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A Study of Lorenzo Da Ponte
and his Opera Buffa

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A Study of Lorenzo Da Ponte and his Opera Buffa

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Thesis

Lorenzo Da Ponte, originally named Emanuele Congliano, was a Jew born on March 10, 1749, in Ceneda, a small city in the Venetian State. From an early age, he developed a profound interest in literature and was closely associated with music in both his living and working environments before moving to Vienna. Before his relocation, he assisted his friend Cateino Mazzolà (1745–1806) in writing parts of an opera libretto. Later, after arriving in Vienna and with the help of Antonio Salieri (1750–1825), he became a poet at the Italian Opera House. During this period, Da Ponte not only collaborated with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) on the Italian opera buffa trilogy: *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*, which are not only Mozart's classic works in Italian opera buffa but also works of great research value to posterity. Besides, Da Ponte also collaborated with Vicente Martín y Soler (1754–1806) on *Una cosa rara* and *L'arbore di Diana*. Though these two operas are rarely seen on stage today and many music scholars may not be familiar with them, their past brilliance on the stage cannot be erased.

Apart from working with these two musicians, Lