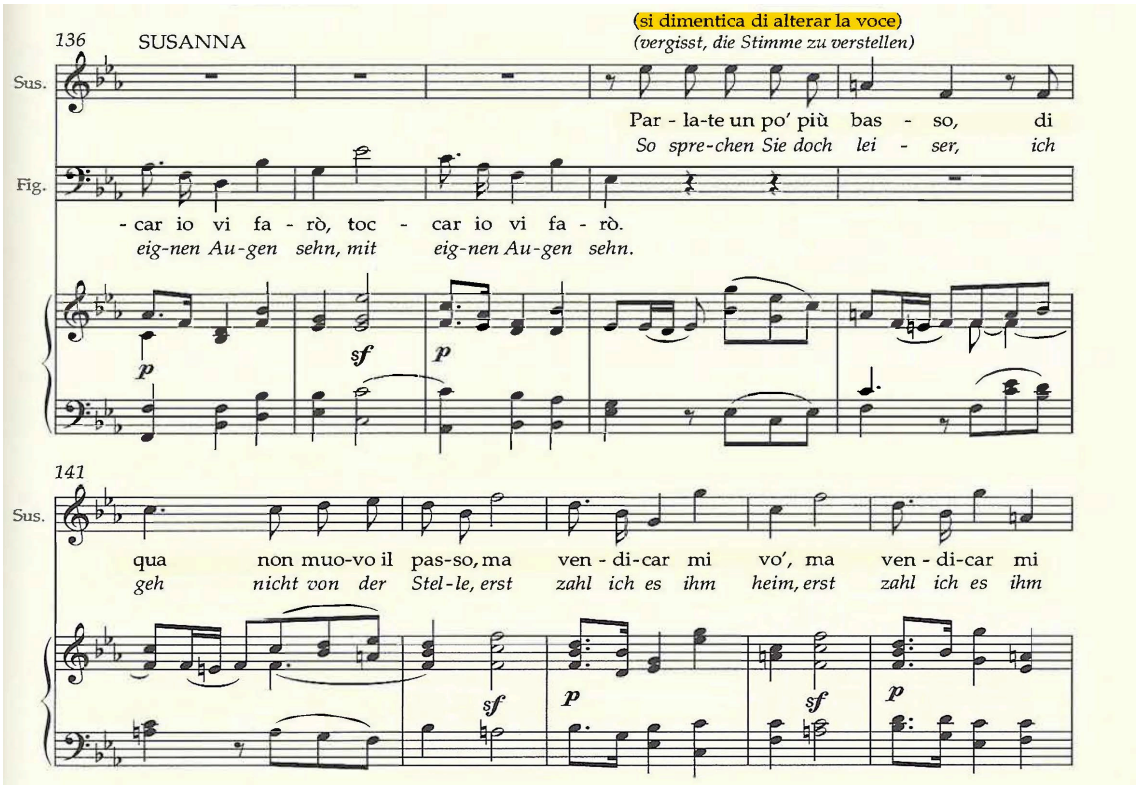


Figure 2.8: Susanna and Figaro, "Tutto è tranquillo e placido" Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro,* (Act IV, scene XIII) (mm. 121-127)



Continued: Susanna and Figaro, "Tutto è tranquillo e placido" (Act IV, scene XIII) (mm. 136-145)

Shrewdness: Playing the Coquette

One of the most characteristic features of the soubrette in comic opera is her strong coquettish tendency, which she inherited directly from Colombina. John Rudlin describes Colombina as: "very affectionate to other characters, and her affections seem to flow through her physically, but she always holds something back. As a result she is pestered by other men, especially Il Capitano and Pantalone."[48] The soubrette typically uses her intelligence, beauty and sexuality as tools for manipulating men. Radulescu eloquently observes:

> Just as submission, frailty, passivity are traits which women have learned and which have become marks of their gender, Colombina seems to say, so can they be unlearned, and so can women learn precisely the opposite: resistance, strength, action. But the trick of it is to be able to play both, according the occasion and to what necessity requires.[49]

Like Colombina, the soubrette in opera buffa is able to play into the stereotypes associated with the female gender to fit her own needs. In *Il mondo della luna* (1777) by Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), Lisetta (Buonafede's maid) sings the aria "Una donna come me non vi fu", in which she falsely manipulates and teases Buonafede into thinking that he can have her romantically whenever he desires. She implies:

> A woman like me there never was, nor will there ever be, no. I am all love and faith. I am all charity. Ask anyone who knows. I have no malice in my heart: I have always been this way. Rarely do I say "no." When I can, I say "yes."[50]

As soon as Lisetta finishes enticing Buonafede with this aria, she leaves the stage without acting on her proposed romantic intentions. Playing the role of a teasing

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[48] Rudlin, *Commedia Dell'Arte*, 130.
[49] Radulescu, *Women's Comedic Art*, 95.
[50] Bouldrey, *Singers' Edition: Operatic Arias*, 76-78.

coquette is a common tactic that soubrettes use with men who pursue them. There are three main reasons that soubrettes use coquettish behavior with men. Soubrettes flirt to manipulate men, reprimand and tease them, or protect themselves by keeping the pursuer at bay without risking financial security. Joan Schirle alleges that flirtation was "the only way that [female servants] could keep their jobs," and their innate cleverness "kept themselves from being backed into a pantry closet and groped by a lecherous employer."[51] Financial security is also Lisetta's reason for continuing to flirt with Buonafede despite loving Cecco, who is Ecclitico's servant. She must keep Buonafede content to retain her comfortable position as the maid for a wealthy household.

Lisetta's aria, "Una donna come me non vi fu" musically typifies her social status despite her underlying intensions to manipulate Buonafede. It contains contrasting sections of 2/4 and 6/8 meter, which are presented in the tonic and dominant tonal areas of F Major. (Figure 2.8) These features were quite typical for soubrettes because F major was a key associated with rustic atmospheres, and 2/4 or 6/8 meters were typical of peasant dance forms.[52] Zerlina's aria "Batti, batti, o bel Masetto" from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* has a similar construction. It begins with a pick-up measure with the key of F major and 2/4 meter. In "Una donna come me non vi fu" Haydn switches to 6/8 meter at measure 45. Mozart also changes to 6/8 meter in "Batti, batti, o bel Masetto" at measure 72. (Figure 2.10) Both arias have a manipulative undertone as the women use their flirtatious skills to get their way. Composers began to apply the

[51] Schirle, "Commedia Women On Stage", 458-459.
[52] The siciliano, pastorale, gigue, musette, passepied and contredanse have rustic/country origins, and they have freer or less sophisticated functions; For further information on the origins of specific dance forms, see Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

same musical archetypes throughout the buffa soubrette repertoire, which helped the audience recognize the social position of each character within the construct of the plot in the same manner that Commedia dell'Arte used character archetypes. These musical topics will be discussed in further detail within the upcoming chapter.

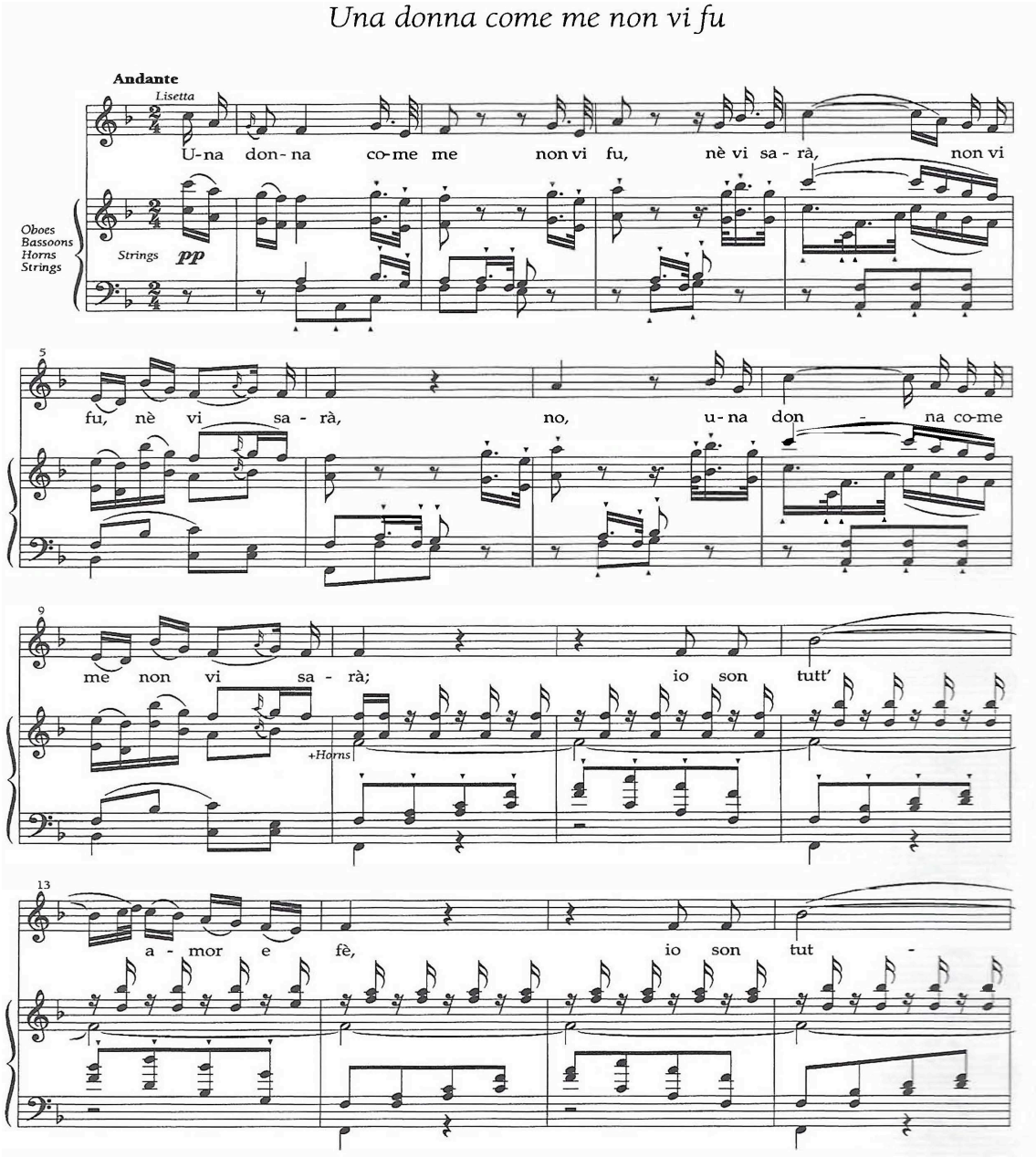
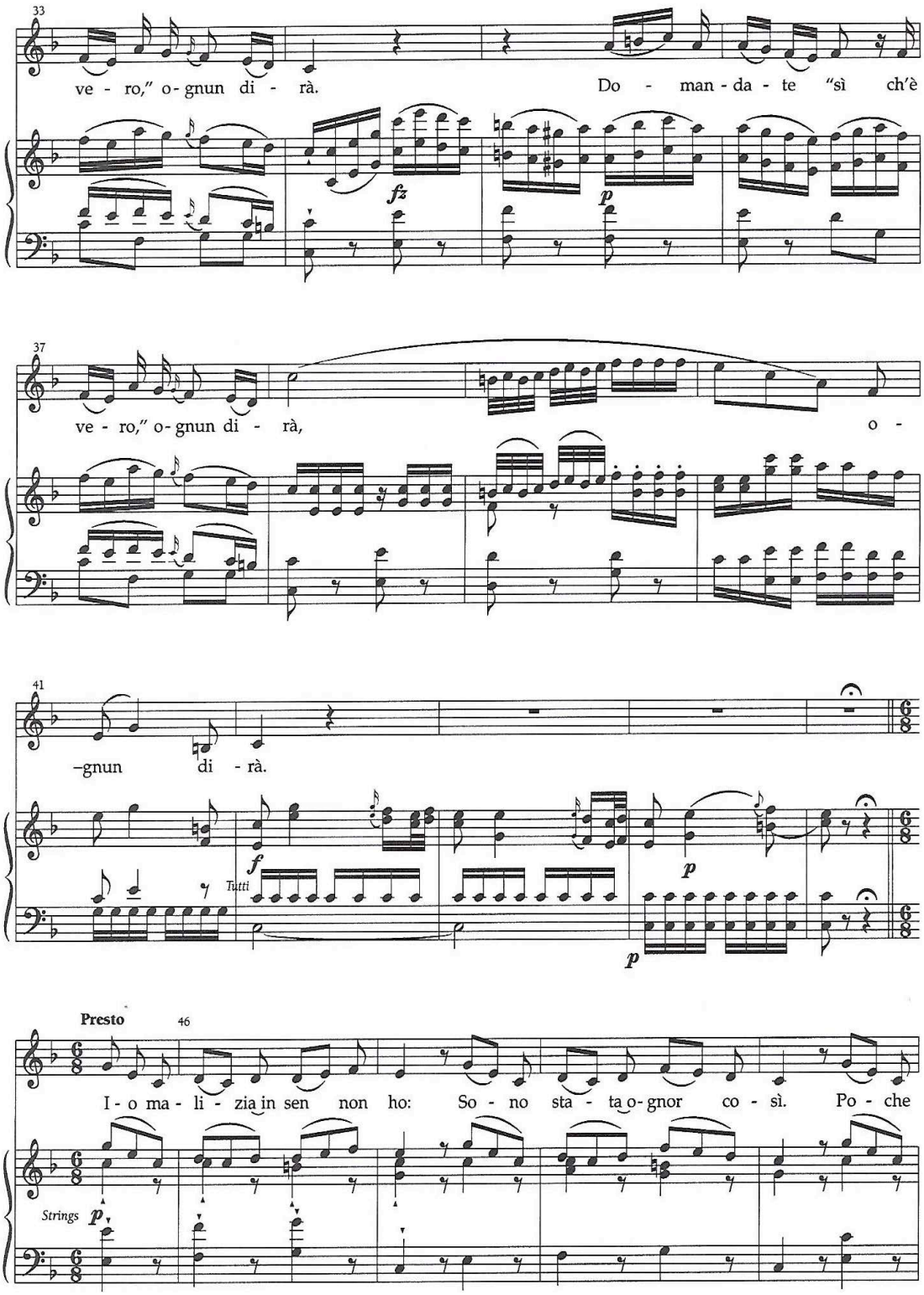


Figure 2.9: Lisetta, "Una donna come me non vi fu"
Haydn's *Il mondo della luna*
(2/4 meter and F Major at m.1-16)
(*Singers' Edition: Operatic Arias Soubrette*, 1992)



Continued: Lisetta, "Una donna come me non vi fu"
Haydn's *Il mondo della luna*
(Change to 6/8 meter and C Major at m. 45)

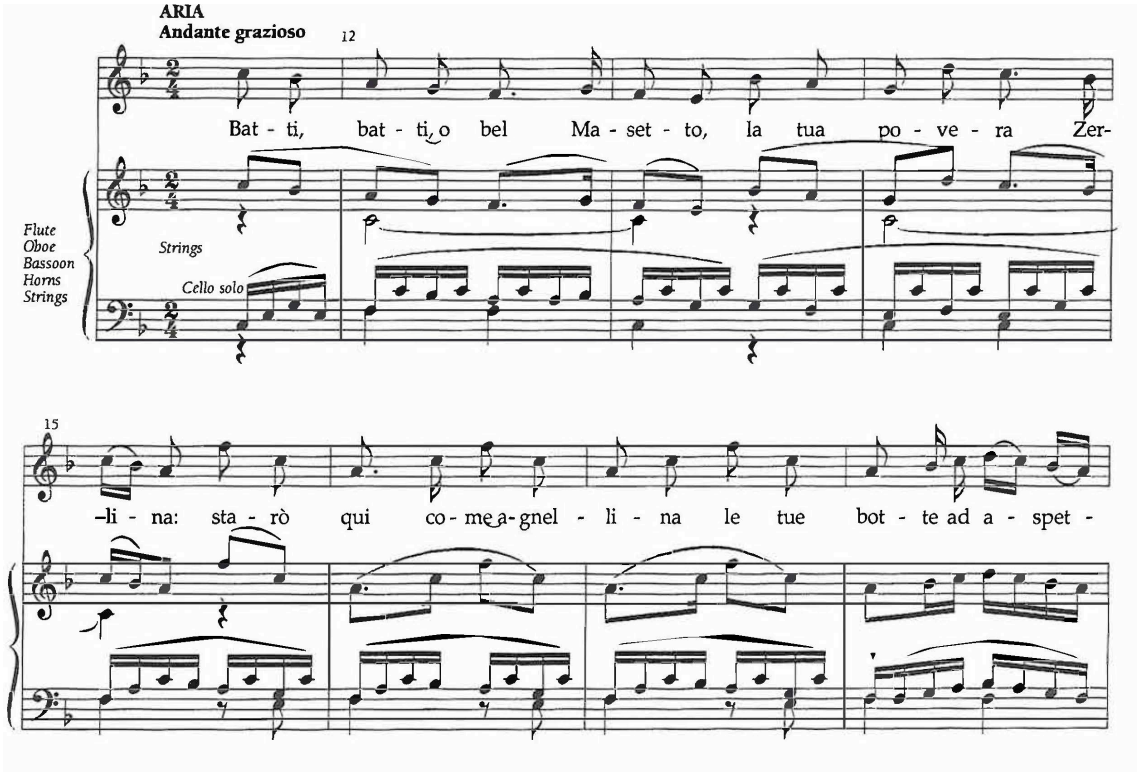
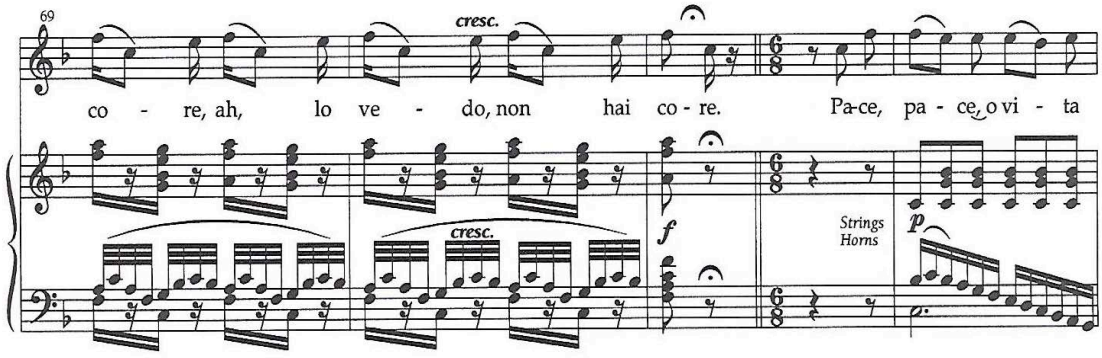


Figure 2.10: Zerlina, "Batti, batti, o bel Masetto" (mm. 11-18)
Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (G. Schirmer Opera Anthology: Arias for Soprano)
(2/4 meter and F Major)



Continued: Zerlina, "Batti, batti, o bel Masetto" (mm. 69-73)
Mozart's *Don Giovanni*
(Change to 6/8 meter and C Major at m.72)

Serpina from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's La finta giardiniera (1775)

Mozart was eighteen years old when he composed *La finta giardiniera* (1775). *La finta giardiniera* employs several token devices from Commedia dell'Arte such as: mistaken identities, cross-dressing, and lovers posing servants. The soubrette character

in *La ginta giardiniera*, Serpetta, is a maid for the Podestà (the mayor) and hopes to advance as the maid of his estate to his mistress.[53] However, the Podestà is in love with his garden girl who goes by the name of Sandrina. Serpetta tries unsuccessfully and maliciously to get the Podestà to fall in love with her instead of Sandrina. Meanwhile, Serpetta is constantly bothered with romantic advances from Nardo, a servant for the Marchioness Violante, who greatly resembles Arlecchino from Commedia dell'Arte in his obliviousness. Nardo fervently tries to court Serpetta throughout *La finta giardiniera*. In a typical soubrette fashion, Serpetta responds by flirtatiously teasing and tormenting Nardo. She calls him an old man, rejects his advances, and boasts about the many men who are attracted to her.

In the recitative before "Appena mi vedon," she turns down Nardo by telling him that she is not made for him and does not like him. Nardo responds to Serpetta by saying that one day she'll come crawling back to him; She responds by laughing in his face and claims that she can easily find a man of her choice. She taunts Nardo by pointing out:

> As soon as they see me, they swoon and fall. As soon as they see me, no one can restrain them. As if dazed and stunned, they go screaming and crying:
> Look at what eyes! What glances of love! What vitality! What manners! What zest! What color! Lovely one, dear one, I want to always love you. In all my modesty, I lower my head. I don't even respond to them. I just send them on their way.[54]

Despite her vain text, Mozart gives the aria charm through his music. The music lacks refined sophistication through its short melodic phrases and lively, peasant dance meter

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[53] Serpetta means "little serpent," and her name recalls Pergolesi's "Serpina" from *La serva padrona.* Both characters are after a rich, elderly bachelor. However, Serpetta does not get her way in the end like Serpina did with Uberto.
[54] Wolfgang A. Mozart, *La finta giardiniera:* Bärenreiter Urtext, (KG, Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag Karl Vötterle GMBH & Co, 1990).

of 6/8. "Appena mi vedon" is not in the soubrette key of F Major; however, Mozart still ties Serpetta to her rustic associations by incorporating a gigue in 6/8 meter. *The International Encyclopedia of Dance* specifies that gigue dances include frequent up and down motion, with a "vigorous and frolicsome" spirit that can be described as "gay and skipping."[55] This joyful dance type shows Serpetta's underlying feelings toward Nardo. Of course since Serpetta spends her time reprimanding and teasing Nardo, Mozart gives her an atypical key for a soubrette- the sharp key of A major. This is the same key that Pergolesi used for Serpina's aria "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso" in *La serva padrona* as she was lecturing Uberto. While "Appena mi vedon" is not in F major, Serpetta does sing a Cavatina ("Un marito") prior to the aria, which is set in F major and 6/8 meter. (Figure 2.11 and 2.12) In "Un marito" however, Serpetta does not reprimand Nardo but tortures him by mentioning the qualities that she looks for in a husband.

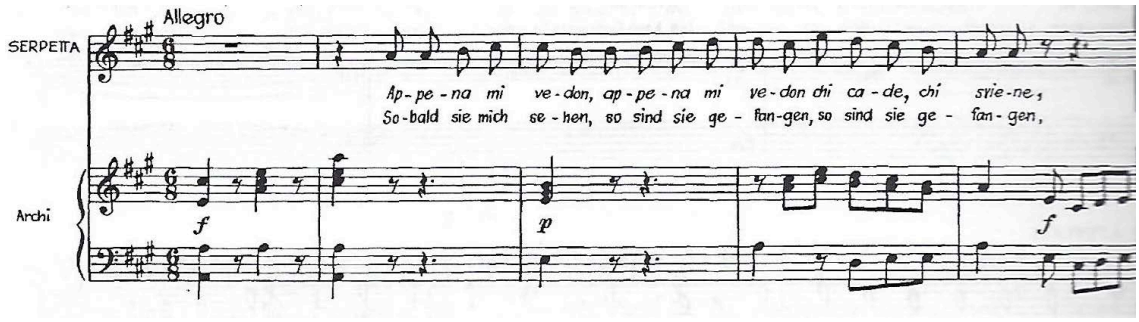


Figure 2.11: Serpetta, "Appena mi vedon"
Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* (Bärenreiter Urtext Edition)
(A Major and 6/8 Meter)

[55] Susan F. Bindig, "Gigue", *The Encyclopedia of Dance,* Ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen and the Dance Perspectives Foundation, (Oxford University Press, 2003), Case Western Reserve University, 24 December 2009, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t171e0692.

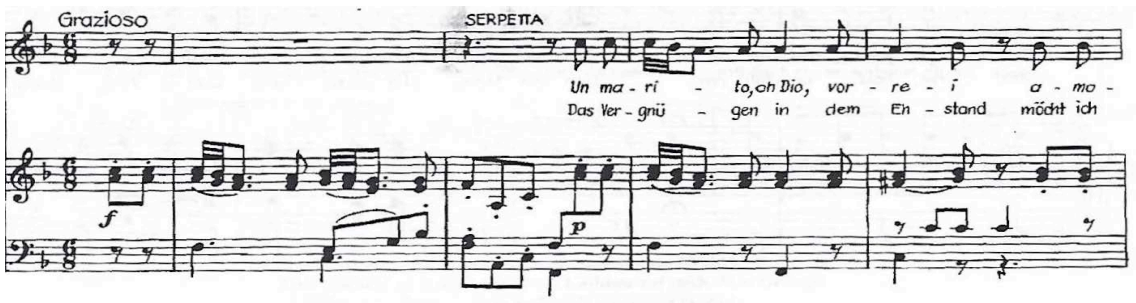


Figure 2.12: Serpetta, "Un marito" (F Major and 6/8 meter)
Mozart's *La finta giardiniera*

Serpetta explains her coy and shrewd behavior toward Nardo in her second act aria, "Chi vuol godere il mondo." In a way, she explains the inner workings of the soubrette type. She admits that she should be more sincere and honest; however, she believes this tactic does not work with men. Instead, showing indifference and playing hard to get works more efficiently. Serpetta also specifies that she inherited her coy behavior toward men from her mother, who showed her these tendencies when she was a young girl. Serpetta is showing the audience through this aria that she knows she is manipulating Nardo to achieve what she desires, whether that means changing Nardo or making him work for her respect. Colombina behaved toward her lover Arlecchino in a similar manner during seventeenth century Commedia dell'Arte. According to Rudlin, Colombina "scolds him, punishes him, deserts him, takes him back, but in the end he does not change and she has to accept him for what he is…"[56] While Colombina loves Arlecchino, she notices his flaws and hopes for some kind of change in him. However, the only change that occurs for Colombina is her own acceptance of society's place for her kind. Serpetta comes to the same realization after scolding Nardo throughout the plot. She settles for him in the end because she understands that marriage to the Podestà would be highly unlikely for a servant.

[56] Rudlin, *Commedia Dell'Arte*, 130.

Colombina represented a "Renaissance" woman in the seventeenth century through her successful attempts at subverting social oppressions. She showed audiences, particularly women, the mutability of gender structures by transforming herself through disguises into educated male figures with occupations that women could never dream of doing in the existing society. Colombina also focused her efforts on improving her social position by manipulating her way to the top. She disclosed her natural "feminine" gifts (her sexuality) and concealed her "masculine" qualities (intelligence and craft) to outmaneuver her superiors and adversaries. Seventeenth century Commedia dell'Arte theatre played an important role in the formation of the characters in eighteenth century opera buffa. Colombina influenced the opera buffa soubrette by codifying mannerisms such as playing coy, manipulating men or noble characters, and defying social or patriarchal structures. Similarly, the buffa soubrette aimed to subvert the social order of the world in which she lived through the help of her intelligence, sexuality, and wit.

The next chapter will consider how the social and political climates of the eighteenth century influenced the subversive nature of the soubrettes in *La serva padrona, Le nozze di Figaro,* and *Così fan tutte*. It is important to consider the soubrettes of these particular operas within the social context in which they were created. As public opera emerged during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, opera buffa materialized as a new style that appealed to bourgeois audiences because of its simplistic melodies and everyday plots. The soubrette was an essential figure for opera buffa's role in the Enlightenment movement because she often promoted social reforms by defying class or gender structures of the ancien régime. This chapter touched

upon the musical topics that became archetypal of the eighteenth century soubrette figure, such as the key of F major, 6/8 meter, rustic dances gestures, and mock pathos. The proceeding chapter will evaluate how Serpina, Susanna and Despina exemplify social and gender roles through those archetypal musical topics. Most significantly, when these soubrettes deviate from archetypal musical topics, it reveals their subversive nature.

CHAPTER THREE:

AN ANALYSIS OF THREE SUBVERSIVE ITALIAN SOUBRETTE ROLES OF THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY

Serpina from Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's La Serva Padrona (1733)

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's intermezzo, *La Serva Padrona,* debuted in Paris in August of 1752 alongside Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Acis et Galatée.* This intermezzo initiated a two-year pamphlet debate called the querelle des bouffons. In this argument, supporters of Lully defended the French opera tradition, tragédie lyrique, from the invasive Italian opera buffa style. Supporters of the French style favored tragédie lyrique because it contained noble themes, legendary characters, and personification of the King's power.[57] Those that favored the new Italian style preferred the realistic characters and identifiable plot scenarios of opera buffa. *La serva padrona*'s music also concerned several "Lullists," who argued that the comic style lacked expression and beauty. While the "querelle" concerned French style verses Italian style, the nature of the controversy centered on political authority. Tragédie lyrique was a symbol of status and power for the royal administration, whereas opera buffa represented tastes of the bourgeois classes. The plots of tragedie lyrique contained "strict rules and stiff conventions [that] left no room for social commentary, satire or mockery."[58] Opera itself gave the King an ability to control the arts and other aspects of society by implementing political propaganda into the operas. Jomarie Alano argues: "royal operatic oversight meant that every operatic detail, administrative or musical, was

[57] Jomarie Alano, "The Triumph of the 'buffoons: La Serva Padrona" at the Paris Opera, 1752-1754", *The French Review* 79, no. 1 (October 2005): 126, Accessed January 02, 2016, www.jstor.org/stable/25480134.
[58] Ibid, 128.

governed from Versailles to reach the hall that drew the upper crust of the Old Régime."[59] On the opposite spectrum, French philosophes supported the new opera buffa genre because of its satirical social commentary that often mocked noble characters.[60] Additionally, opera buffa appealed to audiences because it contained clear and accessible melodies that were drastically different from the lengthy, complicated melodies of tragédie lyrique.

Serpina's "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso"

In Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*, the maid Serpina becomes the authoritative figure in the opera by manipulating and outsmarting her master Uberto into marrying her. Despite her low social status, she defiantly demands respect and obedience from Uberto. Serpina's command over Uberto shows throughout the text of the libretto and Pergolesi's music. The music for *La serva padrona* includes alternations between recitative, arias, and duets. In each act, Serpina and Uberto have an aria and duet that are divided by extended sections of recitative. Serpina's aria from the first act, "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso," takes place after an exchange of recitative with Uberto. Prior to this aria, Uberto had been complaining about Serpina being late with his breakfast chocolate. After much arguing, Uberto decides to get away from Serpina for his own sanity. Serpina responds by belittling and reprimanding Uberto for attempting to leave the house during the lunch hour. She proclaims in "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso": "It is necessary at my forbidding for you to remain silent and not to speak. Shh! Shh! Serpina

[59] Alano, "The Triumph of the 'buffoons'", 125.
[60] The French philosophes were intellectuals during the Enlightenment period of the eighteenth century that advocated for reason and social progress.

wants it like this."[61] The music for "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso" showcased the new buffa style that was praised by the French philosophes for contradicting the stuffy conventions of tragédie lyrique. Serpina's vocal line contains a disjunct melody with several large intervallic leaps. These leaps contribute to her playful, animated nature. French nationalists argued that wide leaps and disjunctive melodies contrasted against the refined nature of tragédie lyrique. (Figure 3.1)

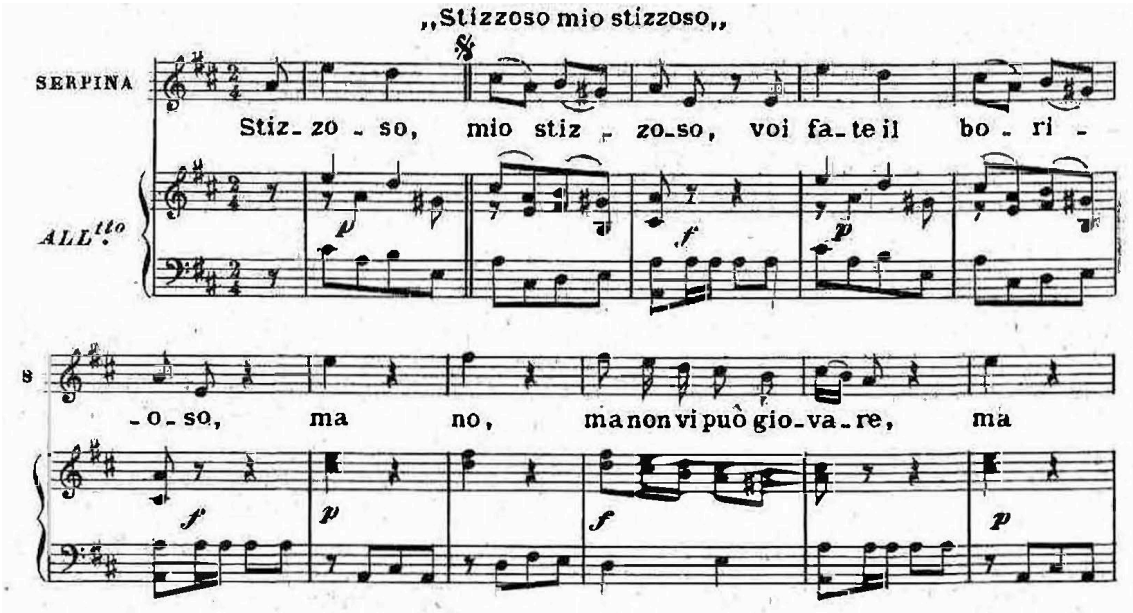


Figure 3.1: Serpina, "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso"
Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* (Act I) (mm. 1-11)
(Milano: Florio & C, 1910)

Pergolesi frequently incorporates comic realism into the music for *La serva padrona* to signify laughing, mock crying or hushing. In "Stizzoso, mio Stizzoso," Serpina tells Uberto to hush several times as she sings: "zit!" Pergolesi writes a short eighth note on the word "zit" and follows it with a playful three-note, staccato gesture in the lower string parts of the accompaniment. "Stizzoso, mio Stizzoso" exhibits the buffa style through Pergolesi's use of short phrases and frequent pauses. Pergolesi

[61] Bouldrey, *Singers' Edition: Operatic Arias*, 29.

breaks up the previous phrase: “e non parlare” with eighth rests between the words to portray how Serpina mocks and reprimands Uberto. (Figure 3.2) Colombina frequently used mockery as a tool with men when she was being manipulative or flirtatious. Serpina’s short rhythms contribute to her coquettish and controlling nature in this aria. She seems to have authority over Uberto when she hushes him as if he were a child throwing a tantrum.

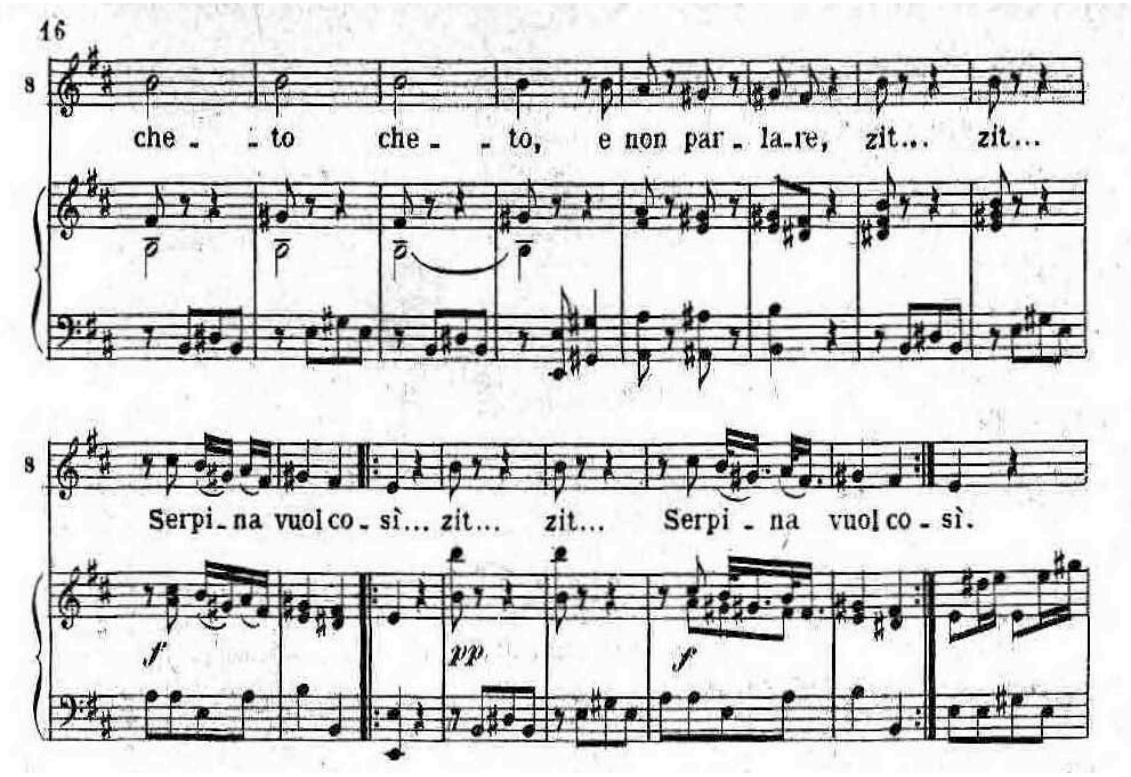


Figure 3.2: Serpina, “Stizzoso, mio stizzoso”
Pergolesi’s *La serva padrona* (Act I) (mm. 18-33)

Serpina also manipulates Uberto through her musical mimicry in “Stizzoso, mio stizzoso.” While Colombina took on vocal and physical traits of the characters that she imitated, Serpina imitates the musical style of lofty characters from serious opera by singing a brief a-minor passage in an elevated style with more step-wise motion and longer phrases. Of course this “mock pathos” is one part of Serpina’s manipulation of Uberto. The key of a-minor arrives for the text “Voi fate il furisoso” (You are furious)

with the addition of c-natural and g-sharp. Serpina mocks the serious "noble" style while also mocking Uberto for his earlier tantrums.

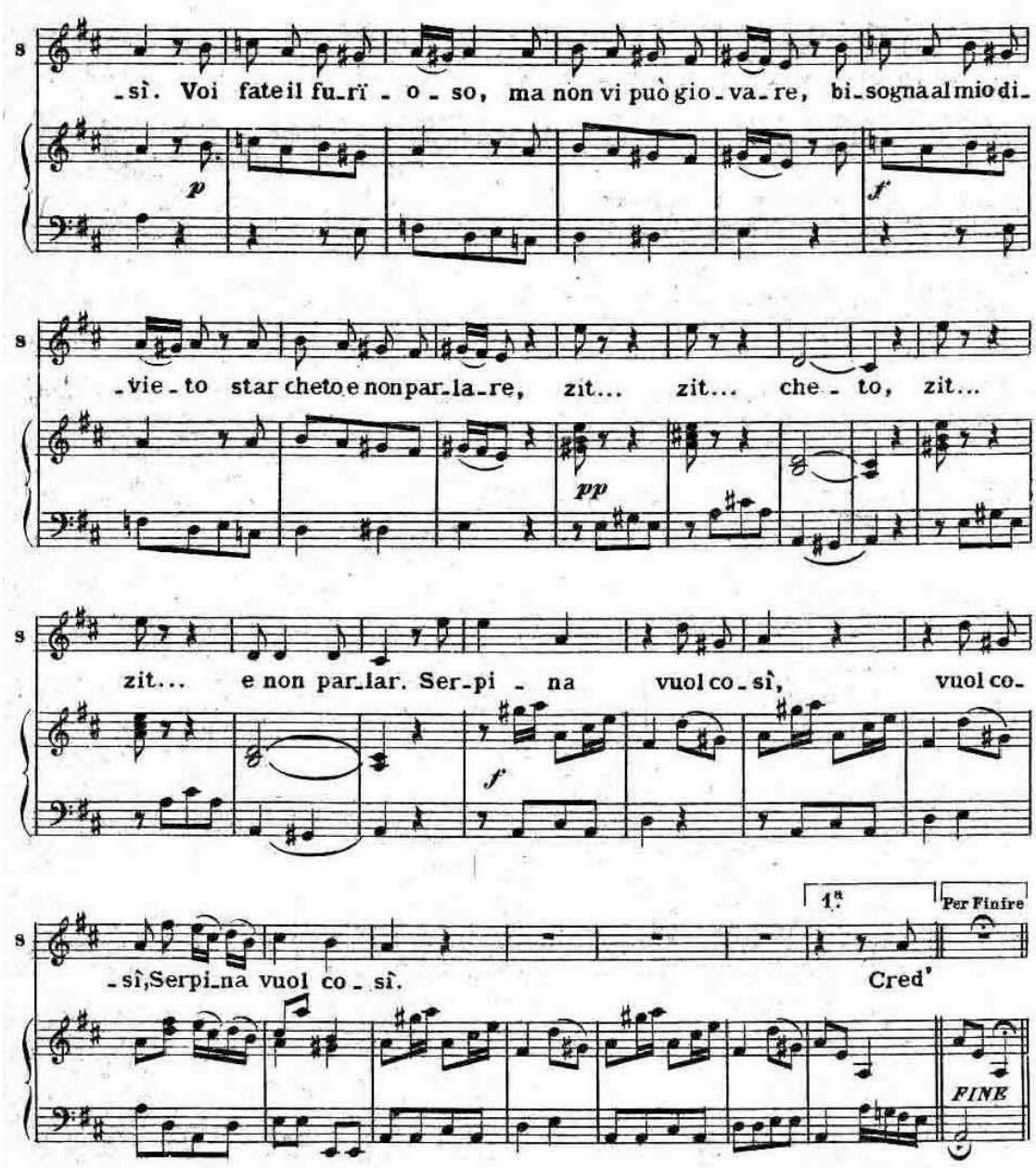


Figure 3.3: Serpina, "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso"
Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* (mm. 61-89)
(a-minor passage)

Serpina and Uberto: "Lo conosco"

The duet "Lo conosco" between Serpina and Uberto showcases the opera buffa style through its increasing use of musical fragments, which contrast with the lengthy nature of opera seria and tragédie lyrique melodies. In this duet, Serpina affirms her command over Uberto by introducing each musical idea only to have Uberto enter a fourth below with the same melodic material. Uberto's first entrance only contrasts musically with Serpina during his text "troppo in alto voi volate" (too high you fly). Pergolesi gives Uberto a rising florid motive to depict his rising anger toward Serpina. (Figure 3.4)

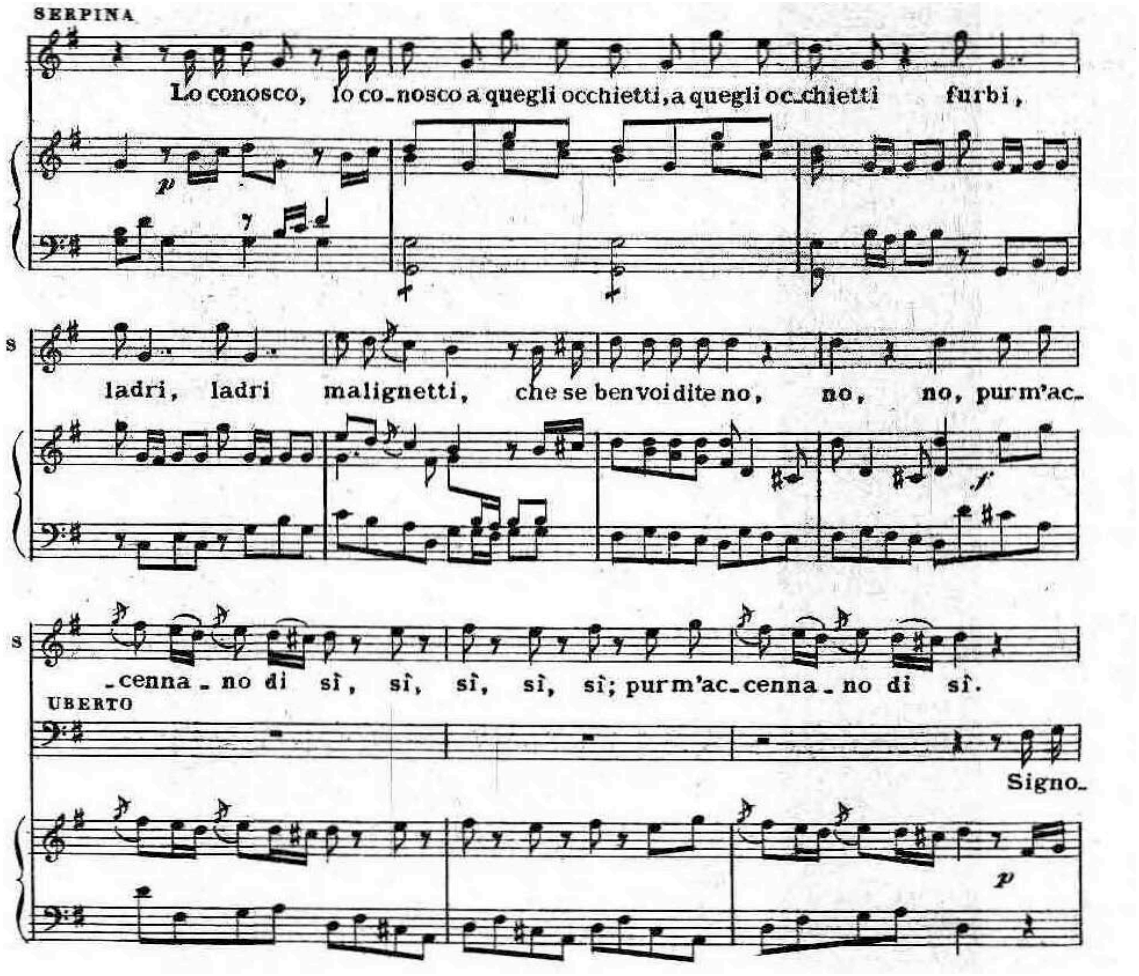
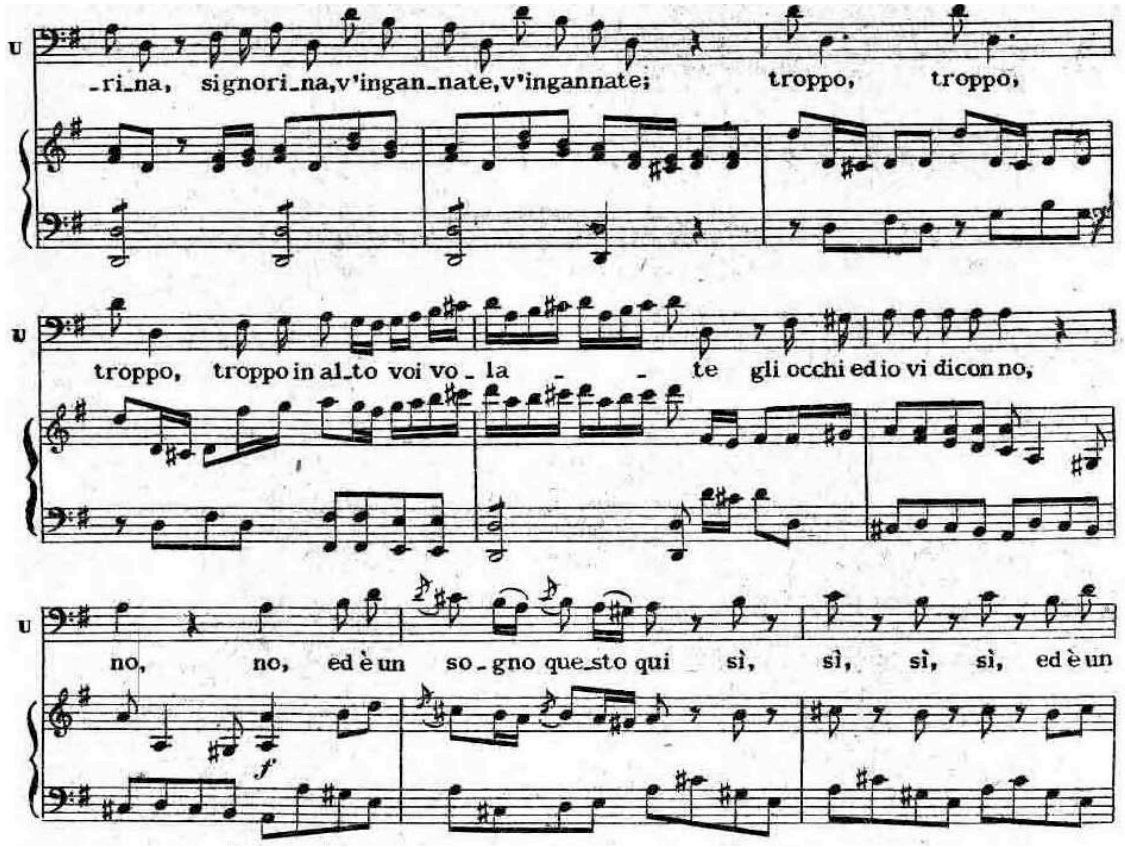


Figure 3.4: Serpina and Uberto, "Lo conosco" duet
Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* (Act I)



Continued: Serpina and Uberto, "Lo conosco" duet
Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* (Act I)

Pergolesi gives both characters passages in G minor in "Lo conosco"; however, Uberto introduces the key of G minor. While Uberto sings in G minor, Serpina sings in D major, the dominant tonal area of G minor. Throughout the opera, Pergolesi frequently designates sharp keys for Serpina and flat keys for Uberto. Charles Ford notes that sharp keys were often associated with men's music, whereas flat keys showcased the more submissive qualities of women.[62] Serpina subverts this stereotypical gender association by singing in a sharp key. Interestingly, German author Gustav Schilling described D major as a "key of triumph, of Hallelujahs, or war cries, and of victory-

[62] Charles Ford, *Music, Sexuality and the Enlightenment in Mozart's Figaro, Don Giovanni and Così Fan Tutte*, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 91-92.

rejoicing."[63] While Uberto sings in the flat key of G minor, Serpina triumphs over him in the dominant tonal area. (Figure 3.5)

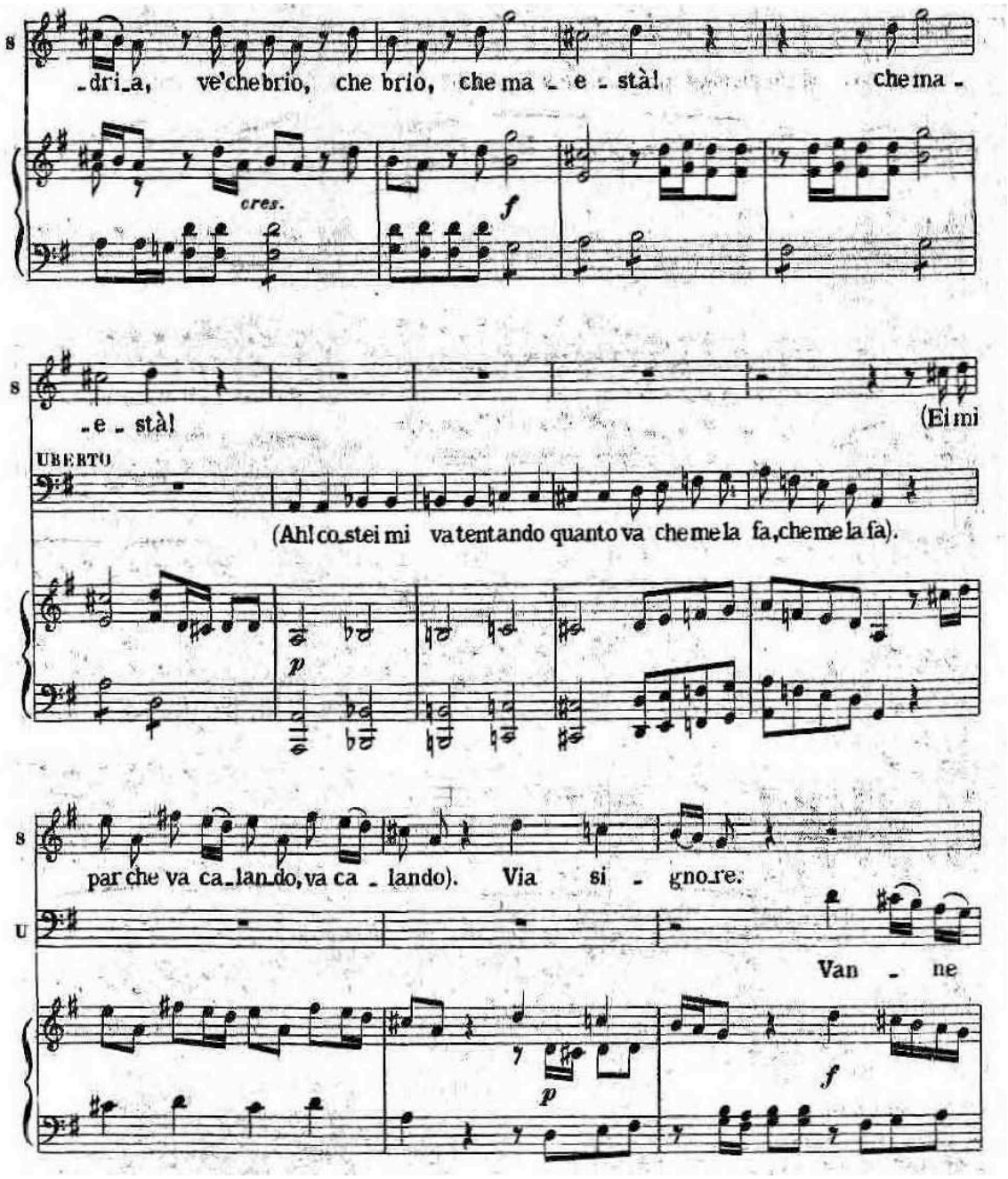


Figure 3.5: "Lo conosco" duet between Serpina and Uberto Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* (Act I)

[63] Translated from Gustav *Schilling's Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst*. 6 vols. Stuttgart, 1835-38; See appendix of Rita Katherine Steblin's dissertation: *Key Characteristics in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries: A Historical Approach*, 1981, 272.

Eventually Serpina joins Uberto in G minor as she enticingly sings "io son bella, grazisoa, spiritosa" (*I am beautiful, gracious, spirited*). (Figure 3.6) However, Serpina only mimics Uberto's key of G minor as a method of flirtation and provocation.

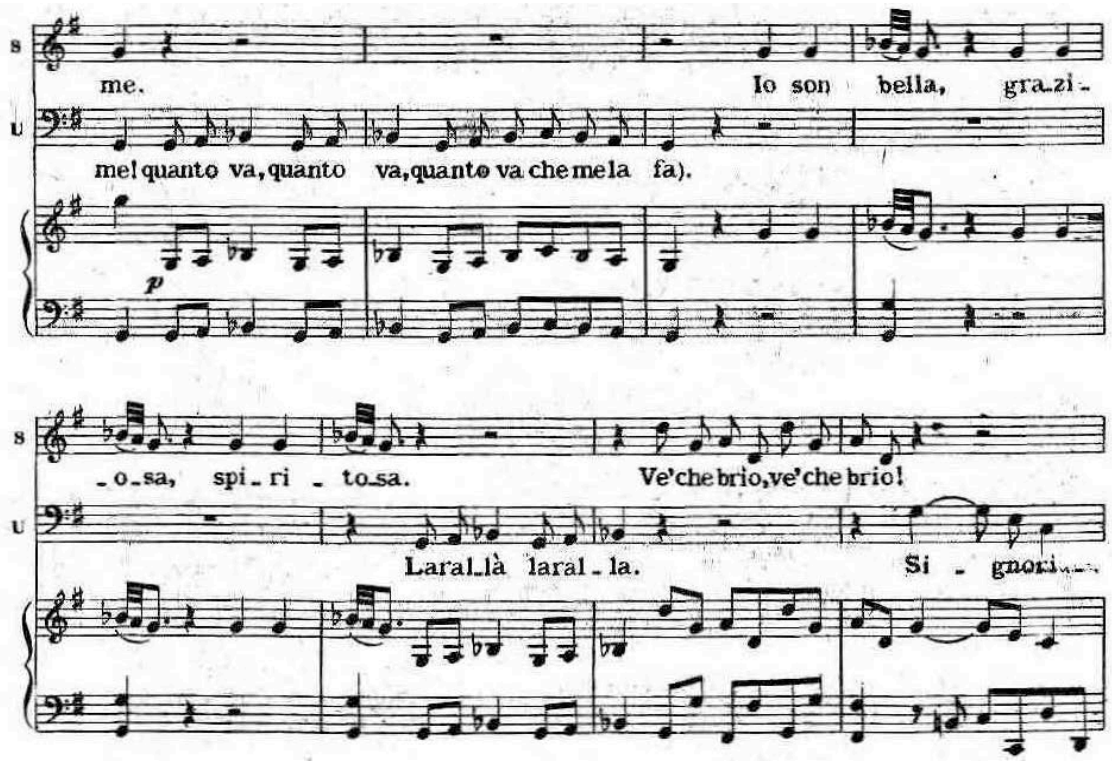


Figure 3.6: Serpina and Uberto, "Lo conosco" duet
Serpina changes to G minor briefly

Serpina's "A Serpina pensere"

Serpina sings "A Serpina pensere" in the second act when she pretends to leave Uberto to marry an angry soldier named Il Capitan Tempesta. This soldier is really Uberto's servant Vespone in disguise. Pergolesi showcases Serpina's subversive and manipulative natures in this aria by juxtaposing two contrasting sections. Throughout this aria her music includes sections that alternate between larghetto and allegro tempos. The larghetto section depicts a higher, sentimental style that would be typical from the lofty characters of opera seria or tragédie lyrique. The aria opens with a slow, serious style that ironically mocks the emotional melodies of tragédie lyrique. She states:

"Every now and then think of Serpina and someday say: Ah! Poor thing, once upon a time, she was dear to me." (Figure 3.7) She plays on Uberto's emotions by using the serious style as a means for manipulation. She takes on a noble, more sincere style to show Uberto her ability to mimic the habits of a noble woman. The key of B-flat major was typically associated with noble characters, so Pergolesi gives Serpina a noble key as part of her mimicry. Being able to play the role of a noble is significant for Serpina to win over Uberto because he is still concerned about public his image. He makes this known in the second act recitative before "Son imbrogliato io già." He states: "I was thinking…but she's a servant…but it wouldn't be the first time…well then, would you marry her? Enough…Oh no, no, never." It is not Serpina's argumentative nature that makes Uberto question marrying her, but rather her low social position that concerns him.

During the allegro passages, Serpina exposes her true intentions in an aside to the audience. She exclaims to herself and the audience: "It seems to me that bit by bit he's beginning to soften" and "Have it your way for now—in the end, things will turn out my way." Pergolesi changes the tempo from larghetto to allegro. He returns to the buffa style to depict when Serpina briefly drops her noble disguise for the audience. As Serpina sings her aside, Pergolesi gives her a triple meter that is frequently associated with peasant dances. The dance topic symbolically shows her natural state of being. Although Uberto raised her in a noble environment, she was still born into a life of service. This is something that can rarely change because of social restrictions. The tonal center of the new center also focuses around F, which is both the dominant of B-flat major but also the key associated with rustic origins. Pergolesi's alternation

between the two contrasting styles depicts Serpina's ability to manipulate Uberto by taking on disguised personalities. While "A Serpina penserete" tricks Uberto into believing Serpina, the music also continues to mock the lofty style of serious opera through Serpina's insincere and ironic use of the serious style.

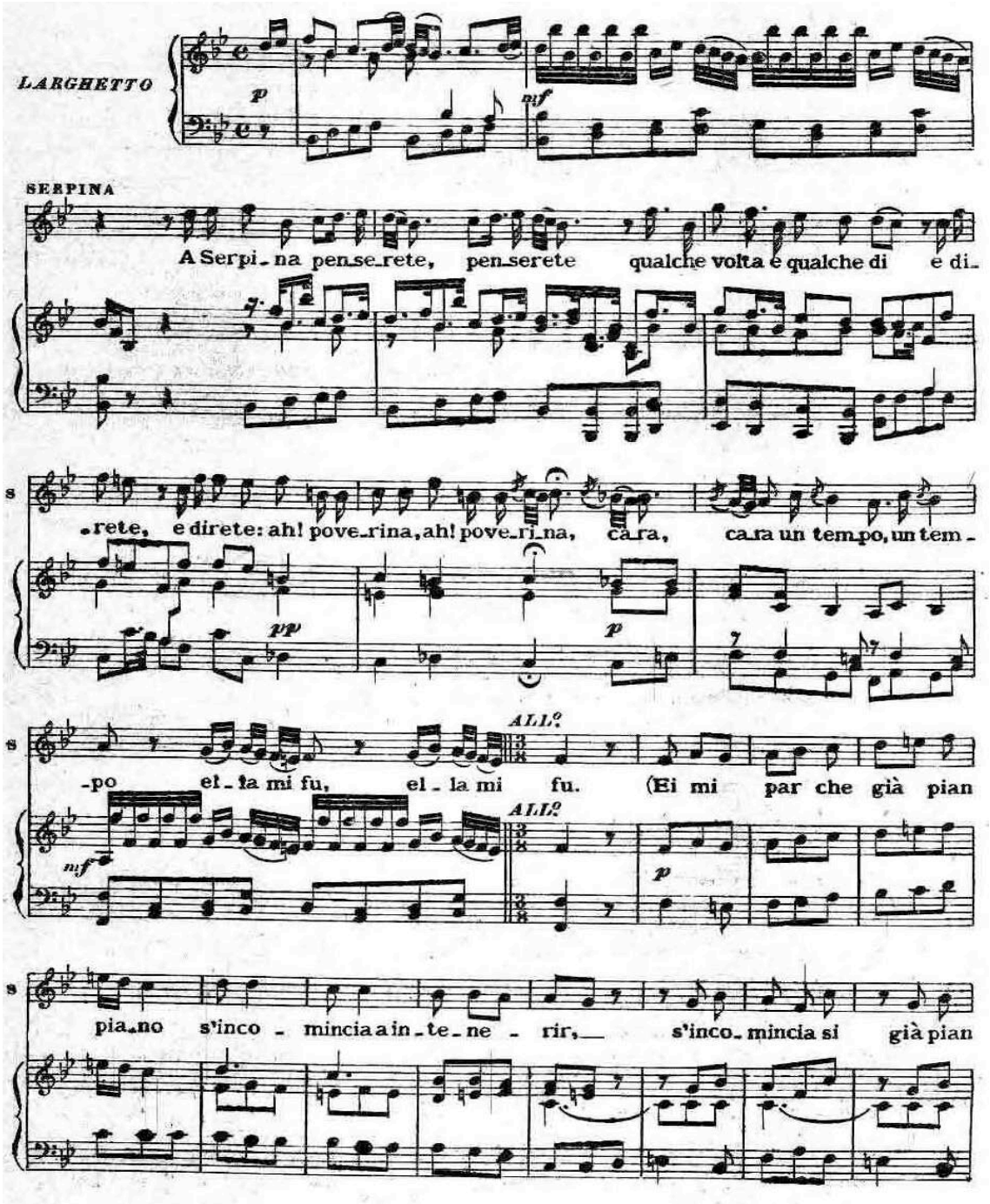


Figure 3.7: Serpina's contrasting tempo and meter in "A Serpina pensere"

Serpina and Uberto: Finale "Per te ho io nel core" and "Contento tu sarai"

Before the finale of *La serva padrona,* Serpina exclaims: "And from servant I have become mistress!" She successfully manipulated and tricked Uberto into marrying her with the help of Vespone's disguise. Charles Ford mentions the perspective of the enlightened man of the eighteenth century, which ironically describes Serpina's own masculine outlook: "When an enlightened man chooses his object of desire—*his* woman—she must either consent, or be forced to realize her authentic nature as no more than an object of his desire."[64] Pergolesi's Serpina often shows the so-called enlightened male perspective in that she chooses Uberto as "her object of desire." However, she still uses her "feminine" features as a manipulative tool. Ford describes this mixture of masculine and feminine qualities or behaviors as a "sexual otherness."[65] In the end, Serpina's "sexual otherness" contributes to her success with Uberto.

Serpina is one of the more successful soubrette characters because she was able to permanently ascend in social status by marrying a rich man. The massive age gap between Uberto and Serpina leaves one wondering if Serpina married for love or comfort.[66] Even Colombina advocated for financial stability over love. However, Serpina and Uberto proclaim their love for each other in the duet "Per te ho io nel core." Similar to the short rhythms used to mimic Serpina's hushing sounds in "Stizzoso, mio stizzoso," Pergolesi gives Serpina and Uberto short rhythms that are divided by rests to represent the "striking hammer of love" and the "beating drum of love." (Figure 3.8)

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[64] Ford, *Music, Sexuality and the Enlightenment*, 117.
[65] Ibid, 136.
[66] The age difference between Serpina and Uberto could potentially be more than thirty years.

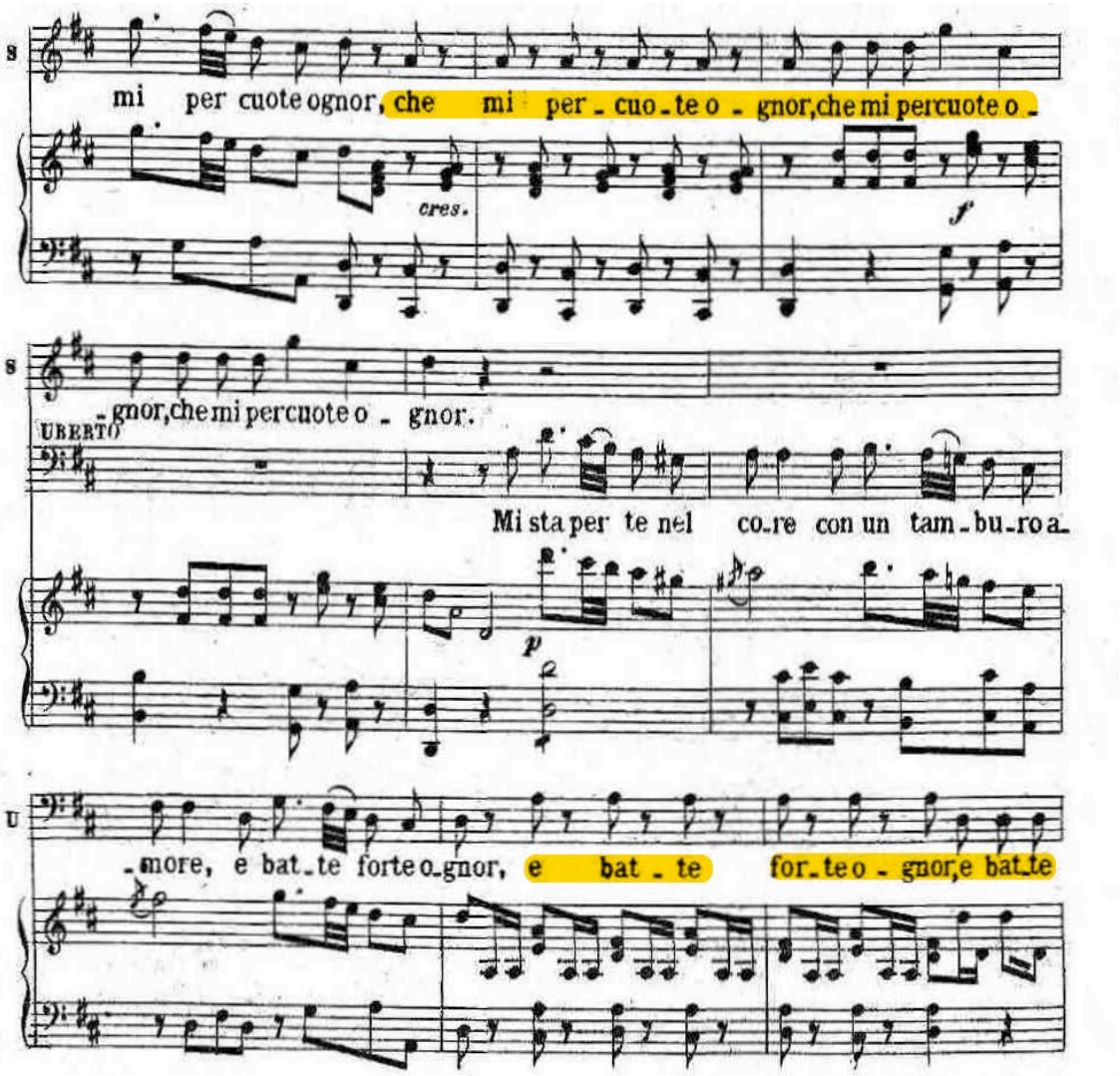

Figure 3.8: Serpina and Uberto, "Per te ho io nel core"
Pergolesi's Text depiction (Act II Finale)

The text "ti-pi-ti" and "ta-pa-ta" also imitates the sound of their palpitating hearts with onomatopoeia. After much bickering throughout the entire plot, the two finally come together by the end of the intermezzo. Pergolesi shows this new union by giving Serpina and Uberto the same text and melodic material in parallel thirds. These close-knit melodies with parallel intervals contrasts greatly from Pergolesi's setting of the duet "Lo conosco a quegli occhietti" from the first act. In that duet, Serpina and Uberto never sing the same text when together because they spend their time arguing

over each other. They also typically have contrasting melodic contours when singing together in act one. (Figure 3.9) This finale represents what Wye Allanbrook refers to as the "lieto fine" of the opera, or the happy ending. Pergolesi further signifies the "lieto fine" through a triple meter (3/8) gigue dance form that begins with a pick-up note in "Contento tu sarai." Once again, the lovers join together in parallel thirds. Pergolesi depicts Serpina's ultimate triumph by celebrating with a gigue dance, which often has rustic connotations. (Figure 3.10)

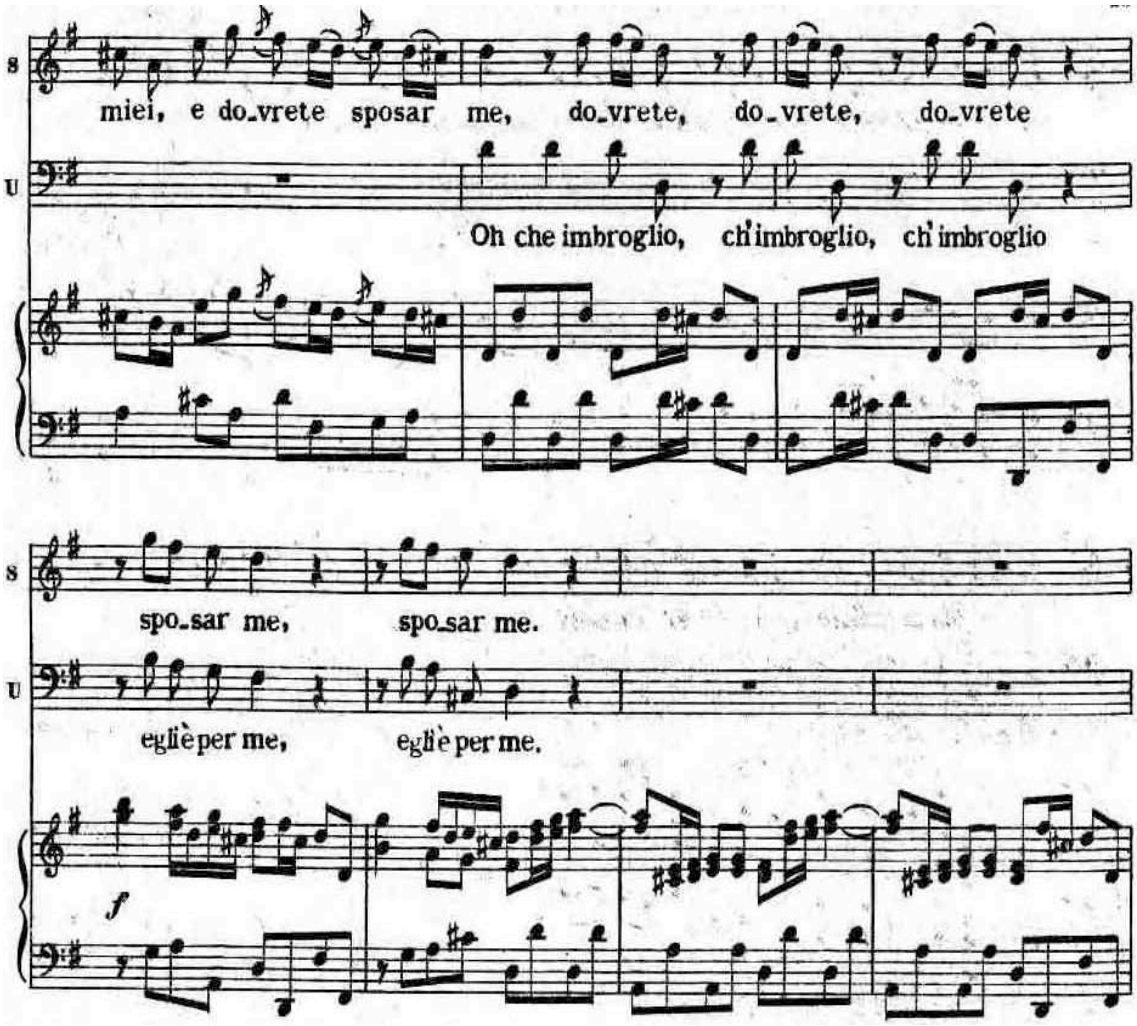

Figure 3.9: Serpina and Uberto, "Lo conosco a quegli occhietti" Contrasting text and melodic contours (Act I duet)

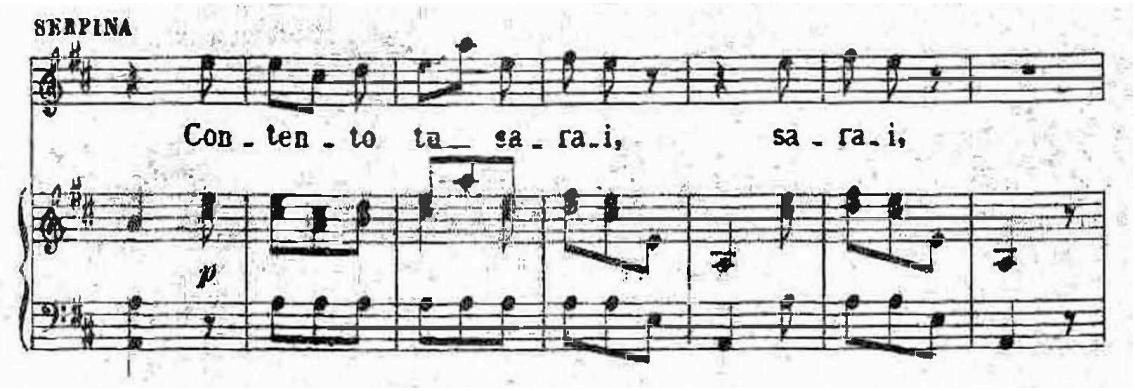

Figure 3.10: Serpina and Uberto, "Contento tu sarai"
Triple meter gigue dance form (Act II duet)

Susanna from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Le nozze di Figaro (1786)

Susanna was one of the most significant soubrette figures of opera buffa in the eighteenth-century because "she [had] the alchemical power to turn feminine intuition into quasi-male power, and thereby turn the Enlightenment on its head."[67] Susanna functions on a higher intellectual level than Mozart's soubrettes, and she knows how to play the game of social politics by *appearing* submissive when scheming. This section of chapter three will showcase Susanna's subversive power in three contrasting duets with Figaro, the Count and the Countess. In each of these scenes, Susanna shows a different aspect of her personality. Susanna shows her true self with the Figaro in the opening duets. She is charming, blunt, witty, intelligent, and informed. Her personal traits contrast with Figaro who is an endearing buffoonish character that is always a step behind his wise better half. In the duet with the Count, Susanna plays the role of a coquette to manipulate the Count. The Count does not sense that Susanna is in control because she plays an act and keeps her true feelings hidden. Where Colombina used physical disguises to outsmart her adversaries, Susanna exerts her power while appearing as herself. The last duet explored will be the letter scene between Susanna and the Countess. Susanna has a different relationship with the Countess than Despina had with her mistresses because they have formed a true friendship. The Countess does not treat Susanna like her inferior maid. While Mozart depicts a symbiosis between the two women throughout the opera, the letter scene transforms their bond of friendship into a state of equality between their classes.

[67] Ford, *Music, Sexuality and the Enlightenment*, 139.

Pierre Beaumarchais's play: La folle journée ou Le mariage de Figaro (1781)

Pierre Beaumarchais wrote the sequel to *Le barbier* called *La folle journée ou Le mariage de Figaro* in 1781.[68] This play takes place three years after Count Almaviva married the Countess Rosina. The Count has started to set his sights on other women. Among these women is Susanna who is the maid to the Countess and the fiancé of Figaro, the Count's servant. The *folle journée,* or crazy day, begins when the Count decides to implement his droit de seignor, which is his feudal right to sleep with Susanna before her wedding. Despite this plot complication, the Countess and Susanna overcome the Count's lustful ways because of their intelligence and strong friendship. The plot devices in *Le mariage* resemble elements from Commedia Dell'Arte with slapstick moments that include disguises, characters hiding behind chairs, and characters jumping out of windows. Beaumarchais manages to transcend beyond these conventions by creating realistic characters, exploiting sophisticated dialogue and repartee, and creating dramatic situations of a remarkable force.[69] *Le mariage* became highly controversial in the eighteenth century because it addressed social tensions between the bourgeois classes and the ancien régime. French critics of Beaumarchais believed that the social ideas in the second play were far too advanced for such an early date, even allowing for the speed at which ideas moved in the years preceding the [French] Revolution.[70] Before the play premiered in 1781, King Louis XVI banned its

[68] Tim Carter, *W. A. Mozart: Le nozze di Figaro,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1987), 34.
[69] Ibid, 35.
[70] Spike Hughes, *Famous Mozart Operas; an Analytical Guide for the Opera-Goer and Armchair Listener*, 2nd Ed., (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), 48.

publication and performances. This public scandal helped propel the success of *Le mariage* throughout Europe.

Emperor Joseph II replaced the National Singspiel Company at the Burgtheater in 1783 with Italian opera buffa to suit the taste of the nobles in Vienna.[71] Mozart was one of the few German-speaking composers that successfully produced for Joseph II because of his previous experience with opera buffa conventions.[72] For Mozart's first opera buffa commission for the Emperor, he chose a libretto topic from the well-known Almaviva plays by Pierre Beaumarchais. *La folle journée ou Le mariage de Figaro* provided the perfect opera buffa source because of its fast paced action, strong social issues, and well-defined characters that resembled figures of Commedia dell'Arte. Mozart recognized the play's strong possibilities and approached Da Ponte to create a libretto around 1785. Da Ponte had been previously assigned as the court poet for Joseph II in 1783.[73] After Da Ponte revealed the plan to the Joseph II, the Emperor requested that Da Ponte omit the offensive political content that caused such a stir in France. In addition to omitting scandalous political scenes, Da Ponte reduced the number of characters from sixteen to eleven.[74] He removed the judge and clerk characters from the plot and cut the trial scene, where Figaro openly mocks the judiciary system. Although Da Ponte's libretto contained less social commentary, Mozart replaced the missing commentary with music that symbolized subversion of social boundaries.

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[71] Roger Parker, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera,* (Oxford England: Oxford University Press, 1994), 107.
[72] Carter, *W.A. Mozart*, 50.
[73] Spike Hughes, *Famous Mozart Operas*, 47.
[74] Carter, *W.A.* Mozart, 50.

Figaro and Susanna: "Cinque…dieci…venti"

Le nozze di Figaro begins with "Cinque…dieci…venti" as Figaro is measuring the room that the Count has designated for their bedroom, and Susanna is showing off her bridal hat. The key for this duet is G major, which often implies a rustic connotation along with F major. Since the previous overture was in D major, the drop to the subdominant key depicts the relaxed atmosphere of Susanna and Figaro when they are together. Mozart gives both characters contrasting dance topics in this opening number. As Figaro counts the inches, he sings short bourrée phrases with "a rather plodding line that suggests a solid character concerned only with life's practicalities."[75] Susanna on the other hand has a melody that contrasts with Figaro's melodic leaps through its step-wise motion and lengthy phrases. This melody is set to a gavotte dance pattern that shows through her dotted rhythms. (Figure 3.11) Allanbrook suggests that the gavotte dance type was "historically a courtship dance, and also had from its origin persistent associations with the pastoral."[76] Susanna playfully demands Figaro's attention and affection during this duet despite his stubborn concentration on measuring the room. Susanna eventually steals Figaro's attention away from his tedious task by demanding that he look at her hat numerous times. She articulates "Guarda un po" (*Look a little*) eight times before he finally focuses on her. Mozart shows Susanna's growing impatience through her repeated pitches and text in A major. (Figure 3.12)

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Wye J. Allanbrook, *The Secular Commedia: Comic Mimesis in Late Eighteenth-Century* Music, Edited by Mary Ann Smart and Richard Taruskin, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2014), 49-50.

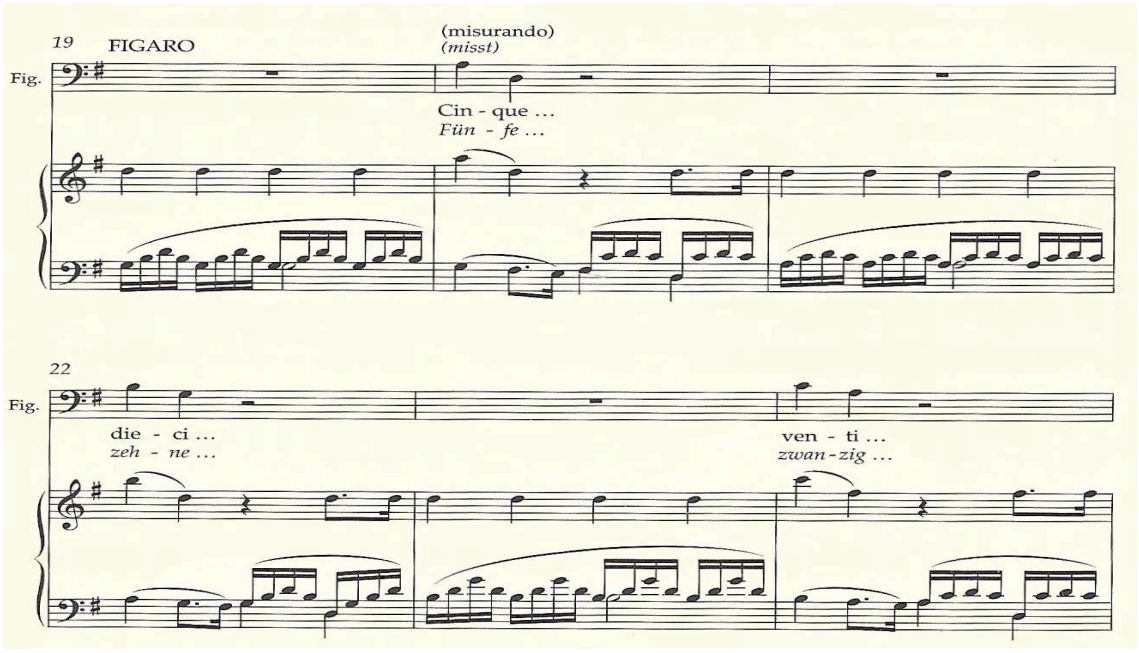

Figure 3.11: Figaro's bourreé dance topic in "Cinque…dieci…venti…" Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (Act I, Bärenreiter edition)

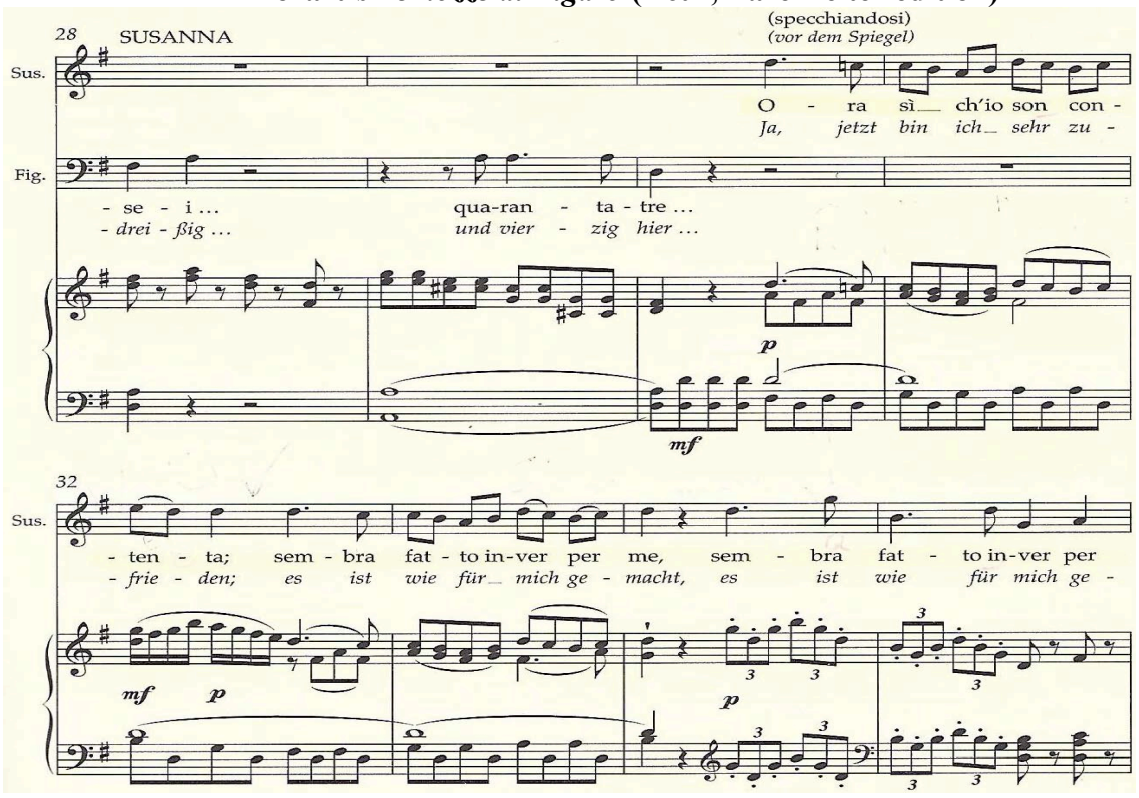

Figure 3.11 Continued: Susanna and Figaro, "Cinque…dieci…venti…" (Susanna has a gavotte dance topic)

Susanna's persistence pays off as Figaro adopts her melody and joins in her gavotte dance topic on "Si mio core, or è più bello" (*Yes my dear, it is much prettier now*). (Figure 3.12) He is forced by Susanna to stop his measuring to admire her bridal hat. Mozart shows Susanna's control as well as Figaro's affection for her by changing his melodic content to match her previous gavotte rhythms and sweeping melodies. By the end of the duet, both characters sing the same melody in harmonized thirds with Susanna on the higher line. Mozart has the characters sing in thirds to show their closeness as a couple. (Figure 3.13)

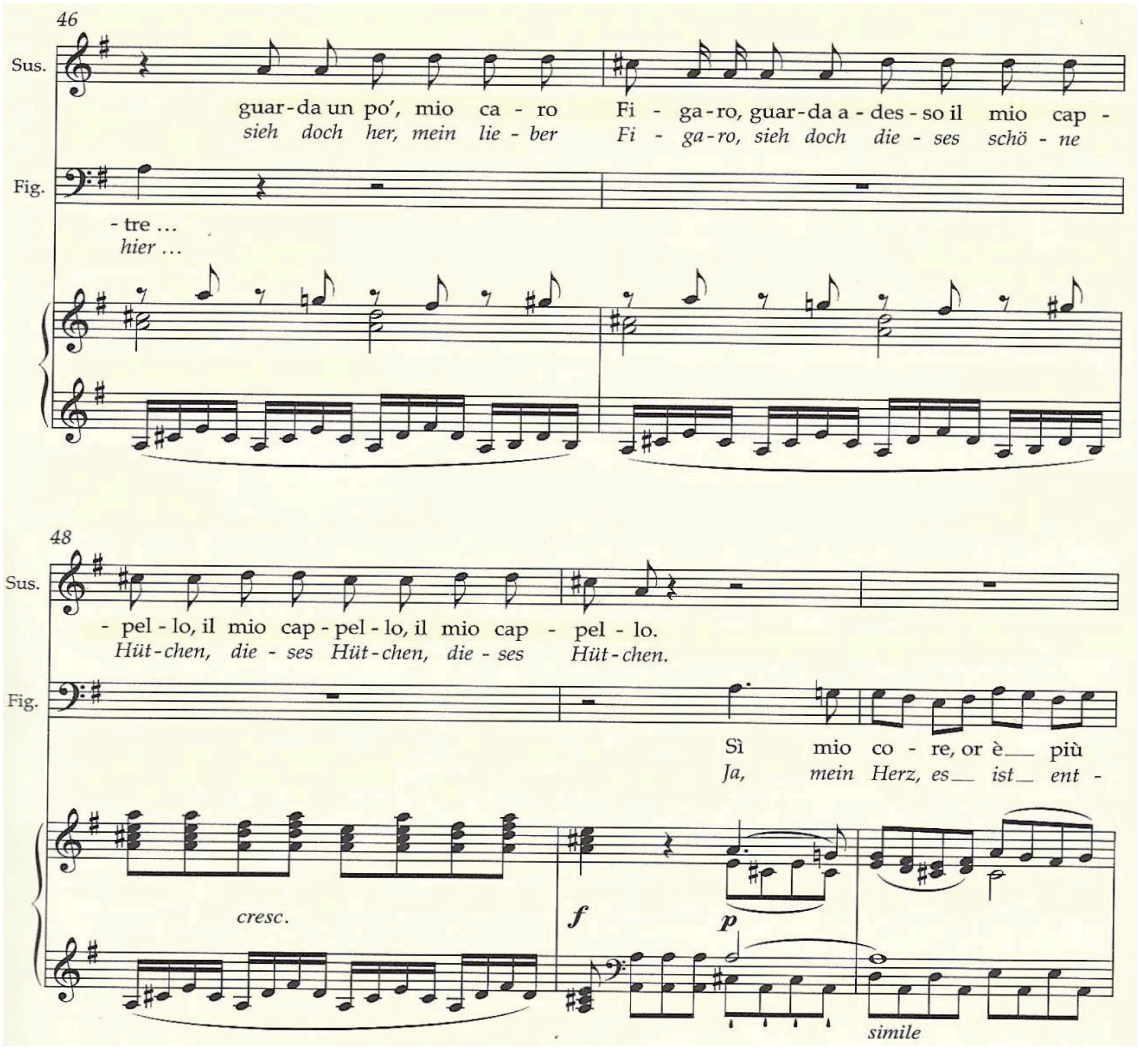

Figure 3.12: Susanna has repeated rhythms and pitches for *Guarda un po'* and *Il mio cappello;* Figaro joins her melody on *Si mio core*

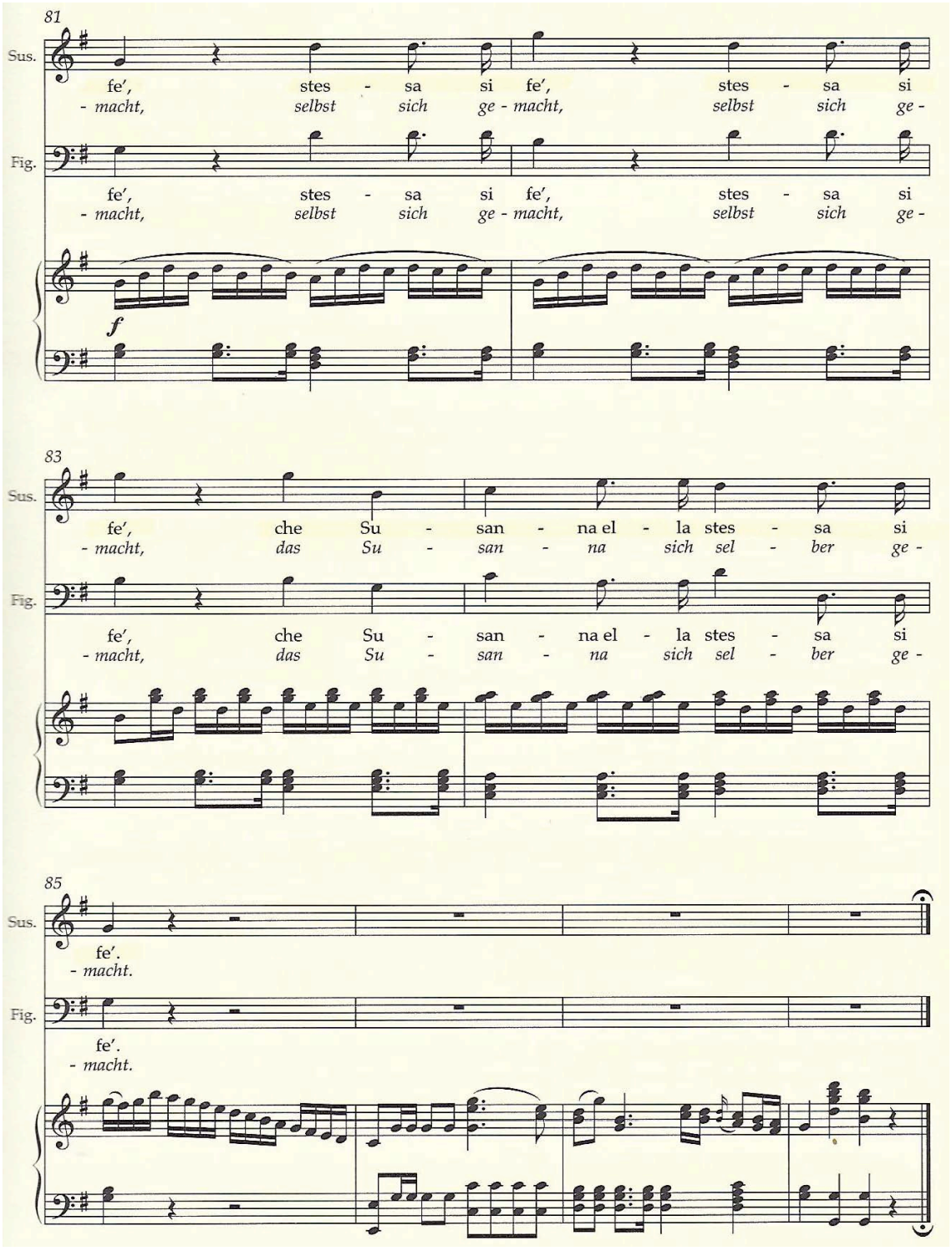

Figure 3.13: Figaro and Susanna sing in parallel thirds on the same text

The Count and Susanna: "Crudel! Perchè finora"

Susanna convinces the Count to meet her in the garden once the sun sets in "Crudel! Perchè finora." The Countess and Susanna plan to deceive and expose the Count for his infidelity by dressing in disguise as each other. The irony of "Crudel! Perchè finora" is that the Count sees Susanna as compliant with his demands, when in reality she is always in control of the situation. Mozart's music reveals Susanna's control because he has her lead the tonal shifts and resolutions. The Count begins the duet in the key of a minor as he asks Susanna his first question: "Cruel woman! Why have you kept me in torment until now?" Being in control of the situation, Susanna answers his question with her own musical statement and shifts to C major as she calmly states: "My Lord every woman has time to say yes." (Figure 3.14) The Count becomes increasingly paranoid as the duet progresses. His hesitancy and lack of confidence shows as he sings minor second intervals (a to b-flat) for his questions: "you will come? I won't miss you?" Susanna answers the Count by leading him toward the dominant tonal area in the key of E major through her augmented sixth on G-sharp. (Figure 3.15) The Count's lack of confidence as he questions Susanna is further underscored by upbeats when Susanna answers on the downbeat. In addition to leading modulatory shifts, Susanna resolves the Count's dominant seventh chords. The first resolution happens in C major and the second happens in A minor. "Crudel! Perchè finora" opens by alternating between male and female solo sections. In the middle passage of the duet, Mozart begins to overlap the two voices; however, Susanna's music is quite independent from the Count's musical ideas. He sings sweeping romantic phrases while she sings short repetitive lines to show her true feelings of disgust.

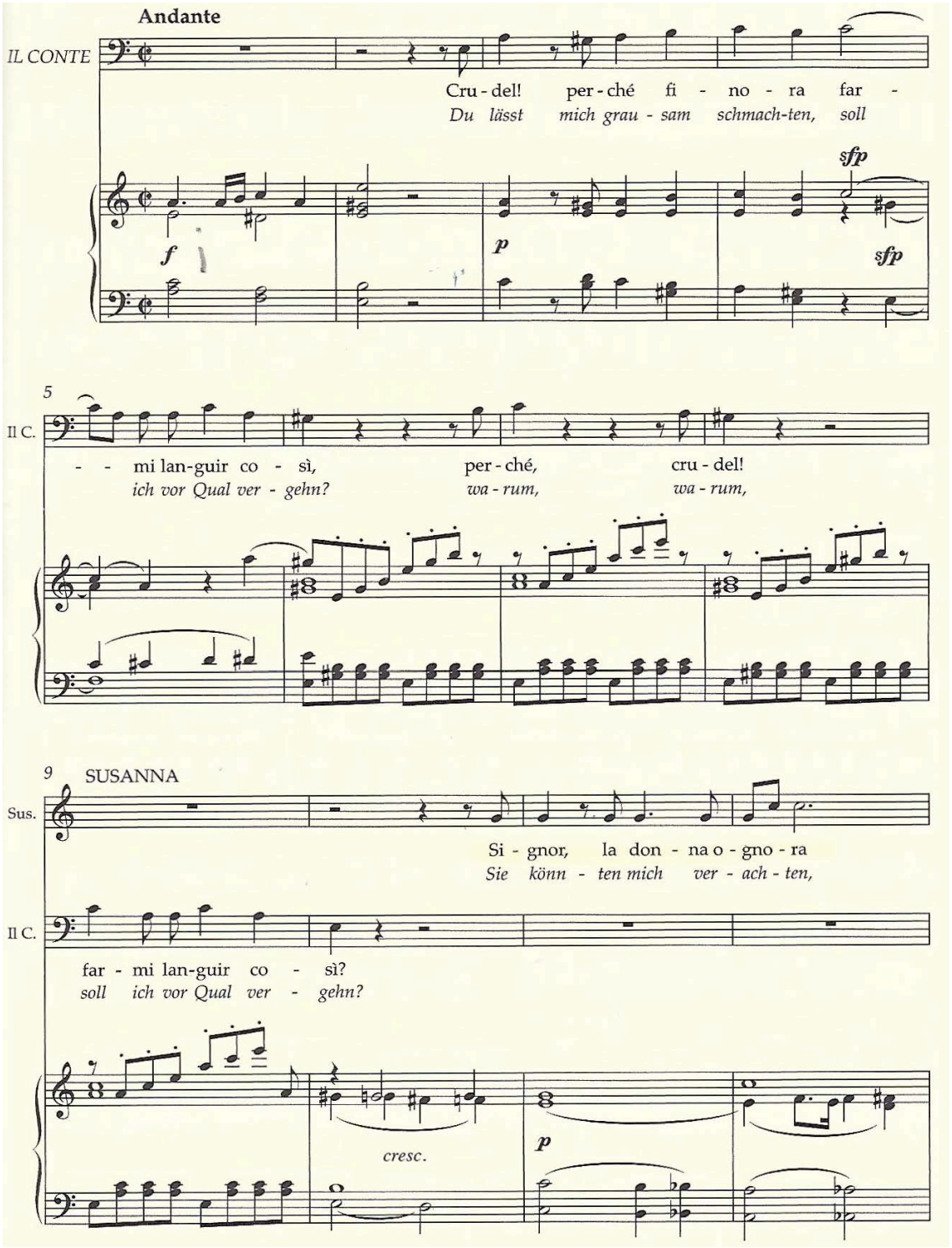

Figure 3.14: Susanna modulates to C major from the Count's key of A minor

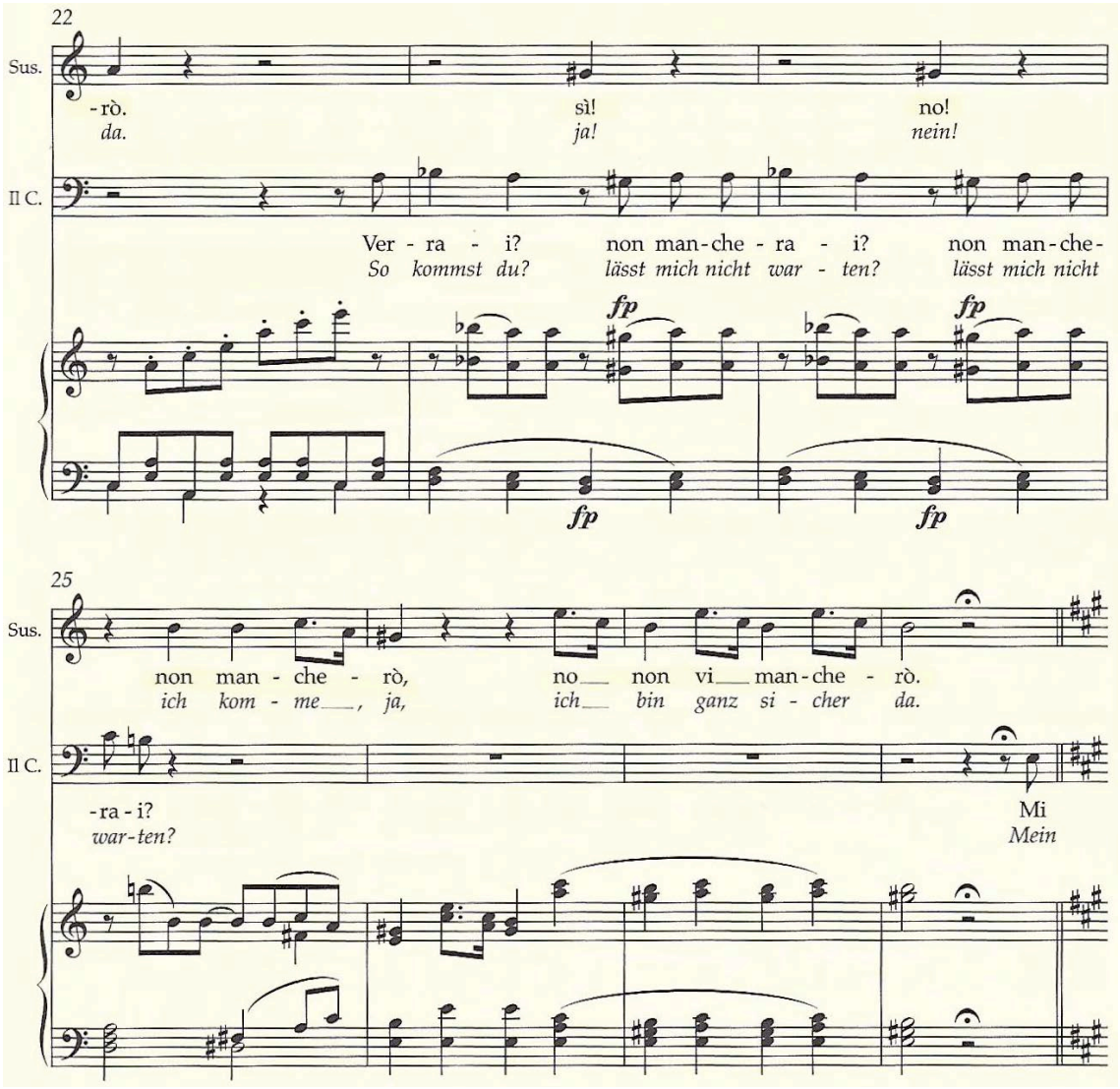

Figure 3.15: Susanna leads the Count to E major with an augmented sixth

Mozart sets "Crudel! Perchè finora" with a similar structural pattern to her opening duet with Figaro: the first section begins with a male solo and female solo, the middle section includes overlapping but independent lines, and the last section includes harmonized thirds sung to the same melody. While the structure resembles a love duet, Susanna's intention is insincere. Her insincerity shows as she sings contrasting text from the Count while singing in parallel thirds. In the last section of her opening duet with Figaro, both characters sing parallel thirds but on the same text to show their unity. However, it is this final passage of parallel thirds that eases the Count's mind. Susanna

finally convinces the Count that she will meet him in the garden by manipulating him with a musical style that represents love and unity. (Figure 3.16)

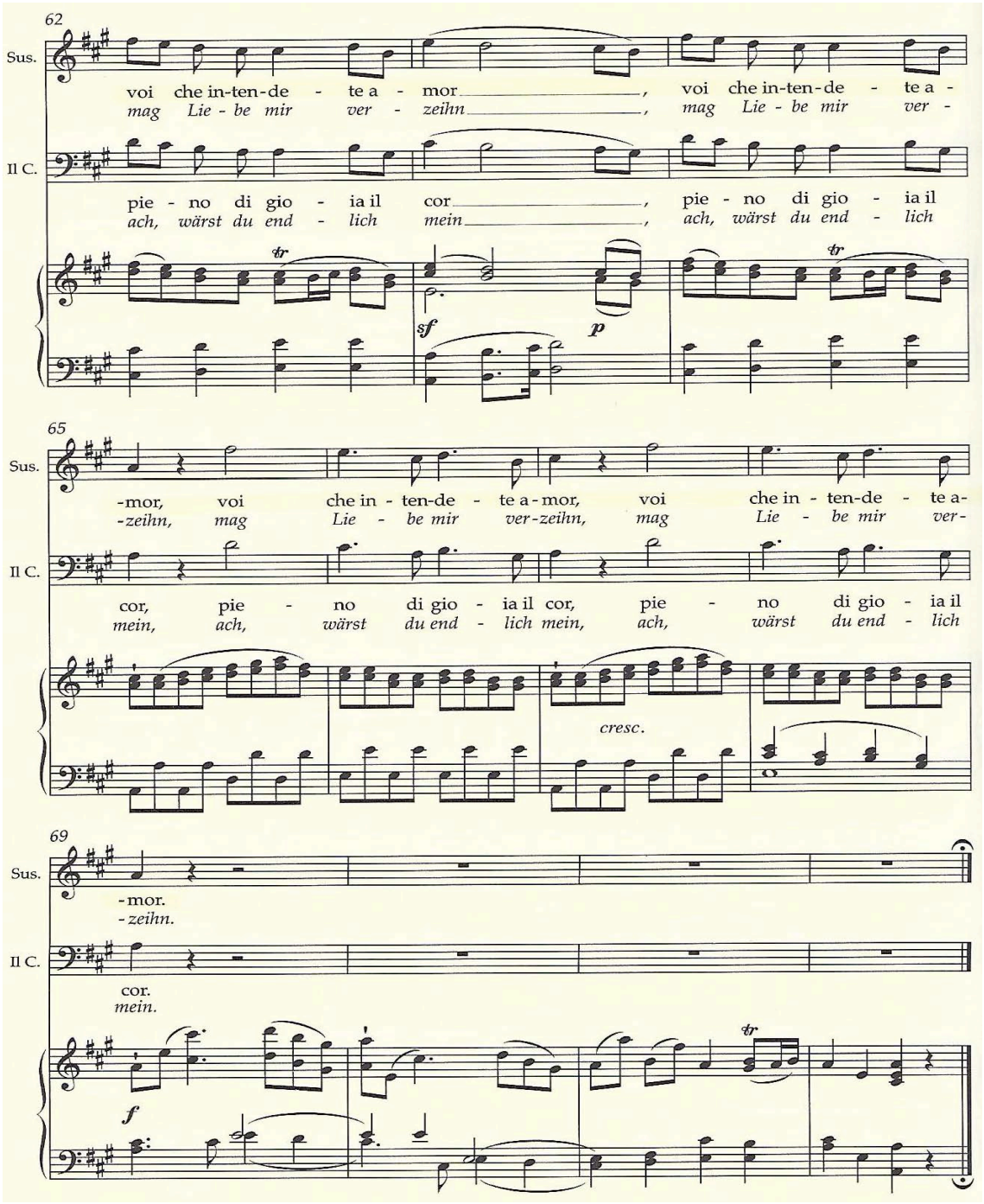

Figure 3.16: Susanna and the Count sing contrasting text in parallel thirds

Rousseau's Intelligent Female

Although philosophers debated the social issues of inequality among classes, women were largely excluded from these discussions throughout the Eighteenth century. In addition to seclusion from the Enlightenment movement, there became an increased subjection of women during the Scientific Revolution. Some writers even wrote that women maintained a sole purpose of bearing children per accordance with nature.[77] They were considered too emotional, unbalanced, and therefore they could endanger the rationalism of culture. In Rousseau's *Emile Book V*, he portrays women as passive and weak, made to please man with little resistance; however, he does not completely discredit the intelligence of women like some of his contemporaries.[78] Instead, he encourages women to maintain an *appearance* of submission despite their intelligence and independence in order to maneuver through the tension and constraints of society.

The females in *Le mariage* follow the advice found in Rousseau's *Emile* in that they use their intelligence and wit in secret to overcome tensions in the plot. Like the Countess, Susanna adheres to Rousseau's sphere of thought. The Countess's *noblesse* of mind exceeds the nobility of her birth; Susanna possesses a singleness of heart to which her innate refinement and coquetry remain subordinated.[79] Susanna does not solely elevate her self above her class in the opera. She also elevates herself above the limitations associated with her gender during the eighteenth century. Feminist leader

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[77] Sylvana Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women", in *History Workshop* No.20 (1985): 103, Web 17 April 2015, < http://www.jstor.org/stable/4288651>.
[78] Denise Schaeffer, "Reconsidering the Role of Sophie in Rousseau's "Emile"", in *Polity* 30.4 (1998): 609, Web 17 April 2015, < http://www.jstor.org/stable/3235257>.
[79] Frits Noske, "Social Tensions in 'Le Nozze di Figaro'", in *Music & Letters* (Jan. 1969): 45-62, Web 17 April 2015, < http://www.jstor.org/stable/732899>.

Mary Wollstonecraft states: "Understanding, strictly speaking, has been denied to women; and instinct, sublimated into wit and cunning, for the purposes of life, has been substituted in its stead."[80] In the end, Susanna maneuvers the restrictions of the ancien régime by manipulating the Count behind the scenes.

The Countess and Susanna: "Che soave zeffiretto"

In Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro,* Susanna and the Countess are inseparable throughout the entire opera. In a way Susanna functions as a secondary ingénue because of how much time she spends onstage compared to Mozart's other soubrette characters. She most certainly does not function as a typical soubrette compared to her predecessors and successors. Susanna establishes a close relationship with her mistress unlike Despina, who betrays her mistresses to claim gold from Don Alfonso. Susanna is the most intelligent, self-educated, and probably the most admirable heroine Mozart created.[81] She does not resemble the egotistical shrewd type of character derived from Commedia dell'Arte's Columbina. Instead she behaves with compassion and concern for others. While most soubrettes manipulate their superiors to further social rank, "Susanna is not interested in outwitting her antagonists to marry a rich man or gain social status. She simply wants to marry her beloved, but needs to use the resources of her kind to do so."[82] In addition to her heroine qualities, Mozart often gives Susanna music that resembles a more refined soubrette servant. Despite her class, her music often resembles the style of the Countess. One forgets that Susanna is but the niece of a plain gardener in the third-act letter scene, and the same holds for her duet with the

[80] Ford, *Music, Sexuality and the Enlightenment*, 135.
[81] Bouldrey, *Singers' Edition: Operatic Arias,* 98.
[82] Mary Hunter, *Mozart's Operas: A Companion,* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 143.

Count.[83] In her famous aria "Deh vieni, non tardar", Mozart sets the shorter phrases in a manner that gives them length and suspended grace with each rising and falling vocal line. By giving Susanna music that sounds more typical from an ingénue, Mozart shows Susanna's social equality with the Countess throughout the opera. In the eighteenth century, a female servant could bond with her mistress and retain her daily behaviors and mannerisms.

One of the most elegant moments from the opera occurs during the letter scene between the women in act three, scene ten. Susanna and the Countess compose a love letter for the Count, so that he will meet them in the garden during the evening. Da Ponte borrowed this scene from Beaumarchais's *Le mariage* (Act four, scene three) when the women write the Count a letter in the form of a song: "Qu'il fera beau, ce soir, sous les grands marronniers."[84] In this scene, the women address a letter to the Count asking him to meet Susanna under the pine trees in the woods when evening falls. However, instead of Susanna meeting the Count, it will be the Countess dressed in disguise as Susanna. Mozart portrays two kindred spirits who are in no way separated by the class structure of society through his clever working of the music. This duet is made up of longer phrases with a refined melodic construction that would be associated with the sophistication of nobles.

In the first two stanzas of the duet, the Countess enters after Susanna each time on the same note on which Susanna's previous text ended. Mozart musically forms a tight bond between the two women. When the two women finally sing together in a homophonic section, they are singing different text but in parallel thirds, until Mozart

[83] Noske, "Social Tensions in", 45-62.
[84] Carter, *W. A. Mozart*, 42.

eventually delays each line by a measure to form a short canon. (Figure 3.17 and 3.18) Because Mozart seamlessly composes each musical and vocal line into the next, listeners often cannot distinguish the two voices by the middle of the duet. However, Mozart does have Susanna sing a third higher than the Countess when they are in harmony. By having Susanna a third above the Countess in this duet, it shows Susanna's refinement of her class and the Countess's humility of working together with her servant to save her marriage.

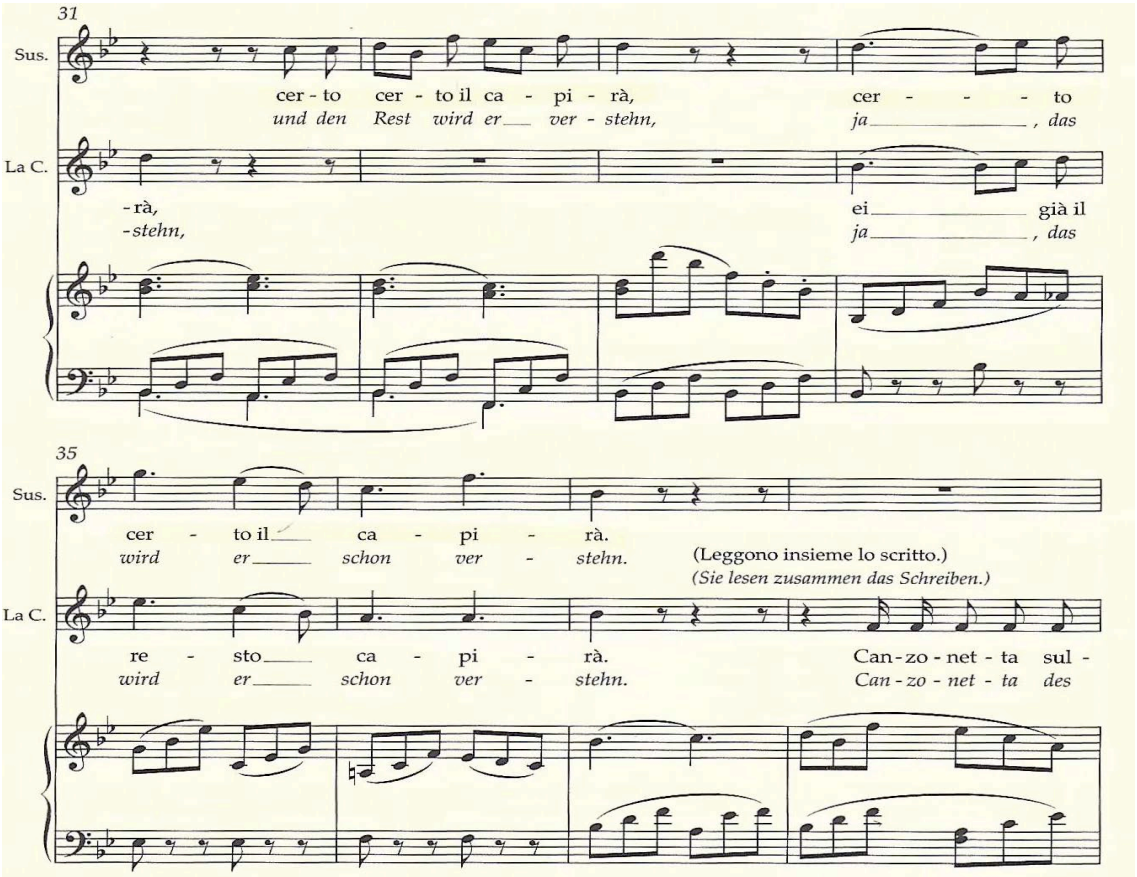

Figure 3.17: Susanna and the Countess begin singing in parallel thirds

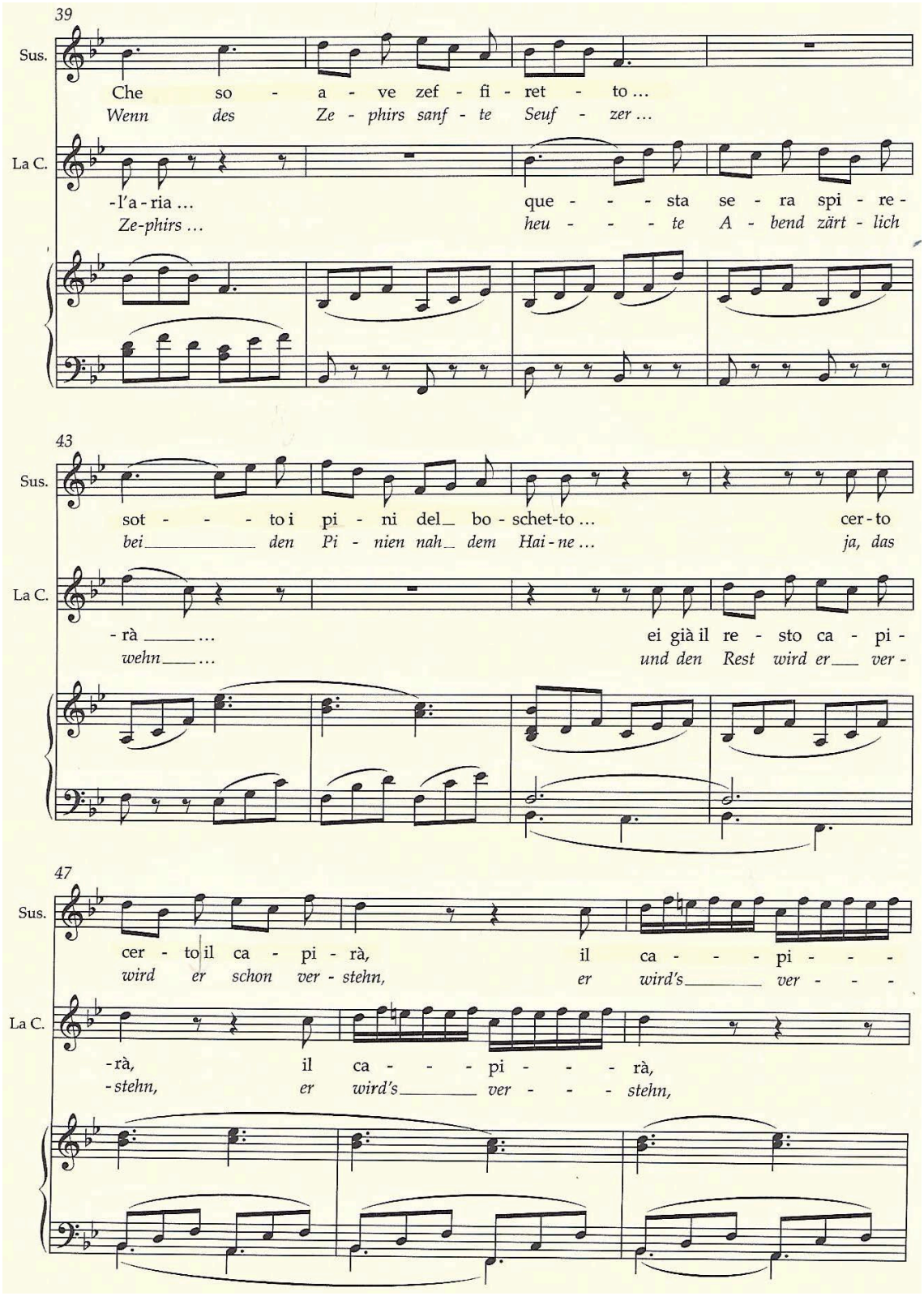

Figure 3.18: Susanna and the Countess enter a measure apart in a musical canon

"Che soave zeffiretto": Peasant and Noble Qualities

Da Ponte and Mozart establish tension and conflicts in *Figaro* between the classes and sexes that are handled by the characters in two ways: either accepting the situation or subverting the social restraints. The women in the opera tend to respond to the conflicts with the second course of action. Prior to the duet "Che soave zeffiretto", the Countess's grief and lament comes to a peak when she sings her aria "Dove sono i bel momenti". During the recitative prior to the aria, the Countess acknowledges the class difference between she and her servant. She proclaims: "Now he makes me seek help from one of my maids!"[85] This line is the only text of the Countess in which she mentions the divide of class. However, Da Ponte's placement of this text and this aria proves very effective because of the duet that follows.

In "Che soave zeffiretto," the Countess takes charge of her fate by designing a plan to fool her husband and humiliate him for his inappropriate behavior. Susanna and the Countess sing "Che soave zeffiretto" in the pastoral style, which provides a foreshadowing of their night in the forest. The Pastoral is meant to express the idealized world of shepherds as well as 'rural innocence'[86]. Mozart presents this piece in 6/8 with an allegretto tempo. Typically triple dances with double metrical levels have essentially peasant associations.[87] This meter type frequently occurs in soubrette arias. For instance, Despina and Zerlina sing both of their arias in *Così fan tutte* and *Don Giovanni* in a 6/8 meter because Mozart associates their music with servant or peasant style dances such as the siciliano, gigue or musette. Mozart brilliantly chooses

[85] Noske, "Social Tensions in", 50.
[86] Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*, 43.
[87] Ibid, 68-69.

a slower dance associated with a rustic setting for "Che soave zefiretto" in order to put Susanna and the Countess on the same "musical" class level for the duet. However, it is set in a more sophisticated style than the rustic meter of 6/8 traditional peasant choruses. It contains longer phrases, more subtle melodic construction, and the key of B-flat major that is often reserved for noble characters. (Figure 3.19) Throughout the opera, Susanna is constantly transcending beyond the bounds of her social class, whereas the Countess must move down a step in class in order to resolve the problems with her marriage. If the Countess's step requires moral courage, Susanna's calls for intelligence and charm, qualities which she possesses to a higher degree.[88] The audience during the eighteenth century would have been familiar with the social dances and their class associations. When the Countess admits that she needs the help of her intelligent servant, noble audience members would have identified with her humiliation.

[88] Noske, "Social Tensions in", 45-62.

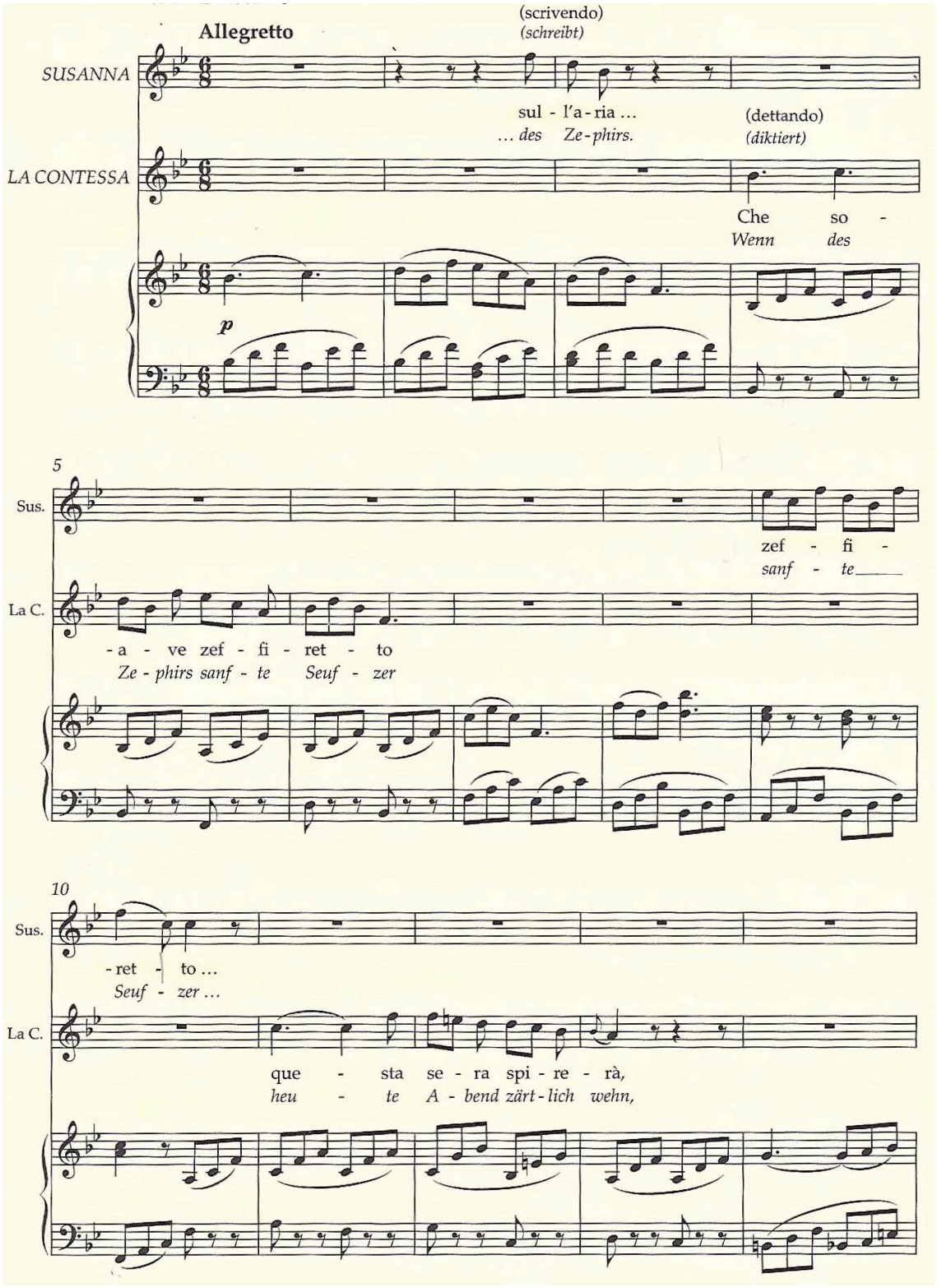

Figure 3.19: Susanna and the Countess, "Che soave zeffiretto"
Pastoral meter of 6/8 has rustic connotations
Key of B-flat major has noble connotations

Staging the Letter Scene

The letter scene provides a crucial change in the dramatic direction of *Le nozze di Figaro* for Susanna and the Countess. Both women are taking a massive risk by scheming behind the Count's back. If the plan was not successful, the women could face serious consequences from the Count. However, the women rarely portray a look of fear in staged productions. Instead, the women appear absolutely confident in their plan and abilities. In the Royal Opera's BBC broadcasted production of *Figaro* directed by David Mcvicar, Susanna (Miah Persson) writes each line as the Countess (Dorothea Röschmann) sits at the piano and dictates the suggestive "little song" to leave for the Count.[89] David Mcvicar's staging depicts two relatively educated women. Susanna was most likely taught how to read and write by the Countess, and she must write the letter instead of the Countess because the Count would be able to recognize his wife's handwriting verses the unrefined style of a maid. Upon finishing the letter the Countess looks over the letter as if she is proofreading and approving Susanna's writing. The Countess dictates her letter and Susanna repeats it, but like any stenographer, Susanna misunderstands words and phrases from time to time and has to be told again.[90] In a 1966 production of *Le nozze di Figaro* from the Salzburg Festival, the Countess (Claire Watson) shows a dynamic change from her first appearance in "Porgi amor."[91] In the Countess's first scene, she looks troubled and perturbed. However, the Countess looks confident and in charge of her fate during the letter scene. The duet becomes the eye of

[89] *Mozart: Le Nozze Di Figaro*, David McVicar dir., Performed by Schrott, Persson, Finaley, DVD, (Royal Opera House BBC, 2006).
[90] Hughes, *Famous Mozart Operas*, 69.
[91] *Mozart: Le Nozze Di Figaro*, Gnther Rennert dir., Performed by Walter Berry and Reri Grist, DVD, (Austria: Salzburg Festpiele, 1966).

the opera's storm by showing Susanna and the Countess as calm and secure in their friendship. Their mutual trust and affection are all the more remarkable in this moment of the Countess's greatest humiliation when, all else having failed, she is reduced to ignoble plotting with her servants to win her husband back.[92] The saying "there is safety in numbers" proves true for the Countess. She appears to have gained confidence during this scene because she has faith that everything will work out if she and Susanna put their intelligent minds together in secret.

[92] Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart,* 147-148.

Despina from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Così fan tutte (1790)

Despina is a fundamental character to the plot of Mozart's *Così fan tutte.* Without her help scheming, Don Alfonso would not succeed in proving his theory that "all women are fickle."[93] Ford argues: "the treatment of femininity to the male enlightened ego is most apparent in the figure of Despina. Without her assistance, Alfonso could never have won his bet for, like Susanna, she has her ear to the ground."[94] Despina makes the wheels of the plot turn through her manipulative actions just like her ancestor Colombina. The two noblewomen, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, make their decisions without the realization that Despina has influenced them with persuasion and disguises. In the end the women realize that everyone, including their maid, duped them as part of Don Alfonso's game. Despina is one of the few soubrette figures to admit to feeling internal guilt for manipulating. Her admittance of guilt is significant because her character becomes redeemable as she realizes that Don Alfonso used her wit for his own selfish benefit. She states: "I'm confused, I feel ashamed; I'm slipping badly if they can do to me what I have done to many others." Along with the noble women Despina discovers the true identities of the foreign men, which Don Alfonso had kept from her. When the real lovers reveal that they posed as the foreigners, she realizes that the men fooled her just like she did to her mistresses. She finally begins to commiserate with the women as the opera closes with the stereotypical "lieto fine," or happy ending of opera buffa.

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[93] Women during the enlightenment were thought to have a "feminine sexual-moral vulnerability." (Charles Ford, 117)
[94] Ford, Music, *Sexuality and the Enlightenment*, 142.

Chapter two previously mentioned how servant characters of Commedia dell'Arte and opera buffa often complain about their life of service. Mozart gives his servants Despina and Leporello similar entrances in *Così fan tutte* and *Don Giovanni.* Both mention how they despise monotonous daily tasks and wish to have the lifestyle of a noble figure. Mozart cleverly shows Leporello's lofty ambitions by underscoring his statement with a regal horn call. Mozart similarly underscores Despina's secret power over the women by assigning her sophisticated musical qualities in each of her arias. Secret is the key word because her noble music qualities are less noticeable than her rustic musical elements. The noble qualities of her music mostly apply to the overall form of her arias. However, Mozart masks her noble qualities by giving her more obvious rustic characteristics within her rhythmic motives, key structures, and metrical patterns. This section of chapter three will explore the contrasts between Despina's stark peasant qualities and her disclosed noble qualities in her arias, "In uomini, in soldati" and "Una donna a quindici anni."

Despina's "In uomini, in soldati"

Despina teaches Dorabella and Fiordiligi a lesson about men in "In uomini, in soldati." She gives the women bitter wisdom as she mocks men for their "lying looks" and "deceiving words." Her solution to men's lack of fidelity is for women to pay them back with a taste of their own medicine: "Love for convenience and vanity." While the subject of Despina's text is rather trivial and playful, Mozart gives her interesting musical topics that conflict with themselves. Robert Hatten defines "the bringing together of two otherwise incompatible style types in a single location" as musical

troping.[95] By presenting two contrasting styles together, the composer can "produce a unique expressive meaning from their collusion or fusion."[96] In Despina's case, Mozart juxtaposes noble styles with rustic styles. In "In uomini, in soldati" her rustic associations are more simple and obvious than her noble connotations. Mozart begins the aria in the key of F major in 2/4 meter before moving to a lively 6/8 meter as she sings "Di pasta simile." F major and 6/8 meter are typical of soubrette figures of opera buffa because of their association with the peasant, pastoral world. Mozart sets Zerlina's aria "Batti, batti" from *Don Giovanni* in the same manner with a slower 2/4 section followed by a more lively 6/8 segment. The 6/8 of "In uomini, in soldati" resembles a rustic gigue dance through its dotted eighth notes, large melodic leaps, and natural lilt. It is interesting to note that the gigue dance originated as a "vulgar" folk-dance before it was refined into a more noble style of dance.[97] The evolution of the gigue's contradictory function becomes symbolic for Despina because she is a lower-class servant with a substantial amount of control and power over her mistresses. Despite its rustic origins, the gigue eventually became more refined once it was incorporated into noble forms like the sonata or symphony movements. Mozart "refines" Despina's aria in a similar manner by absorbing the gigue within her aria form, which develops into a compact sonata form.

Sonata Form in "In uomini, in soldati"

Mozart defines Despina's power by creating a sonata form for the second part of her aria despite its peasant elements. The first thematic subject of the gigue section

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[95] Robert Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert,* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 68.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart,* 42.

occurs during measures 28-32 for the text "Di pasta simile son tutti quanti." This section moves into a four bar transition that is filled with repetitive octave leaps (measures 32-35). The secondary subject of four bars enters in measure 36 with the text "mentite lagrime." This subject briefly moves into the tonal area of G major. The presentation of the two themes functions as the exposition. The section that follows the two themes functions as a transition into the 12-bar development section that begins at measure 48 with "In noi non amano che ill or diletto." Ford observes that Despina's development section sits around the "flat-side, feminine keys of the supertonic and subdominant."[98] By moving to the subdominant "feminine tonal area" for the text "In us they only prize their own pleasure; Then they despise us, deny us affection," Mozart gives provides his own commentary on the "enlightened male" perspective through Despina. Despina's development section ends with the text "chieder pietà" on a diminished D-flat chord followed by an augmented sixth on B-natural in measure 59.

Similar to Serpina's mockery of the seria style, Despina's transition into the recapitulation mocks the tragic style. This brief incorporation of the serious style is fitting for the text "to ask for pity." The last two sections of the sonata form contain a recapitulation for measures 62-84 followed by an extended coda (measure 84 to the end). In the recapitulation, Despina revisits the first thematic subject from the exposition in the tonic key of F major. The playful music that begins with the text "amiam per comodo" (Let us love for comfort) presents a new theme that is based on an inversion of the second theme from the exposition blended with aspects of the first theme (m.72). (Figure 3.20-22)

[98] Ford, *Music, Sexuality and the Enlightenment*, 143.

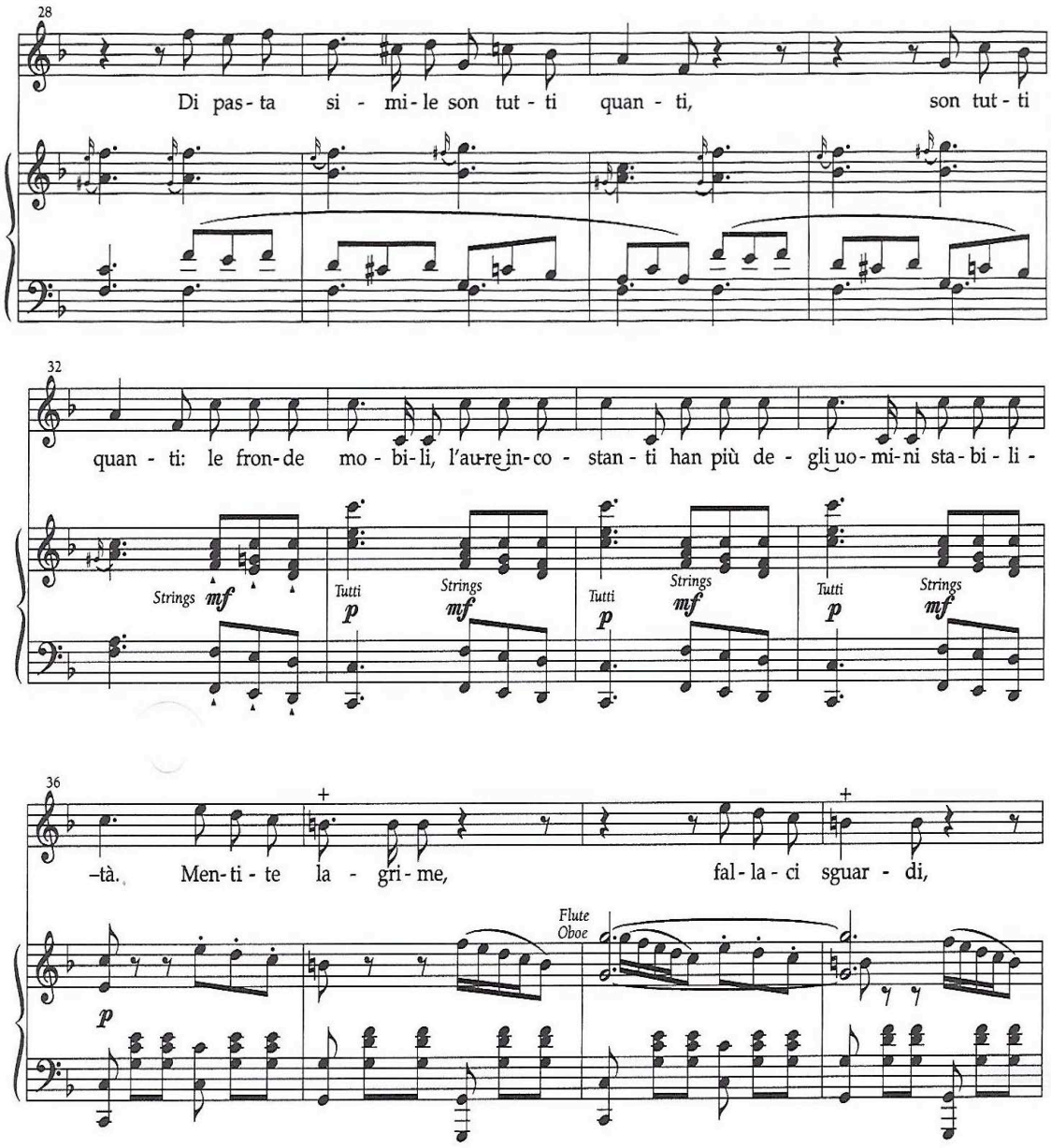

Figure 3.20 Despina, *In uomini, in soldati*
Exposition: m. 28 (Theme 1); m. 36 (Theme 2)
(Singers' Edition: Operatic Arias, Soubrette)

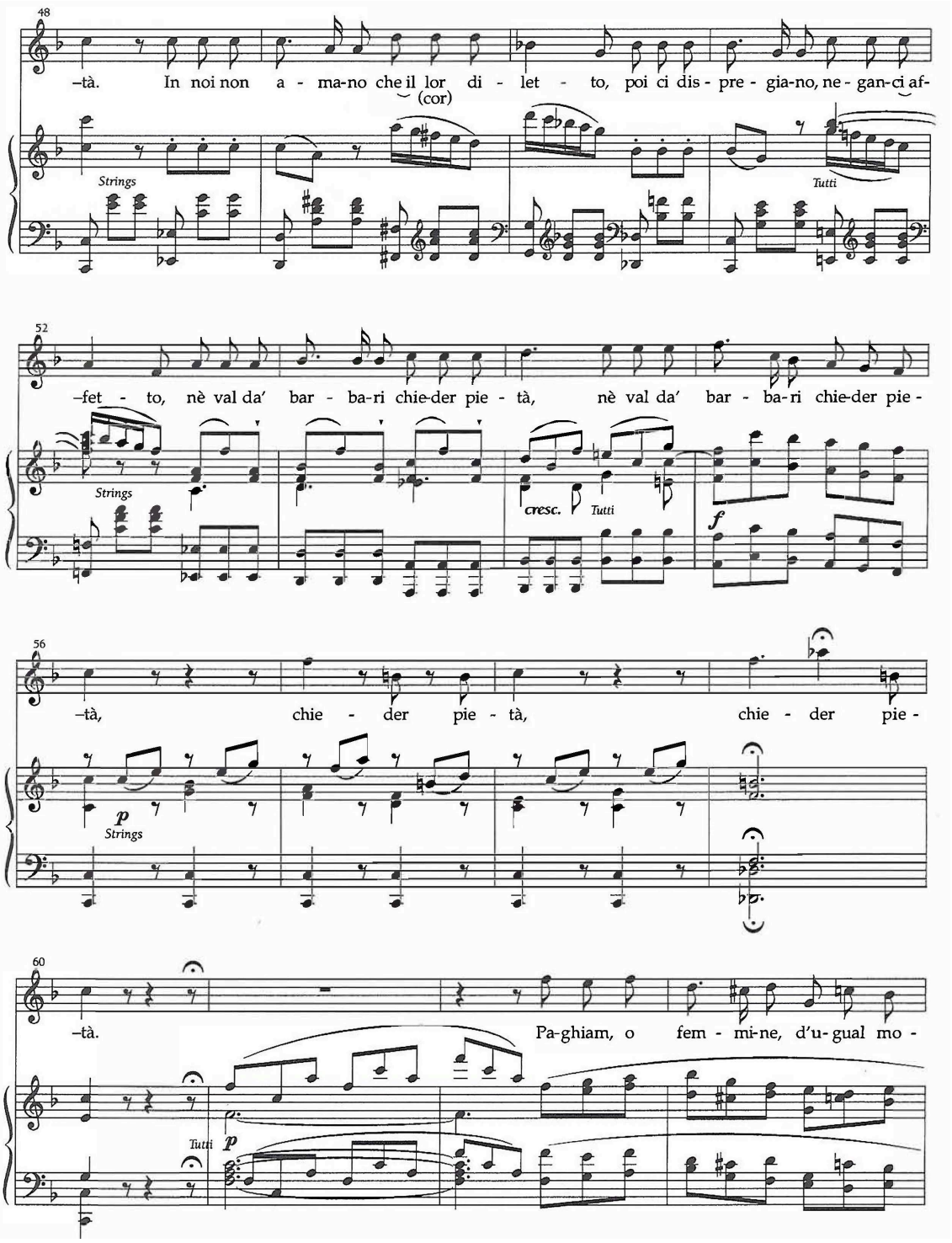

Figure 3.21: Development begins at m.48 and ends at m. 59
Recapitulation begins at measure 59 with a return of theme 1

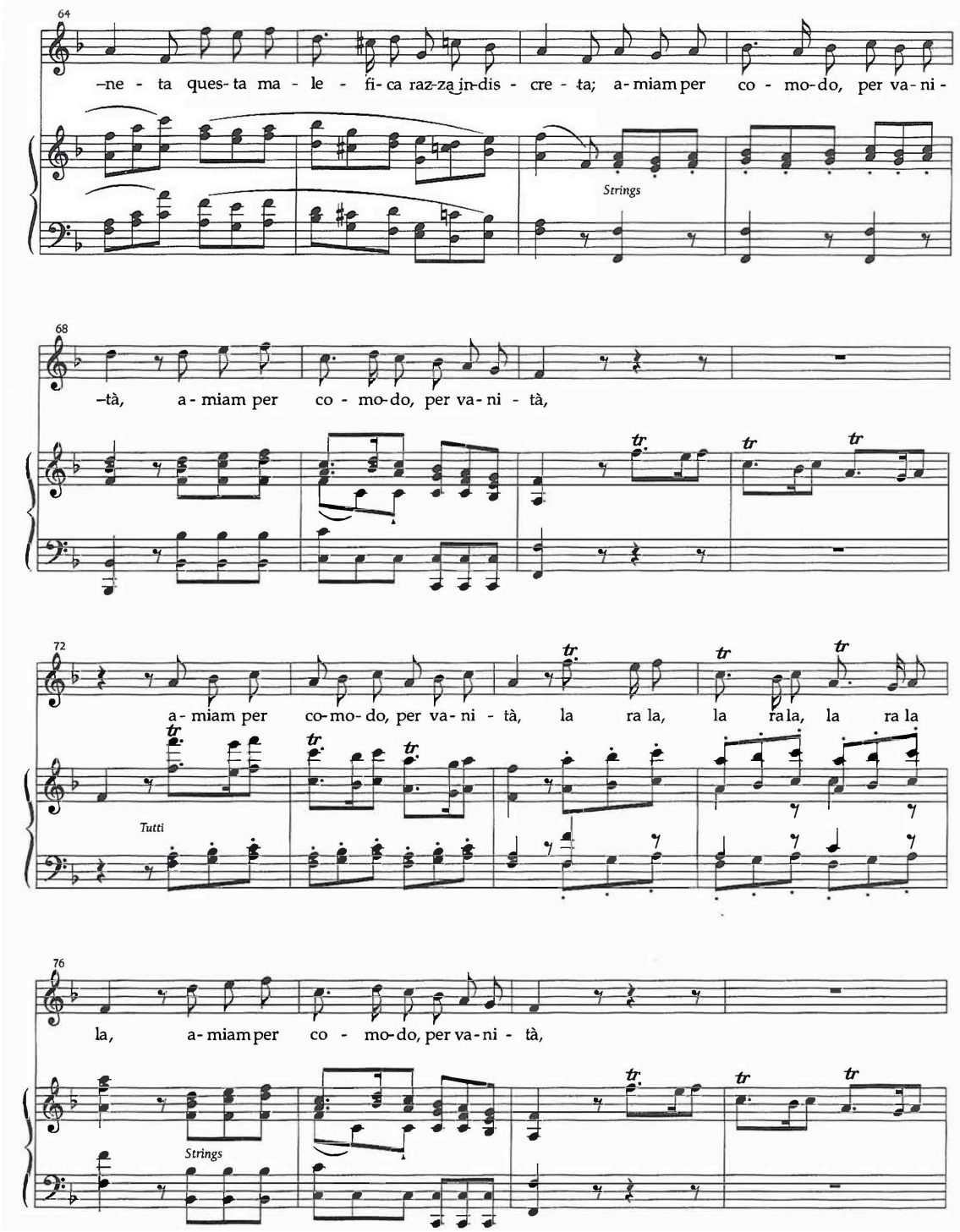

Figure 3.22: Recapitulation continued (theme 2 begins at m.72)

Despina's "Una donna a quindici anni"

Despina teaches Fiordiligi and Dorabella another lesson about men in her second act aria, "Una donna a quindici anni." Instead of cataloging her complaints about men as in her previous aria, she lists the numerous ways a woman can win the affections of a man. This lesson is more effective with the noble women because they decide to give in to their temptations in the following scene. In both of Despina's arias, she relates to the noblewomen by sharing her personal experiences and worldly ways with them. These types of lessons are typical of soubrette characters in opera buffa. Mary Hunter notes: "The singers of these arias often take it upon themselves to explain the nature of woman-hood to audiences both on and off stage, especially in arias complaining about men."[99] Despina may not complain about men in "Una donna a quindici anni," but she certainly advocates for deceiving them and manipulating them to become powerful "like a queen." Despina proclaims: "Like a queen from a high throne with "I can" and "I wish" a woman can make herself obeyed."

Mozart musically depicts Despina's sovereignty over men by featuring passages with less common or more sophisticated qualities. Despina's first aria "In uomini, in soldati" has a conventional key of F major, which suits her peasant association. However, "Una donna a quindici anni" has the key of G major, which is less common for a soubrette aria. G major does have rustic connotations, but Mozart typically uses it for his peasant choruses and male buffo characters. The peasant choruses for *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* both begin in G major. Richard Bouldrey finds significance in Despina's key of G major in "Una donna a quindici anni." He argues:

[99] Hunter, *The Culture of Opera*, 127.

"perhaps, like Zerlina's *Vedrai, carino* (in C major), this aria is meant to be a bit more serious. Perhaps this sermon is meant to sink in more than the cajoling *In uomini*." [100] The previous chapter mentions that Serpina and Serpetta both sing in sharp keys when they are lecturing men in arias. In the beginning of "Una donna a quindici anni," Despina shames the women for their naïveté: "You are of bone, and of flesh, or what are you? A lady at fifteen years must know each great fashion." Perhaps Despina's sharp key of G major provides a similar connotation.

The regal coda in "Una donna a quindici anni"

"Una donna a quindici anni" preserves the rustic nature of Mozart's peasant women through its 6/8 meter, which is divided into two sections of contrasting tempi (Andante and Allegretto). Mozart's soubrette figures typically begin their arias in a slower meter or tempo before switching to a more dance-like meter with a brisk tempo. While Mozart's choice of key and meter recall rustic influences, he gives Despina a sense of authority in the coda section through sophisticated music that matches her pretentious text. The coda begins in measure 82 after Despina's dramatic leap down a seventh for the word "voglio" (I want) and a dramatic pause in measure 81. Despina sings with more elegance in measures 82-89 by having phrases with repeated pitches, longer durations, and higher tones. Prior to the coda section, she mostly had quick, driving rhythms. She does not sing dotted quarter notes successively until this final section. (Figure 3.23 and 3.24)

[100] Bouldrey, *Singers' Edition: Operatic Arias,* 164.

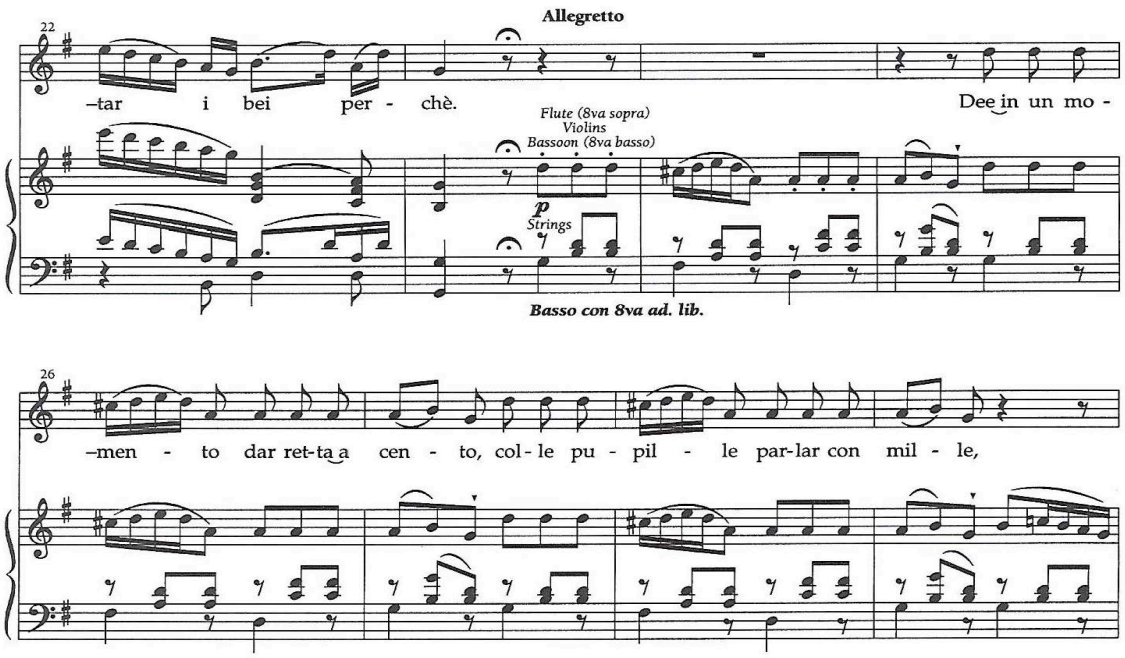

Figure 3.23: Despina, "Una donna a quindici anni"
Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (Ricordi Edition)
6/8 rustic dance

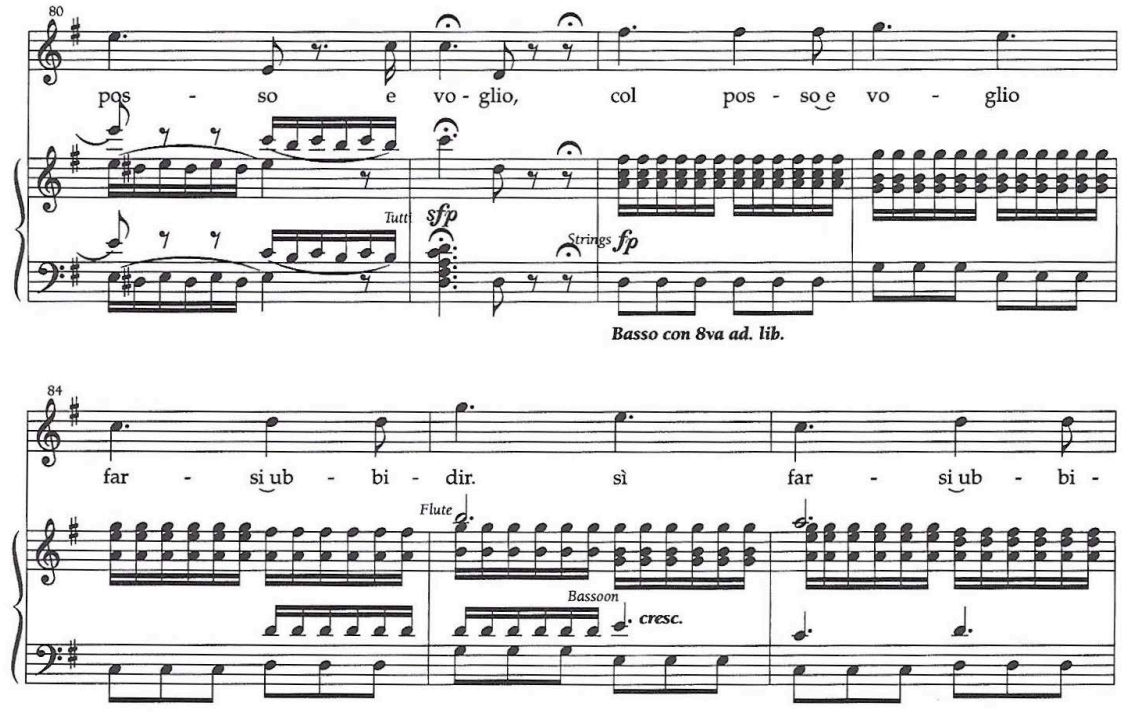

Figure 3.24: Despina, "Una donna a quindici anni"
Despina's Regal Coda (Begins at measure 82)

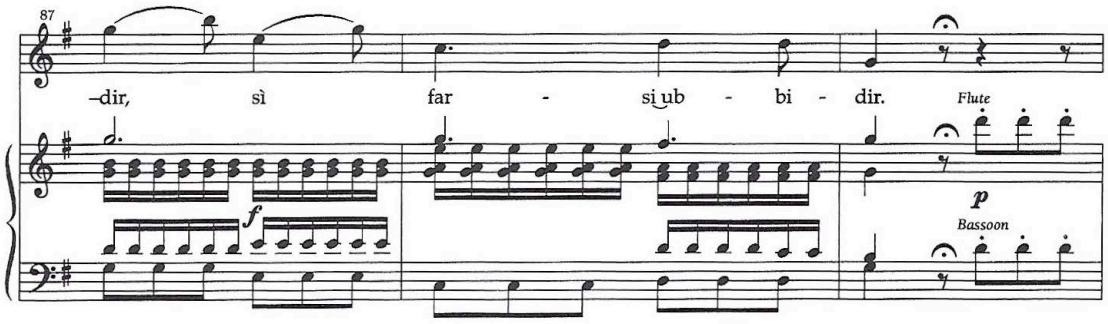

Figure 3.24 Continued: "Una donna a quindici anni"

Edmund Goehring argues that Despina's coda "captures the text's regal aspirations with a heroic musical style, complete with octave leaps, sixteenth notes anacruses, a dramatic pause, and a declamatory setting of words."[101] This regal style aims to put Despina on the same level as her social superiors. Her musical mimesis makes her more persuasive with the women because they identify with the noble style. Despina eventually breaks from her noble mimicry with her aside that begins in measure 91 for the text: "It seems that they have a taste for this kind of doctrine, long live Despina who knows how to serve."[102] In an aside for the audience, Despina returns back to the musical theme that was introduced at the beginning of the allegretto section in measure 25. (Compare Figure 3.23 and 3.25) Mozart reveals Despina's truest self in the coda by juxtaposing her noble "act" with her playful, dance like rhythms that evoke her rustic origins.

[101] Goehring, *Three Modes of Perception,* 135, (See chapter two, footnote 43).
[102] "Par ch'abbian gusto di tal dotrina, viva Despina, che sa server."

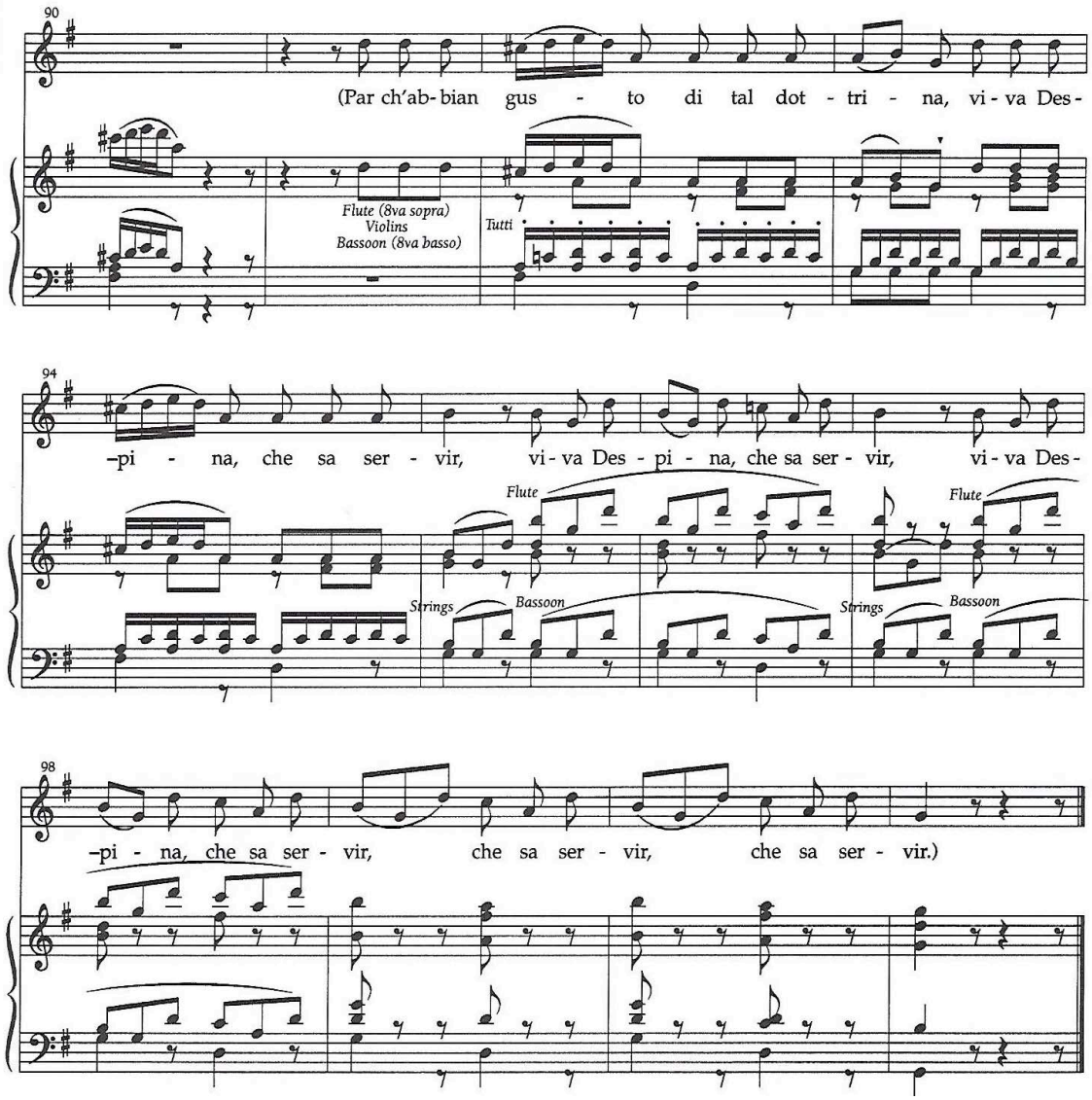

Figure 3.25: Despina, "Una donna a quindici anni"
Despina's aside in the coda (mm. 98-101)

The Italian Soubrette's Challenge of Social Structures

Because opera buffa plots often revolve around the relationships and interactions between noble figures and low-status characters, arias and ensembles often imply social connotations through their conventional forms and musical styles. Mary Hunter describes the "serving girl" aria as less predicable compared to buffo arias because it tends to include a mixture of the buffo and cantabile styles.[103] This combination of styles gives the "serving girl" aria multiple vantage points, which can provide complexity and richness for the soubrette character. The soubrette aria often brings together "two otherwise incompatible style types in a single location."[104] For instance, Serpina's arias in Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* often contain elements of eighteenth-century buffa juxtaposed with serious styles. Serpina's "seria" passages often function as social commentary that mocks the "noble style," or she uses it to mimic the noble and disguise her own peasant qualities. Musical mimesis for the soubrette is a subversive quality that can be traced back to Colombina's ability to take on the traits of other characters around her. Despina also takes on noble forms in both of her arias from *Così fan tutte* as part of her manipulation of Dorabella and Firodiligi. The success of her persuasive tactics shows after her second-act aria when the women decide to follow her scandalous advice.

Another subversive feature of the eighteenth century buffa soubrette is her capacity for taking charge of other people and situations within the plot without getting caught. Her secret power-*wit*-often reveals itself the most during duets and ensembles. Mozart frequently gives Susanna the upper hand during duets in *Le nozze di Figaro* by

[103] Hunter, *Mozart's Operas: A Companion,* 13.
[104] Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures,* 68.

allowing her to lead the tonal progressions and resolutions. Serpina also commands Uberto during their duets in *La serva padrona* by handing him his melodic motives along with her reprimands.

Mozart's soubrettes in *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Così fan tutte* challenged the social roles and customs, which Rousseau advocated for in his Enlightenment treatises such as: dignity for lower classes, individual freedom, and social equality. Susanna and Despina both represent women with secret intelligence and wit that Rousseau referred to in his treatise *Emile Book V*. In *Le nozze di Figaro*, Mozart and Da Ponte depict the low class servants and women as the heroes of the opera, whereas the aristocratic noblemen function as the villains. Susanna not only becomes a hero in *Le nozze di Figaro*, but she also becomes a secondary heroine due to her critical role in the plot's conflict and resolution. Additionally, Susanna and the Countess do not have the typical relationship of a lowly servant and her mistress. Instead they experience a mutual friendship that is based in equality and trust. In the end, their friendship and intelligence give them the resources to survive the plot's complications. Despina also plays a crucial part in the plot of *Così fan tutte.* Don Alfonso recruits Despina to help him execute his scheme because he knows that he would never be able to successfully manipulate the two noblewomen on his own. Don Alfonso may have devised the twisted experiment, but Despina actively conducts it through using physical and musical disguising.

The final chapter will explore the characteristics and musical qualities of soubrette figures from the Singspiel genre near end of the classical period into the early portion of the romantic period. Since there is less scholarship on these particular roles,

the purpose of this chapter will be to open an avenue for future discussion of the soubrette figure's significance within the Singspiel genre. Opera buffa was a notable source for Singspiel within Vienna during the late eighteenth century, therefore, the musical archetypes from this chapter and the previous chapter will still be considered as significant. Opera buffa was not the sole influence of Singspiel in Vienna during the eighteenth-century. Jesuit dramas, improvised comedies, Northern German Singspiels and traveling plays in English and French also influenced the plots and characters of Singspiels in Vienna.[105] All of these genres should be considered as intertextual resources for the formation of the soubrette figure within Viennese Singspiel.[106]

[105] Hunter, *Mozart's Operas: A Companion,* 76-81.
[106] Intertextual refers to how a literary or musical text influences another text.

CHAPTER FOUR:

SOUBRETTES OF SINGSPIEL

The previous chapters traced the origins of the soubrette figure and her subversive tendencies to the Commedia dell'Arte stock character Colombina, who was created by the actress Caterina Biancolelli in the seventeenth century. Commedia dell'Arte served as the basis for the character types that arrived within opera buffa during the eighteenth century. This chapter will look at the soubrette role in the Singspiel genre from the eighteenth through the mid nineteenth century. While Commedia dell'Arte and opera buffa influenced the Singspiel genre in Vienna, other resources such as the Jesuit drama, improvised theater, the Northern Singspiel, and traveling English and French plays influenced its plots and character types. As for the music, German composers began to establish their own national identity by incorporating German dialogue between musical numbers and varying musical forms to fit the action of the plot. This chapter aims to compare and contrast five Singspiel soubrettes with their Italian counterparts and to evaluate their degree of agency by considering their musical features and personal characteristics beginning with Blondchen from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782) and ending with Gretchen from Albert Lortzing's *Der Wildschütz* (1842).

The Beginnings of German Singspiel

Because of the lengthy and destructive nature of the Thirty Years War within the fractured Holy Roman Empire (1618-1648), art and music suffered from a lack of progress during the seventeenth century. Fortunately, Vienna was able to preserve some sense of musical tradition because southern areas were not as affected by the war.

Singers and musicians from Mantua often traveled to the Viennese court in the seventeenth century to perform musical works for Carnival season or other significant occasions such as weddings and birthdays. In addition to Italian musical works, traveling theatrical troupes such as the "Englische Komödianten" provided Elizabethan dramas for the Viennese court, which were translated into German. In the years following the Thirty Years' War, Emperor Leopold I became an important patron of Italian baroque opera by supporting Italian composers such as Antonio Cesti (1623 – 1669). Emperor Leopold I regularly commissioned operas from Cesti throughout his reign. Most of the operas in Vienna during the seventeenth-century were based on classical subjects and in Leopold's preferred language, Italian. While Italian opera flourished in the courts of Vienna as well as Dresden, Munich, Hanover, and Brunswick, courts with fewer resources and less grandeur to flaunt turned toward German opera as an alternative to Italian works. On the preference for German opera verses Italian opera, John Warrack notes:

> More cannot be claimed, and the situation was confused and even contradictory. Some courts were given over to Italian opera, but would also welcome visits from German touring companies; a few courts made a stand for German opera, but would not refuse Italianate works. There were German composers who adopted an Italian manner, and Italian composers who made some use of German subjects and admitted French elements to their style.[107]

It wasn't until 1678 when Hamburg established the first public opera house (Oper am Gänsemarkt) that German opera finally took a step forward in its overall development.

The first major composer of German opera in Hamburg was Reinhard Keiser, who composed German opera plots around biblical and historical dramas, classical

[107] John Warrack, ed. Mary Hunter and James Webster, *German Opera: From the Beginnings to Wagner*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2001), 30.

dramas, or popular German subjects. He became the official music director at the Oper am Gänsemarkt in 1695.[108] His compositional style put a greater emphasis on recitative and shorter aria forms to further the plot and action, whereas opera seria focused more on stagnant reflection with lengthy da capo arias. Keiser did not rely upon this Italian Baroque style. Instead, many of his arias were strophic, binary or through composed. As for his recitative structures, Keiser was influenced by Bach's Passion recitatives and molded the music around German contours and speech-like rhythms.

Georg Philipp Telemann, who composed operas for the Oper am Gänsemarkt in Hamburg in the early eighteenth-century, was the first German composer to implement the comedic features of Italian opera buffa into his Singspiel plots. His opera *Der geduldige Socrates* (1721) blended both serious and comedic elements, which was likely influenced by his awareness of Italian opera buffa and French opera comique.[109] Telemann's operas also included mockery of social conventions, which became a key feature of both opera buffa and Singspiel. In 1725, Telemann's comic opera *Pimpinone* premiered at the Oper am Gänsemarkt as a comic intermezzo (Lustiges Zwischenspiel) between the acts of Handel's opera seria, *Tamerlano.* The plot and characters in *Pimpinone* are identical to Pergolesi's *La serva padrona,* which later premiered in Naples in 1733. Vespetta is the chambermaid for the elderly bachelor Pimpione. As soon as she marries Pimpione, she transforms into a dominant, shrewish spouse.

While German Singspiel thrived in Northern Germany, it was less popular in Vienna in the early eighteenth-century. Emperor Joseph II wanted to change the opera

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[108] Tim Carter, *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Music*, Vol.1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 549.
[109] Warrack, *German Opera,* 59.

culture in Vienna to reflect German tastes. In 1778, Emperor Joseph II established the National Singspiel opera troupe in Vienna. He was determined to use the stage as a means to strengthen national unity and to promote the German language. In addition to commissioning Singspiels, Joseph II hired German singers for the productions. One of the more successful Singspiels produced for Joseph II's National Singspiel was Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in 1782. However, Joseph II's German troupe dissolved in 1783 because aristocratic supporters in Vienna preferred Italian opera buffa traditions. After Emperor Joseph II's Singspiel troupe disbanded in 1783, Singspiels continued to be produced in suburban theaters for large middle-class audiences. Suburban theaters were allowed to provide entertainment to the public after Emperor Joseph II issued an edict of Entertainment Freedom (*Schauspielfreiheit*).[110] Joseph II even financially supported local theaters as part of his effort to maintain German entertainment in Vienna. The three main suburban theaters included: Leopoldstadt Theater (1781), Theater auf der Widen (1787), and Josefstadt (1788). Productions for these theaters included a rich mixture of German farces, improvised comedies, Singspiels, and German translations of opera buffa productions. One of the more noteworthy productions that premiered at Theater auf der Wieden was Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* in 1791. *Die Zauberflöte* was more German in spirit than his previous *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* because of its incorporation of Germanic folk elements.

[110] Hunter, *Mozart's Operas: A Companion,* 81.

Blondchen from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Die Entführung aus dem Serail (1782)

Similar to the stock characters from Commedia dell'Arte and opera buffa, Singspiel characters were often defined by their conventional personalities and musical traits. For example, the primary heroine of Singspiel was typically given ornate coloratura arias, whereas the secondary female role (soubrette) often demonstrated simpler strophic arias. Since the soubrette was originally considered a stronger actress than singer, composers often gave her character more simple melodies to prevent vocal fatigue. Warrack notes:

> Viennese songs would certainly make an appearance-generally for servants or peasants- tuneful, strophic and given a light accompaniment, so as not to tax unduly one of the secondary singers in the company: such numbers were often distinguished as Lied, Cavatine, or Romanze. Place for a narrative song or serenade might be found, and a drinking song was a popular standby.[111]

In addition to simpler forms, many soubrette arias in Singspiels contained smaller ranges that did not exceed below C4 or above A5. These smaller ranges were common of the soubrette arias in opera buffa as well. One of the few exceptions occurs in Blondchen's aria from Die *Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782).

Blondchen's "Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln"

Her first aria, "Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln," includes an extended range of two and a half octaves plus florid passages that would be more typical of a Lyrischer Koloraturasoubrette.[112] However, these features are partly based on a manipulative effort from her character to "exaggerate the opera seria style," while she

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[111] Warrack, *German Opera*, 130.
[112] Pearl Yeadon McGinnis and Marith McGinnis Willis, *The Opera Singers Career Guide: Understanding the European Fach System*, (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 21.

reprimands Osmin and mocks his pity party.[113] While several scholars have classified Blondchen within the coloratura category, her less proclaimed aria, "Welche Wonne, welche Lust," maintains standard musical features of a true soubrette aria. Additionally, Blondchen's witty personality and low social status within the drama should not be overlooked when classifying her character type.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* tells the story of a noble woman Konstanze and her maid Blondchen who have been kidnapped by pirates and sold to the Pasha Selim. Konstanze's fiancé Belmonte, a Spanish nobleman, arrives to rescue the women along with his servant Pedrillo. *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* premiered at the Vienna Burgtheater in 1782 with Therese Teyber in the role of Blondchen. A review in *The Etude* journal notes: "The part of Blonde was written for a high soprano, Therese Teyber, who had 'all the charm and freshness of youth'."[114] Teyber was additionally praised for her acting abilities. In the second act, Teyber performed Blondchen's "Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln," which showcased the brilliance of her upper range with its extended passages up to E6. Mozart frequently composed his roles with specific singers already in mind. "Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln" was meant to showcase Teyber's vocal assets. While Blondchen's first aria diverts from the standard musical features of a soubrette, her text still exemplifies the shrewish personality of the stock type.

Just like Serpina's behavior toward Uberto in Pergolesi's intermezzo *La serva padrona* (1733), Blondchen reprimands Osmin, who is an ill-mannered and decrepit overseer for the Pasha Selim. She belittles his coarse nature and his inability to

[113] Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women*,180.
[114] *The Etude,* Volume 33, Issues 7-12, (T. Presser, 1915), 950.

properly court a woman, as she states: "grumpy commands, ranting and bickering, and tormenting will make [a woman's] love and fidelity vanish within a few days." Blondchen proceeds to tell Osmin how to fix his unfavorable qualities by demanding that he treat a woman with "tenderness, flattery, and lightheartedness." Blondchen's reprimanding of the grumpy bass figure dates back to Colombina scolding Pantalone in Commedia dell'Arte Lazzi scenes. In addition to its extended range, "Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln" contains several passages with wide melodic leaps. Mozart uses intervallic leaps of 5ths and 7ths to depict Blondchen's annoyance toward Osmin's "mürrisches Befehlen" (grumpy commands). Her frustration is further depicted on the words "und Poltern, Zanken, Plagen" (and tormenting, bickering, ranting) as Mozart writes a five-note scale up to B5 and then quickly drops down the octave to B4 for a dramatic effect. (Figure 4.1)

Mozart also gives Blondchen a more unusual key for a soubrette character in this aria. He gives her the sharp key of A major, which was described by several eighteenth-century music theorists as "brilliant", with "a sharp and biting inner character," and "a warlike march or air of triumph."[115] According to Johann Mattheson in 1713, flat keys were reserved for more soft and tender sounds, whereas sharp keys evoked "hard, lively, and joyful" sounds.[116] While Blondchen does not express joy by any means in this aria, she definitely does not feel "soft or tender" toward Osmin. Instead, she reprimands his actions in a true Colombina-like fashion.

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[115] Key attributes of A major are listed in the appendix of Rita Steblin, *Key Characteristics in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries: A Historical Approach*, 1981, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

[116] Johann Mattheson, *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre* (Hamburg: der Autor und Benjamin Schillers Wittwe, 1713), 232-33.

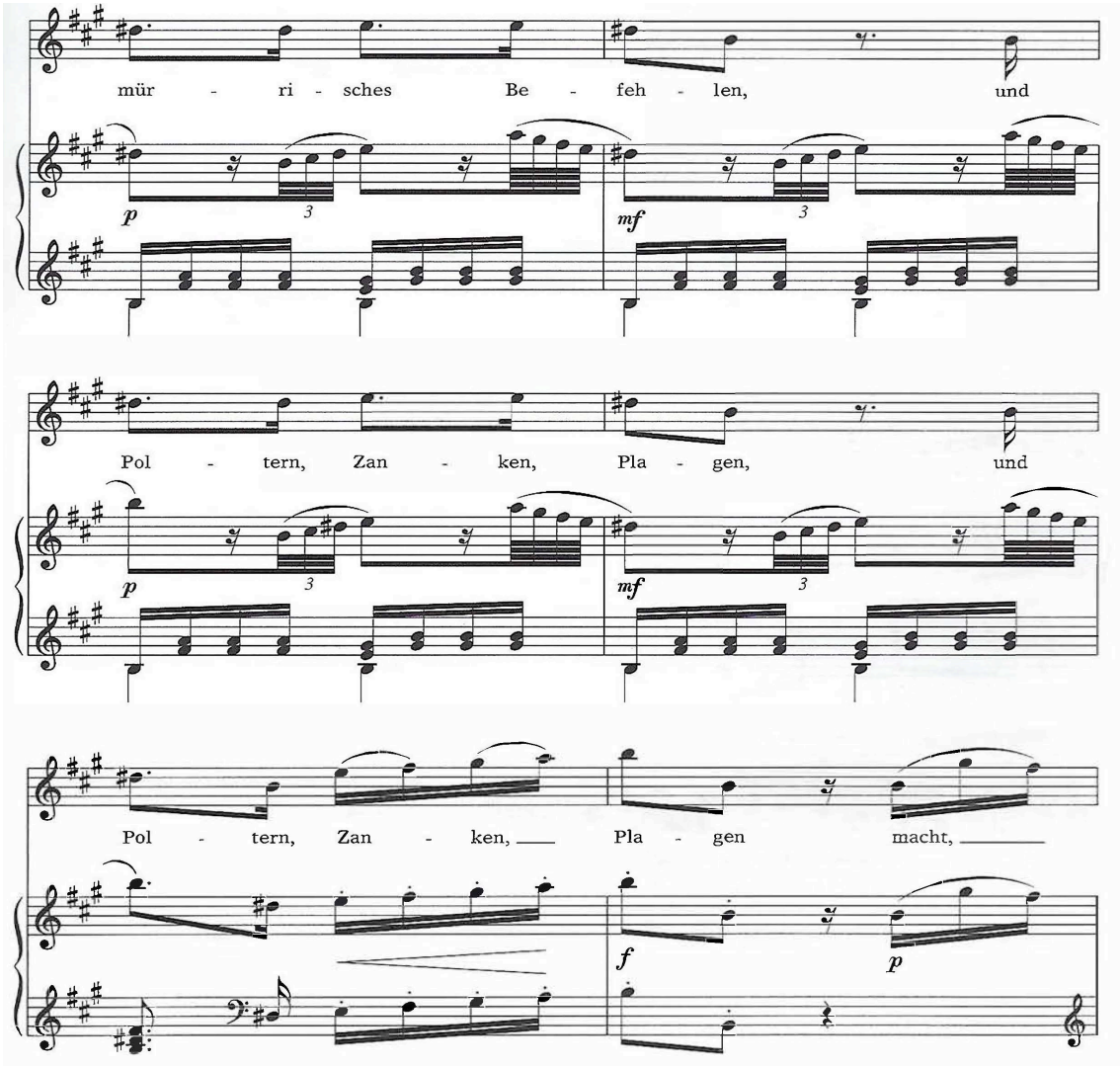

Figure 4.1: Blondchen, "Durch Zärtlichkeit und Scheicheln" (Act II)
Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*
G. Schirmer Opera Anthology: Coloratura Arias for Soprano (2002)

Blondchen's "Welche Wonne, welche Lust"

In Blondchen's second aria, "Welche Wonne, welche Lust," she celebrates the news from her fiancé, Pedrillo, who tells her that Belmonte has arrived to rescue them from the captivity of the Pasha. She sings: "I must hasten without delay to bring her the news straight away. And with laughter and pleasantries, I will prophesy to her weak, timid heart happiness and rejoicing." Blondchen's pure happiness at the arrival of her noblewoman's fiancé depicts her close bond with the Konstanze. This close unity

between a maid and her mistress reappears again in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786) with Susanna and the Countess. Kristi Brown-Montesano notes that Blondchen compares to Susanna because she also serves her mistress Constanze "with good sense and a frank tongue."[117] Unlike her previous aria, "Welche Wonne,welche Lust" maintains a more typical range for a soubrette of D4 to A5, which is similarly displayed in the arias of Mozart's well-known opera buffa soubrettes and other Singspiel soubrettes from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. (Figure 4.2 and 4.3) Otto Jahn in *Life of Mozart Volume II* praises Mozart's musical style in Blondchen's second aria:

> The second song is far fresher and more original, and expresses heartfelt joy in so lively and charming a manner, without ever overstepping the province of a good-humored soubrette, that the hearer is involuntarily beguiled into the same cheerful frame of mind. A German element if unmistakably present…and we may note the first appearance of those naïve girl-parts common to German opera.[118]

Despite the archetypal musical features in this aria, Otto Jahn significantly notes that Blondchen contrasts with her Italian predecessors and successors through her youthful innocence and sincerity. He associates her cheerful nature with a new type of "German soubrette." While Blondchen has coquettish qualities of the Italian soubrette, she does not comment on her class status or attempt to subvert it like Colombina, Despina, or Zerlina. She does manage to put her male adversary Osmin in his place through her confident reprimands in "Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln." It is her innocent joy in "Welche Wonne, welche Lust" that signifies a new "girlish" type of soubrette figure. As the eighteenth-century neared to an end, the "German Soubrette" continued to

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[117] Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women,* 180.
[118] Otto Jahn, *Life of Mozart Volume 2*, and trans. Pauline D. Townsend, (Cambridge University, 2013), 243-244.

appear as youthful girls like Papagena, Marzelline, and Ännchen.

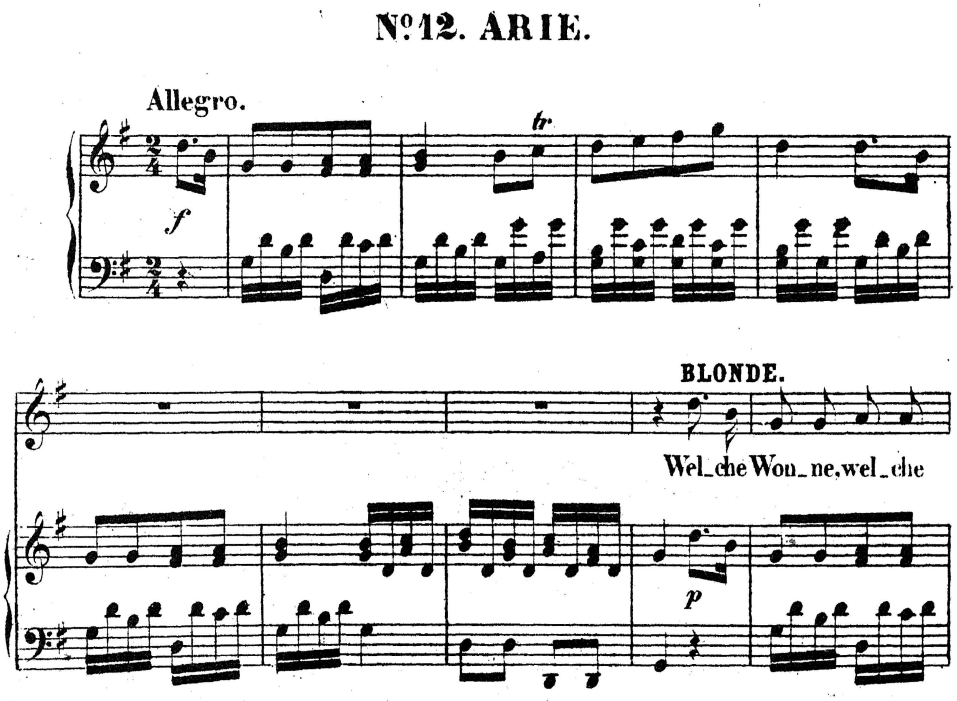

Figure 4.2: Blondchen, "Welche Wonne, welche Lust" (Act II)
Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*
(Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, n.d., ca. 1876)
Note: Aria continued on the next page

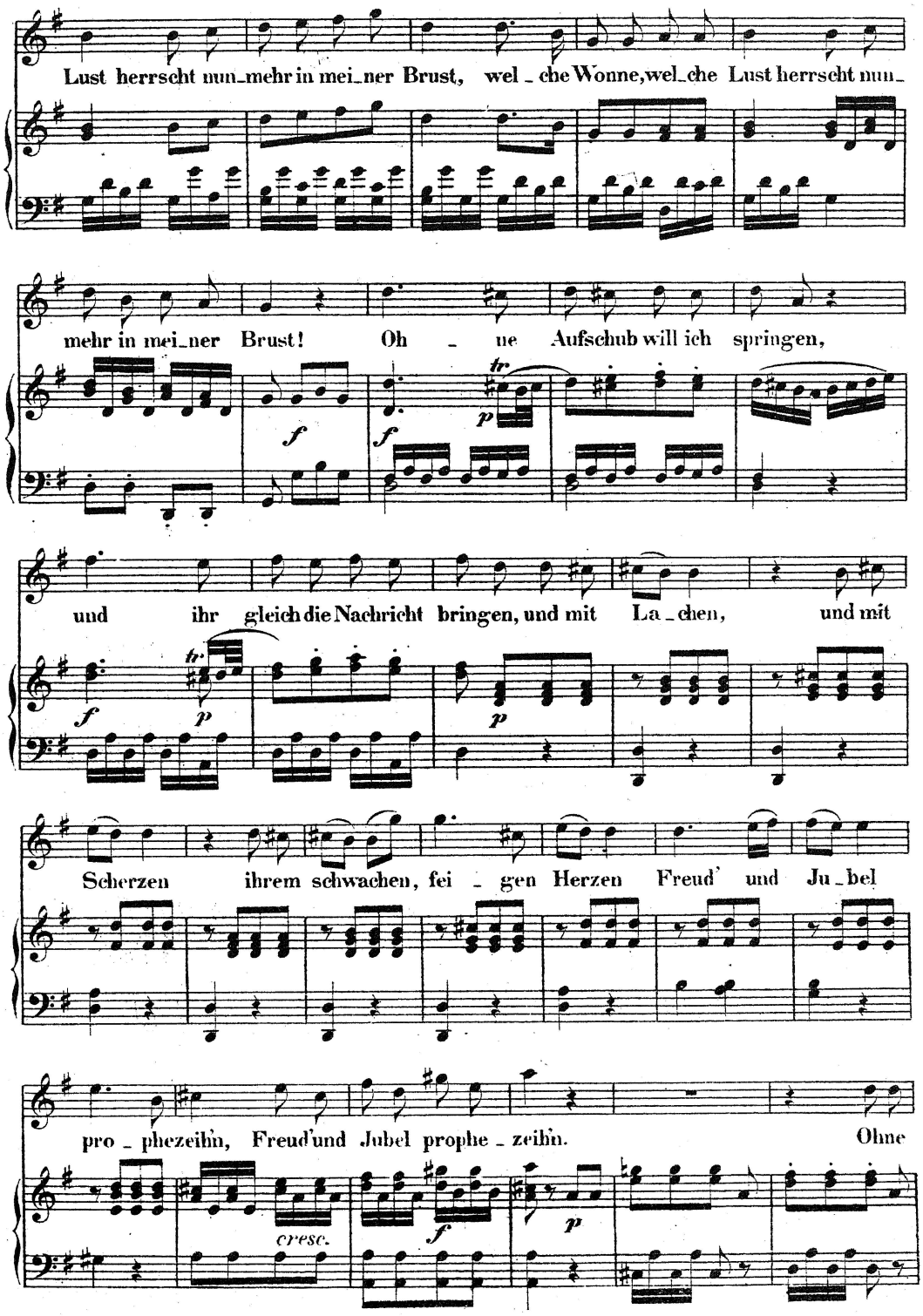

Figure 4.2 Continued: Blondchen, "Welche Wonne, welche Lust" (Act II)
Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*

Soubrette Character	Opera Buffa/ Singspiel	Aria (s)	Aria Range (s)	Year/Location/singer of the opera's Premier
Blondchen	***Die Entführung aus dem Serail*** **(W.A. Mozart)**	***1) Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln*****;** ***2) Welche Wonne, welche Lust***	**1) E4-E6** **2) D4-A5**	**July of 1782; Burgtheater, Vienna; Therese Teyber**
Susanna	***Le nozze di Figaro*** **(W.A. Mozart)**	***1) Deh vieni, non tardar*** ***2) Venite, inginocchiatevi***	**1) D4-A5** **2) D4-G5**	**May of 1786; Burgtheater, Vienna; Nancy Storace**
Zerlina	***Don Giovanni*** **(W.A. Mozart)**	***1) Batti, batti, o bel Masetto*** ***2) Vedrai, Carino***	**1) C4-B-flat5** **2) G4-F5**	**October of 1787; Estates Theatre, Prague; Caterina Bondini** **May of 1788; Burgtheater,Vienna; Luisa Mombelli**
Despina	***Così fan tutte*** **(Mozart)**	***1) In uomini, in soldati*** ***2) Una donna a quindici anni***	**1) C4-A5** **2) D4-B5**	**July of 1790; Burgtheater, Vienna; Dorotea Bussani**
Marzelline	***Fidelio*** **(Ludwig van Beethoven)**	***O wär ich schon mit dir vereint***	**G4-A5**	**November of 1805; Theater an der Wien, Vienna; Louise Müller**
Ännchen	***Der Freischütz*** **(Carl Maria von Weber)**	***1) Kommt ein schlanker Bursch gegangen*** ***2) Trübe Augen***	**1) C4-B5** **2) D4-B-flat5**	**June of 1821; Schauspielhaus, Berlin; Johanna Eunicke**

Figure 4.3: Opera Buffa and Singspiel Soubrette Aria Ranges

Papagena from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Die Zauberflüte (1791)

Richard Bouldrey describes Papagena from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* as "a wonderful acting role, [that includes] a superb duet with Papageno, but no aria of her own." Papagena is one of the soubrette characters with a lesser role onstage, similar to Gianetta from Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* or Frasquita from Bizet's *Carmen.* While Papagena does not have an aria of her own, she is the most "soubrette-like" when she is not singing but rather speaking in German. Papagena first appears onstage to Papageno in disguise as an unattractive old woman. She appears to him in response to his wish for a wife of his own. While Papageno originates from the character "Hanswurst" from Viennese popular theatre, Papagena relates the most to Colombina from Commedia dell'Arte with her teasing disguises and her sexual coquettishness.[119] When Papagena is in disguise as the Old Woman, she manipulates Papageno so that she can test his moral character. In the end, Papagena appears to Papageno as a beautiful "bird girl." Papagena becomes his "feminized reflection" just like when Colombina transformed into Arlecchina, the counterpart to Arlecchino in Commedia dell'Arte.[120]

In "Pa-pa-pa" Papageno and Papagena show their interest in each other by performing a duet that resembles a bird mating call. Kristi Brown-Montesano reflects on the "Pa-pa-pa" duet between Papageno and Papagena. Both characters are "more explicit about sexual pleasure," which is quite typical from "serving-class" characters in

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[119] Hanswurst (also called Jack Sausage) was a servant that was driven by his own physical needs. He was a comedic stock figure created for improvised performances by Joseph Anton Stranitzky at the Kärntnerthor Theater in the early 1700s; See Mary Hunter, *Mozart's Operas: A Companion,* (New Have, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 77.
[120] Ibid, 147.

opera buffa and Singspiel.[121] Each time Papageno initiates the "pa..pa..pa..pa.." bird call, Papagena completes his phrase or concludes it with a cadence. (Figure 4.4) When Papageno asks Papagena "Have you yielded to me now?" She responds before he finishes his phrase with: "Now I have yielded to you." (Figure 4.5) After the pair sings their second "mating call" with each other's names, both voices come to a cadence point on a dominant 7th chord (D major7). After a dramatic fermata, Papagena enters back in the tonic key of G major. This time she is in charge of the melody, which Papageno repeats. (Figure 4.6) Mozart later shows their newfound unity by giving them 3rd intervals as well as unison melodies through to the end. At the beginning of the duet, Papageno takes the lead by introducing each melodic phrase. Papagena then responds by completing the melodic idea. In the middle of the duet, the roles reverse. Papagena takes charge of the melodic phrases and Papageno follows suit. In the end, both characters become a true reflection of each other as they sing in 3rds or unison with a homophonic texture. (Figure 4.7) Throughout the duet Mozart shows a sense of equality between the two figures by giving each singer an opportunity to lead the melodic content.

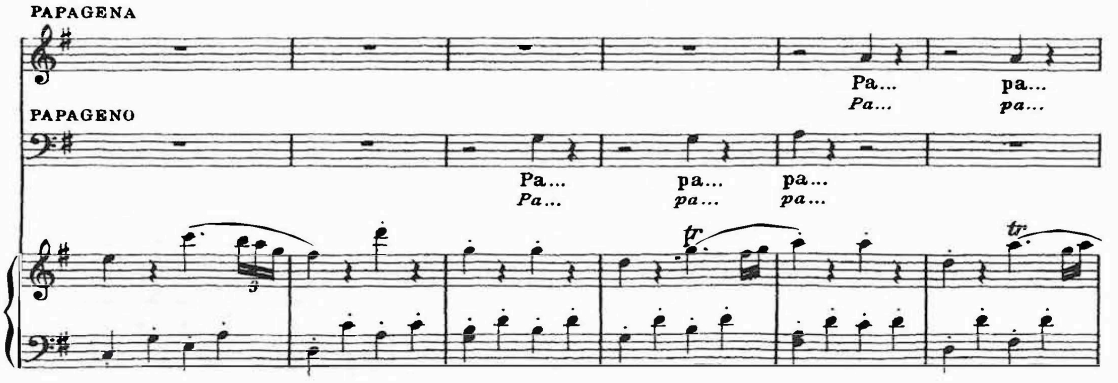

Figure 4.4: Papageno and Papagena, "Pa-pa-pa" duet (Ricordi edition, 2005) Key of G major (rustic key)

[121] Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas*, 203.

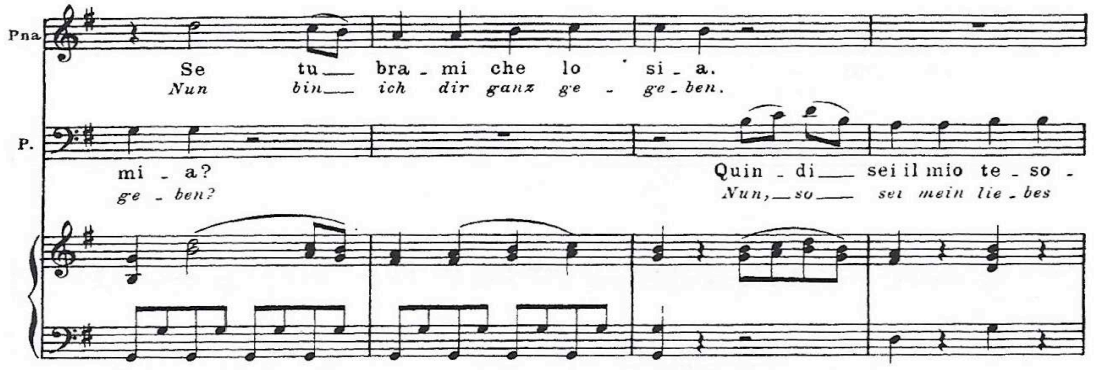

Figure 4.5: Papagena interrupts Papageno's question with her answer

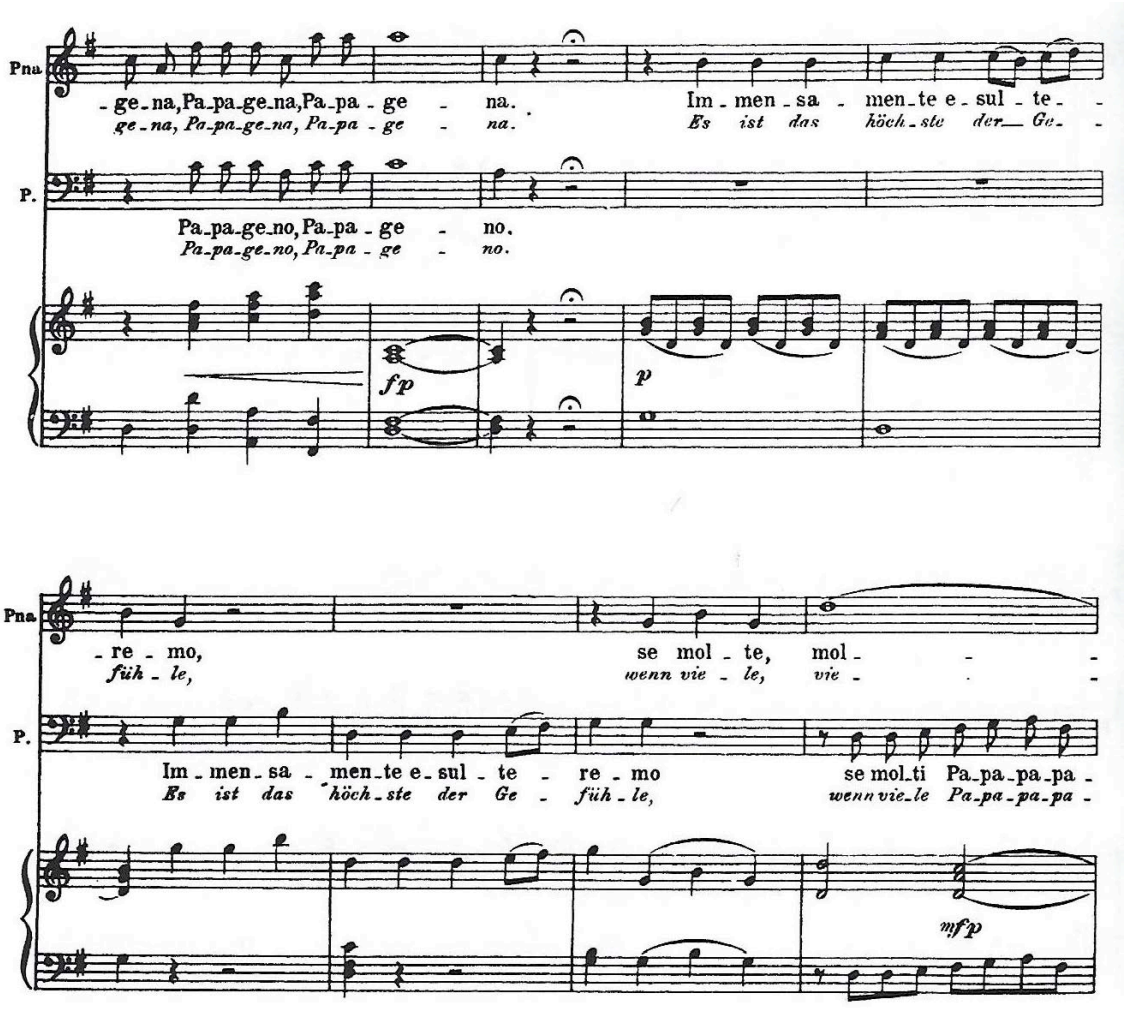

Figure 4.6: Papagena takes charge of the melody after the cadence

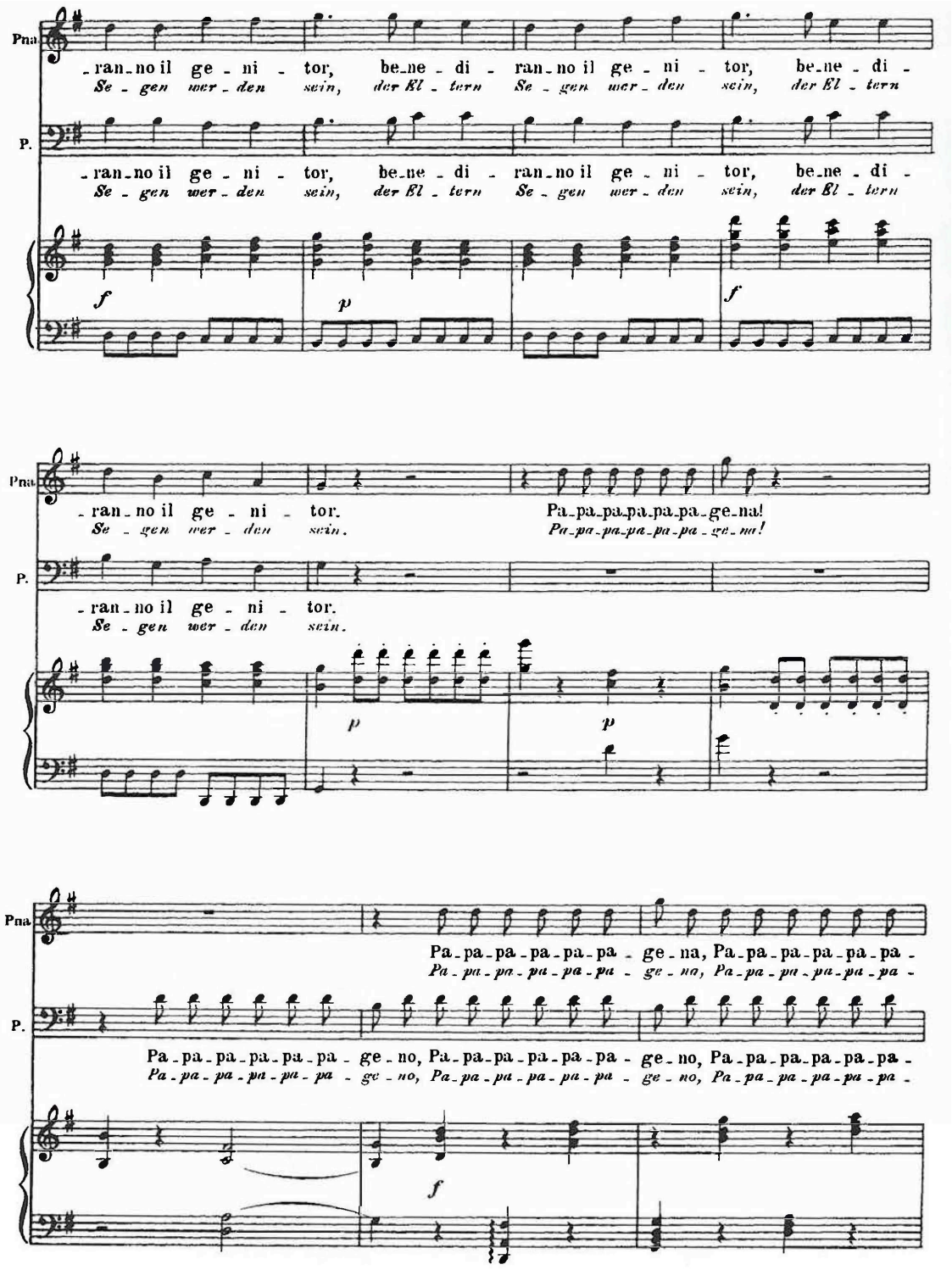

Figure 4.7: Papageno and Papagena sing in 3rds and unison
Homophonic Texture

Marzelline from Ludwig van Beethoven's Fidelio (1805)

Marzelline is the jailer Rocco's youthful daughter in the rescue opera *Fidelio* by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). The plot of *Fidelio* revolves around Leonore who disguises herself as a man named "Fidelio" to rescue her husband Florestan, a political prisoner sentenced to death. The overall tone of Beethoven's rescue opera is quite dramatic and somber. Marzelline provides charming relief from the serious nature of the plot through her light-hearted pining for Fidelio and her playful denial of Jaquino's advances. She represents a new type of soubrette figure because she does not have shrewd or manipulative qualities like her predecessors. Instead, she depicts youthfulness and naiveté as she falls for Fidelio, who she does not realize to be Leonore in disguise. She is one of the few soubrette figures to be tricked by a disguise instead of doing the tricking herself.

Her youthful innocence shines throughout her charming aria, "O wär ich schon mit dir vereint." Beethoven begins Marzelline's aria in the key of C minor with a slower tempo of Andante con moto. Marzelline dreams of marrying Fidelio and sings: "I wish we were united yet, and I could call you husband! A girl may never say aloud to anyone what she thinks." Marzelline's excitement gradually builds as Beethoven switches to C major with a new tempo of Poco più allegro. She sings: "Hope already swells in my chest with untold sweet desire, how happy I shall be then!" During this text, Beethoven depicts Marzelline's excitement and shortness of breath by giving her dotted rhythms and shorter phrases that are broken up throughout by rests. Mozart uses dotted rhythms in a similar manner in Blondchen's second aria, "Welche Wonne, welche Lust." Blondchen's text even contains a similar message: "What bliss, what delight sways

within my heart!" Beethoven and Mozart both use similar musical gestures to depict the soubrette's excitement such as, dotted rhythms, 2/4 meter, and an allegro march-like section. These specific rhythms in conjunction with meter and tempo give the arias a lively, dance-like quality that resembles skipping. (Figure 4.8) Although Beethoven does not change the meter to 6/8 in the Poco più allegro section that begins with the pick-up measure into "Die Hoffnung schon," Marzelline's contrasting tempos in her aria resembles features found in the arias of Mozart's soubrettes such as Despina and Zerlina. However, Marzelline is missing the manipulative undertone that Despina and Zerlina both have in their arias.

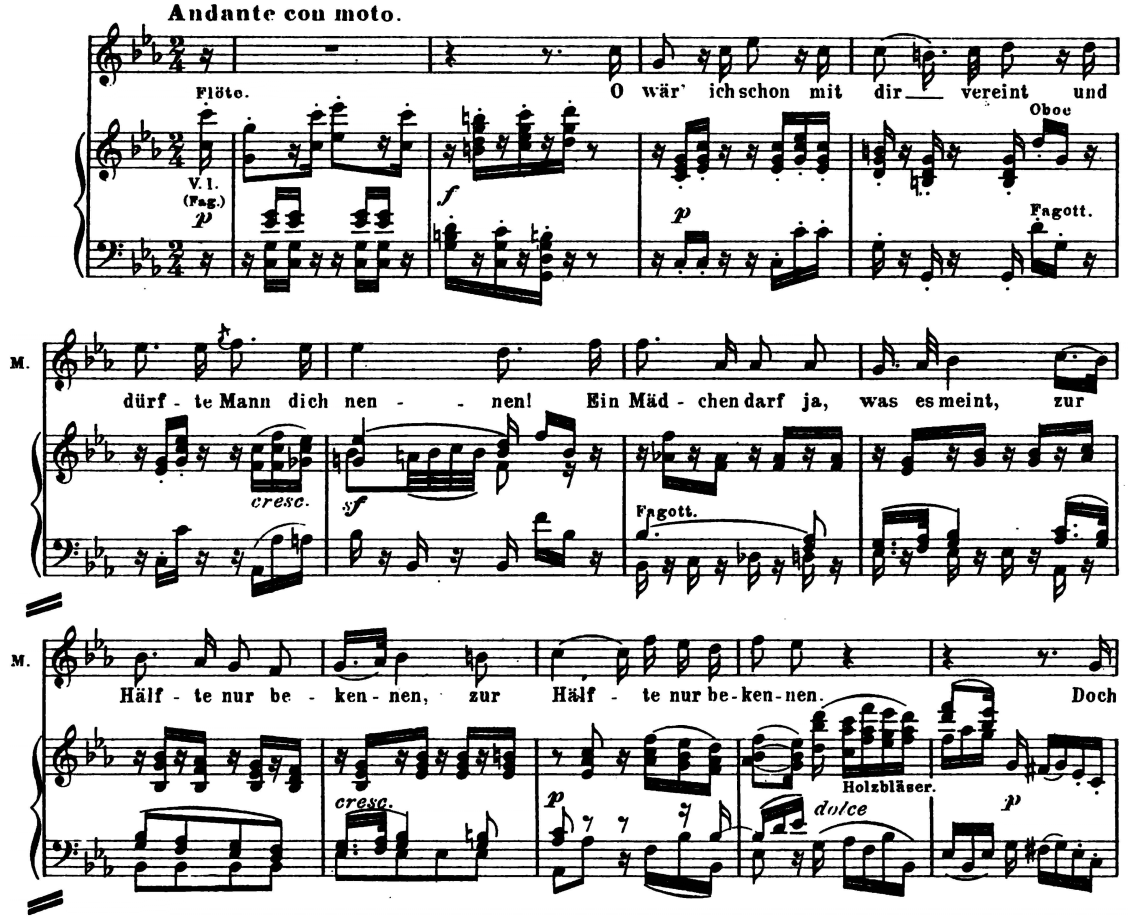

Figure 4.8: Marzelline, "O wär' ich schon mit dir vereint"
Beethoven's *Fidelio* (Act I): *Leonore,* 1805 version;
Erich Prieger ed., (Leipzig, Breitkopf und Härtel, 1905)

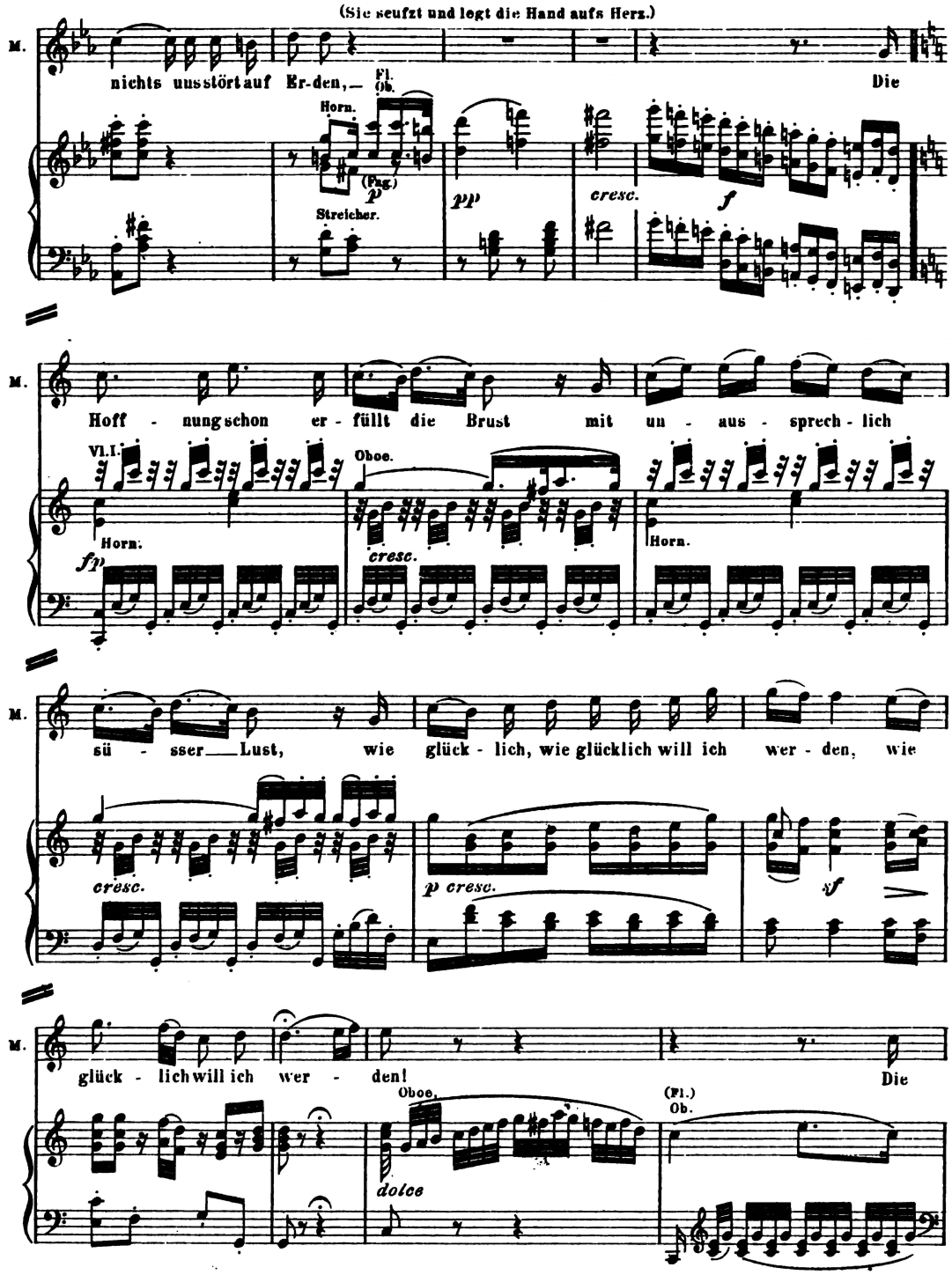

Figure 4.8 Continued: Marzelline, "O wär' ich schon mit dir vereint"
Poco più allegro section; March rhythms

Ännchen from Carl Maria von Weber's Der Freischütz (1821)

Der Freischütz by Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) premiered in 1821 at the Schauspielhaus in Berlin. This opera is considered one of the first significant German operas of the Romantic period because of its striking emotionality and national folk identity. The story revolves around a German folk legend that includes Romantic themes of the supernatural. Ännchen, the cousin of the primary character Agathe, serves one dramatic purpose in this opera: to cheer up her anxious cousin through her songs and playful stories. Ännchen is quite similar to Marzelline from *Fidelio* in that she is youthful and joyful. She fits Otto Jahn's description of the new German Soubrette because, like Blondchen and Marzelline, she does not have manipulative qualities and has a youthful innocence.[122] Weber lets Ännchen's child-like imagination shine through the text and musical gestures in both of her arias.

In her first aria, "Kommt ein schlanker Bursch gegangen", Weber displays polonaise dance-rhythms with an Allegretto tempo in the key of C major. Rose Rosengard notes the significance of popularized folk songs within arias in the nineteenth century: "by the early decades of the nineteenth century, not only native songs and vocal serenades but also such forms as the cavatina, rondo, romanze, and polonaise had achieved a commanding position in French, Italian, and German opera alike."[123] While the Polonaise had its roots in folk weddings and Polish peasant dance styles, it eventually became associated with noble court dances after Napoleon's expansion into Eastern Europe. The opening introduction of "Kommt ein schlanker

[122] Jahn, *Life of Mozart,* 243-244.
[123] Rose Rosengard, *Popularity and Art in Lortzing's Operas: The Effects of Social Change on A National Operatic Genre*, 1973, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

Bursch gegangen" includes a melodic line in the right-hand that includes quick, playful staccato rhythms followed by dotted quarter rhythms. Underneath the melodic line, Weber keeps a constant moving pulse in the left hand of the piano accompaniment through the polonaise gesture. (Figure 4.9) This dance-like pulse continues throughout the entire aria as Ännchen reenacts a wedding between a happy bride and her good-looking groom. She sings this happy story in order to ease the mind of Agathe, who has just been warned by a Hermit of future catastrophe.

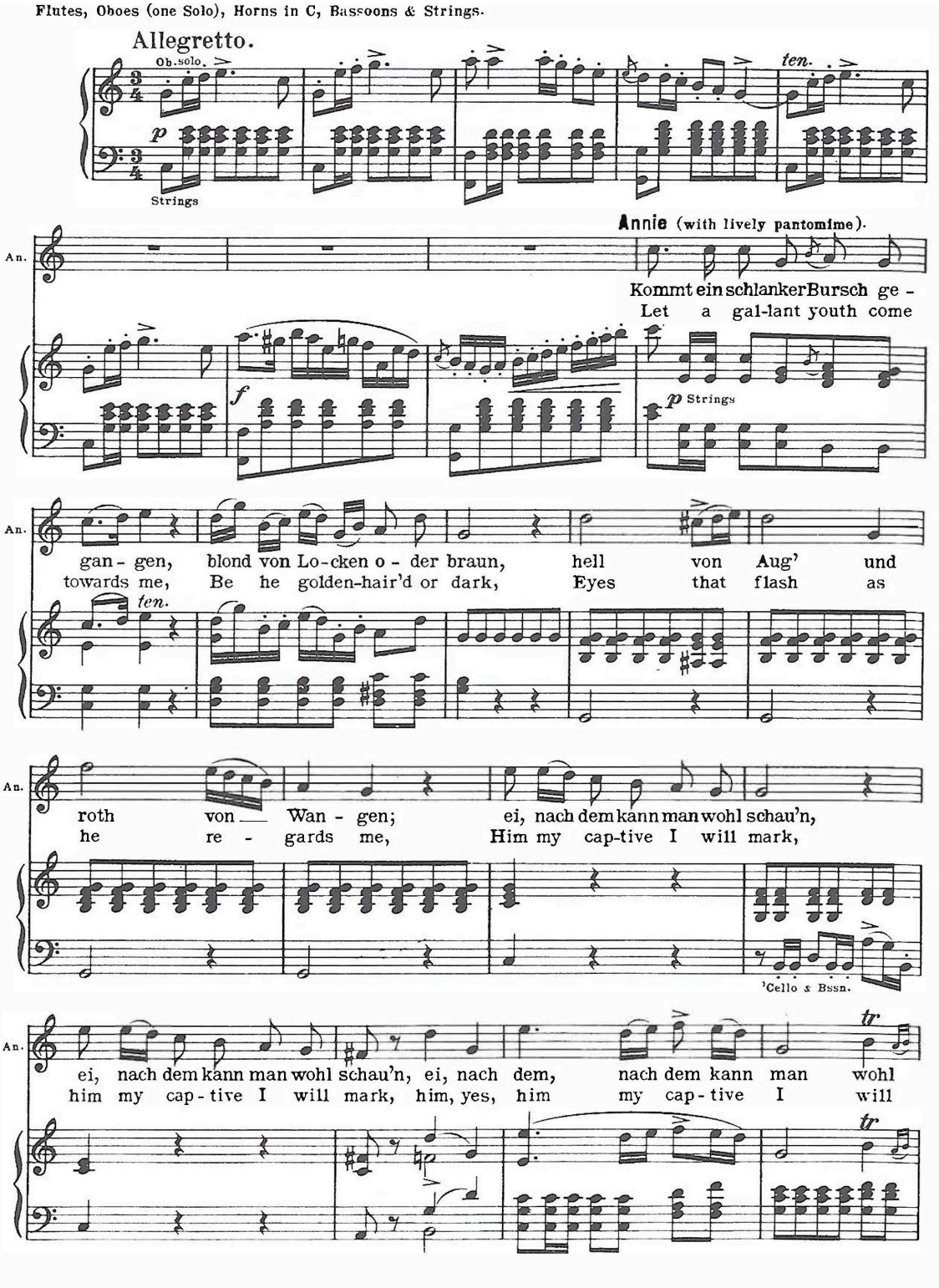

Figure 4.9: Ännchen, "Kommt ein schlanker Bursch gegangen" (Act II) Weber's *Der Freischütz* (G. Schirmer Opera Score Editions, 1904)

Ännchen's "Trübe Augen"

In Ännchen's second aria "Trübe Augen," she once again attempts to cheer up her cousin Agathe after dreams of an evil omen. This aria requires strong acting abilities because of Ännchen's numerous changes in tactics to cheer up Agathe. In the accompanied recitative section in G minor, Ännchen tells a scary story of "a monster with eyes like fire and with clanking chains" that approached the bed of her "late cousin." At the end of the story, Ännchen reveals that the terrifying monster was just "Nero, the watchdog." Weber depicts the ghost story in the first section through a more Romantic compositional style with rising chromatic lines and slower dotted rhythms in the style of a *romance*. At the end of the ghost story, he switches to G major with a more bare secco recitative section as Ännchen checks to see if Agathe is mad at her for the ghost story. Finally, Ännchen gets loses her patience over Agathe's incessant moping and sings: "sad eyes, dear one, do not suit a blessed bride!" In a true soubrette fashion, Ännchen reprimands her cousin for her dreary behavior and gives her advice on how to properly behave as a bride to be. Ännchen's reaction to Agathe resembles Blondchen when she reprimanded Osmin for his behavior in her aria, "Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln." Ännchen states: "[a bride] should refresh and delight, and captivate, and enchant everyone around her." As the aria begins, Weber changes to a lively allegro tempo in a 6/8 gigue meter. (Figure 4.10) The gigue is an archetypal dance gesture for Ännchen's character type because of its rustic origins. Weber uses the 6/8 gigue dance to showcase the buoyant, frivolous attitude of Ännchen, but he also relates Ännchen with her peasant Italian ancestors.

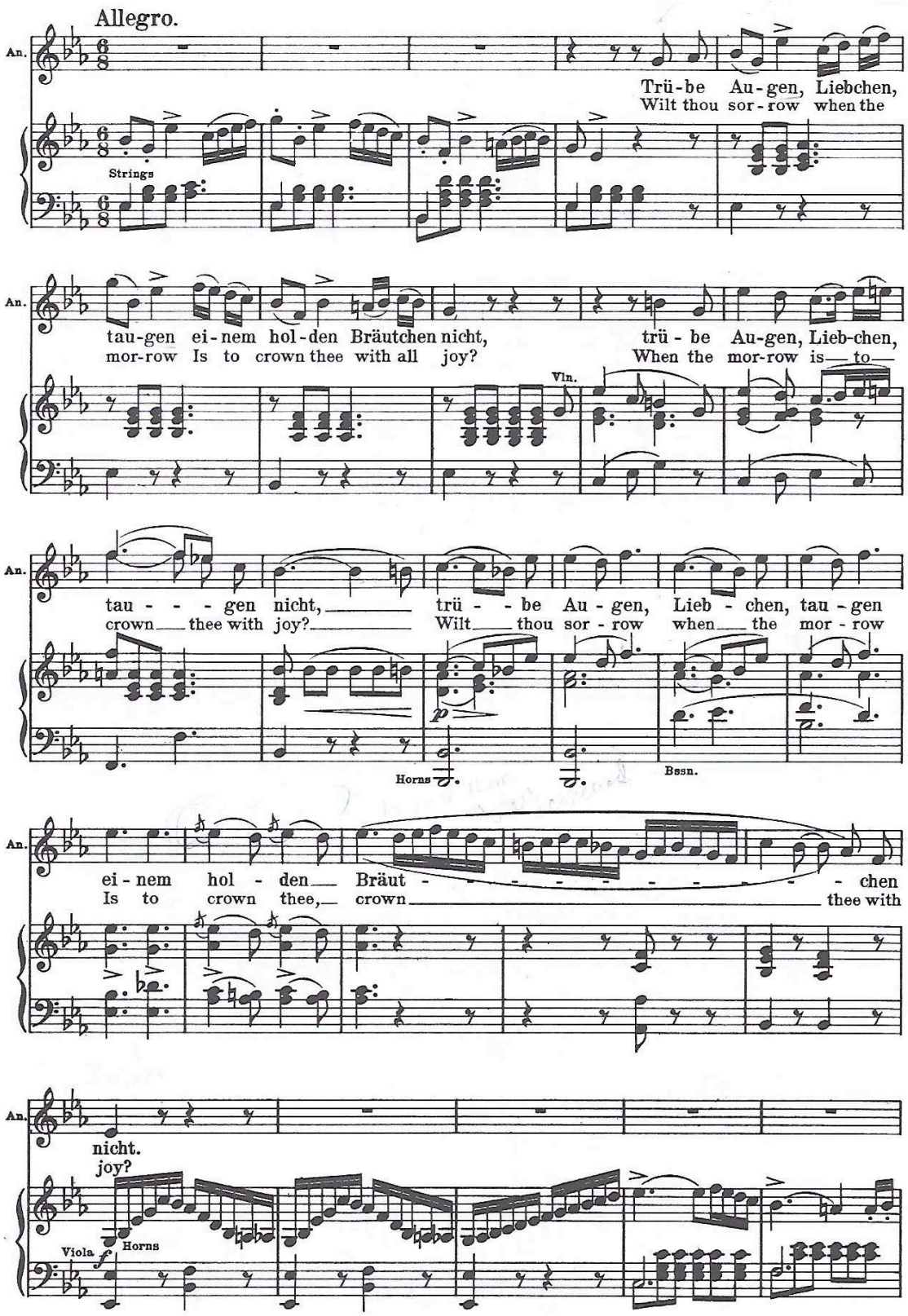

Figure 4.10: Ännchen, "Trübe Augen" (Act III)
(G. Schirmer Opera Anthology: Arias for Soprano Volume II, 2004)

Gretchen from Albert Lortzing's Der Wildschütz (1842)

Albert Lortzing's comic operas and operettas often showcased the everyday lives of common characters, which appealed to his middle class audiences. Instead of presenting a dichotomy between servant classes and the aristocracy, Lortzing paired the middle class with the privileged class of society. When he did enter the world of the court or the supernatural, he typically opened with "humble characters in their own milieu."[124] Lortzing's characters represent what Rose Rosengard refers to as the "volkstümlich" (folk) class. Rosengard elaborates: "Where Lortzing had to deal with more authentic folk figures, he neither left them as eighteenth-century peasants nor idealized them in the Romantic sense but modernized them to represent the middle class."[125] Lortzing's characters typically originated from two sources: German middle-class plays and Viennese/Italian caricatures from improvised theater or opera buffa. The first scene in Lortzing's *Der Wildschütz* opens with Baculus, a schoolmaster, celebrating his engagement to Gretchen with local people from the village. The noble characters are introduced first through Baculus, as he has been dismissed from his post as schoolmaster for hunting on Count von Eberbach's land without permission. Gretchen offers to meet with the Count to change his mind; however, Baculus does not permit it for fear that the Count will make an unwarranted move. Baroness von Friemann offers to pose as "Gretchen" in her place. Contrary to opera buffa, *Der Wildschütz* gives the manipulative power to the inamorata character (the Baroness), and the soubrette figure (Gretchen) loses her sense of agency. While Gretchen is the subject of the Baroness's disguise, she does not partake in the Baroness's scheming or trickery.

[124] Rosengard, *Popularity and Art,* 324.
[125] Ibid, 325.

She is an innocent bystander much like Ännchen and Marzelline.

Like Papagena, Gretchen does not have a solo aria in *Der Wildschütz.* Instead, she participates solely in ensemble numbers (two duets and a quartet). Although Gretchen does not manipulate through disguises, she does display coquettish tendencies like Colombina in her duet with Baculus. In the opening scene, Baculus and Gretchen celebrate their upcoming marriage with the people of their village; Gretchen playfully teases her fiancé about his old age. Throughout the scene they exchange mild insults through flirtatious banter that resembles the bickering between Serpina and Uberto in Pergolesi's *La serva padrona*.

> Gretchen: Marriage will come soon because my old man loves me very much. Of course it would not hurt if he were a little younger.
> Baculus: My face, what do you mean Grecthen? Is it not very young and good-looking?
> Gretchen: Oh, I have seen you far more ugly in my life.

Lortzing musically sets their banter in the style of a joyful, gigue dance. The gigue is a fast country-dance in 6/8 meter with a rustic, peasant feeling. According to Martha Elliott, gigue dances frequently display octave leaps, which Lortzing uses as a comedic device in the duet as Gretchen provokes Baculus.[126] As Gretchen and Baculus go back and forth in their pretend argument, the village chorus comments underneath with short, playful rhythmic fragments for the text: "Look at the loving dispute, hahaha!" (Figure 4.11)

[126] Martha Elliott, *Singing in Style: A Guide to Vocal Performance Practices*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 100-101.

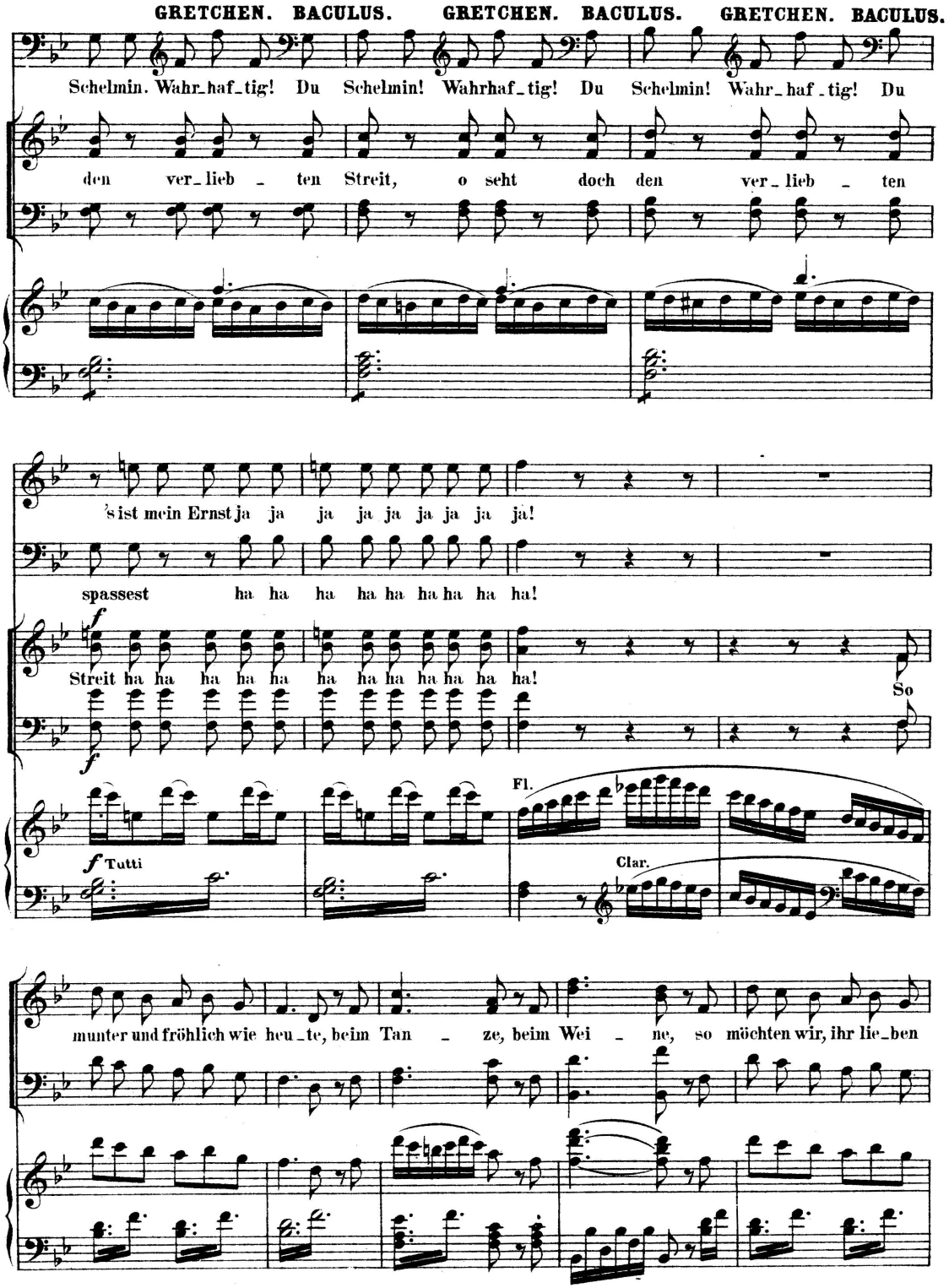

Figure 4.11: Gretchen, Baculus, and Village Chorus, (Act I, scene I)
Lortzing's *Der Wildschütz* (1842)
(Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, n.d.)

One of the reasons for the soubrette figure's new role in Singspiel as a youthful, charming girl could be attributed to the social reorganization of the German "ganzes Haus" system in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. As the notion of the master's rule over his house servants disappeared from the concept of the family, a new "bourgeois" family emerged.[127] While German society was still predominately patriarchal in the nineteenth century, it was no longer socially relevant for a "female agent" like the soubrette to depict the corruption between the nobility and their servants. Additionally, the presence of conniving women began to fade as the emerging Bourgeois class encouraged women's role in the home over education and liberation. In the eighteenth century, aristocratic women were encouraged to pursue an education for the purpose of making better wives and mothers. However, education was less encouraged in the nineteenth century. All of these social changes inspired a new soubrette that was no longer a maid or peasant with ties to monarch figures. The soubrette's new social role as a middle-class "folk" character contributed to her naïve youthful qualities, whereas her Italian ancestors were influenced by the subversive nature of Colombina from Commedia dell'Arte. Despite these characteristic differences, composers still incorporated archetypal forms for the soubrette that defined her "rustic" origins.

[127] Richard John Evans and William Robert Lee, *The German Family (Routledge Revivals): Essays on the Social History of the Family in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century Germany*, (London: Routledge, 2015).

CONCLUSION

The Singspiel soubrette in the nineteenth century began to reflect a new social reality from her Italian predecessors of opera buffa. While the German soubrette still displayed coquettish behaviors toward her male counterparts, she no longer used disguises and trickery to manipulative her adversaries. In some cases other characters even fooled the German soubrette by using disguises against her more naïve nature. This was rarely the case for the Italian soubrette, except for Despina, who did not know the true identities of the foreign soldiers until the finale of *Così fan tutte*. However, she still partook in her share of disguises as she manipulated the noblewomen throughout the plot. By the mid-nineteenth century, the German soubrette changed from being a lower class servant or peasant to an ordinary middle-class woman of society. While men still had the upper hand and monopolized education and social politics, monarch/servant households (ganzes Haus systems) began to dissolve with the emergence of a middle class population. These social changes contributed to a new type of soubrette that was no longer connected to her mistress. By losing that social connection, the German soubrette lost a degree of her political/social agency within the plots of Singspiel. The German soubrettes that were discussed in the previous chapter did not have a crucial role in the plot's outcome like the Italian soubrettes from chapters two and three. These soubrettes are less concerned with "paying back the male breed" as Despina states in "In uomini, in soldati." However, they still retain Colombina's reprimanding nature when other characters get under their skin.

By looking at the development of the soubrette from her origins as Colombina through to her presence in Singspiel, one can observe how progressive her tendencies

were during the Renaissance period through the Enlightenment. Colombina and her Italian successors were catalysts for social change through their subversive actions that included manipulating with disguises and trickery. Through disguises, the soubrette exposed the "performativity of gender" by taking on the powerful positions and occupations of her male opponents.[128] She also destabilized and challenged the symbolic orders of society, which greatly divided the lower classes from the noble classes. The female servant was "predictably unpredictable as [she acted] outside of the accepted codes of behavior imposed by [her] master."[129] Composers also played off of the soubrette's "predictably unpredictable" mannerisms by using archetypal musical gestures to showcase her class status.

The second and third chapters referenced intertextual connections to the key of F major and the pastoral, peasant world. Additionally quicker meters such as 6/8 and 3/8, as well as specific rhythmic gestures, were often borrowed from rustic dance styles of the past. These musical idioms continuously appeared in the arias and duets of soubrette characters in both opera buffa and Singspiel. As specific keys, meters and dance gestures became associated with character types, composers were able to divert from those stereotypical qualities to better depict the soubrette's subversive and defiant ways. For instance, sharp keys, noble style phrasing, and mockery of pathos were reserved for moments when the soubrette reprimanded another character or disguised herself as a noble figure. As Charles Ford notes, flat keys were typically associated

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[128] Domnica Radulescu discusses Colombina's "performativity of gender" in *Women's Comedic Art As Social Revolution: Five Performers and the Lessons of Their Subversive Humor*, chapter two.
[129] McGehee, "The Pre-Eminence", 16, (see chap. one, footnote 4)

with weaker, feminine qualities, whereas sharp keys were reserved for the assertive and masculine.[130] In the moments where the soubrette teaches or reprimands, she takes on more "assertive" musical traits.

Future Scholarship on the Soubrette

The Italian soubrette in Commedia dell'Arte and opera buffa promoted enlightened priciples such as social progress for lower classes and the dignity of women; however, her role as a subversive figure began to transform in the nineteenth century once she became a higher status ingénue. Caterina Biancolelli's Colombina was also considered an ingénue in certain instances where she became the primary focus of the plot. While this document traced the progress of the German soubrette into the nineteenth century, it did not focus on the Italian soubrette beyond the eighteenth century. This topic could certainly expand to include several roles from the bel canto era that continued to show strong ties to Colombina's mannerisms. Unlike the Singspiel soubrette, the soubrette-influenced heroine in nineteenth century opera buffa became a leading ingénue instead of a sidekick or secondary character. Gaetano Donizetti's well-known opera buffas, *L'elisir d'amore* (1832) and *Don Pasquale* (1843), contain leading women with designated "ina" names. Although the music for Adina and Norina requires more virtuosic abilities that might be associated with coloratura voices, the characters still contain the coquettish and manipulative tendencies of Colombina. By connecting these character traits to Colombina and the eighteenth century soubrette, it could provide singers and directors with clarity and understanding into the behaviors of these feisty women. Even though Adina is an educated, land-owning woman in

[130] Ford, *Music, Sexulatiy and the Enlightenment,* 45-57.

Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore,* she still torments and manipulates Nemorino until he gains an unexpected inheritance and pretends to lose interest in her. Adina is not a peasant or servant character; however, she still seems concerned with her social image. She only reciprocates affection toward Nemorino when he becomes the richest man in the town. Similar to Despina's advice to "love for comfort and convenience," Adina loves Nemorino from the beginning of the plot but cannot commit to him because of his low social standing.

In addition to Singspiel, the soubrette role exists in several Viennese operetta productions of the nineteenth century, which were created by popular composers such as Johann Strauss II, Carl Zeller, and Franz Lehár. Operettas frequently premiered in Vienna at the *Theater an der Wien* within the late 1880s through the first decade of the nineteenth century. The transformation of the soubrette role should also be considered and studied for her significance within this genre. Part of the reason for the evolution of the German operetta genre in Vienna is due to the enormous popularity of Offenbach's operettas that took place on the stages of Vienna in the late 1850s and 1860s. Although Viennese composers took inspiration from the successes of the Parisian operetta genre, they began to incorporate their own Viennese dance forms, such as the Waltz and Polka, as well as other ways of suiting the tastes of society. Operetta also shared many common features with the spoken stage works that were performed in the Vorstadt theaters. These plays would often include strophic songs and choruses as well as musical accompaniment for dances, marches or music between acts. Viennese operettas were much more geared to a middle class audience than the serious operas that had been performed at the Court theaters of the aristocracy. Chapter four showed the affects that

a developing middle class and a diminishing aristocracy had on the soubrette's social role in Singspiel. It would be interesting to see if class structure similarly affected the soubrette's subversiveness in a more popular style of theatre. Outside of Adele from Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus* (1874), scholars and instructors have paid little attention to the soubrette figures within Viennese operetta. Operetta could open another avenue for future scholarship. This study could even go further into the twentieth century with characters from musical theatre, light opera, or other popular forms of entertainment. It is not an exaggeration to say that all of the coquesttish types could be traced back to Colombina.

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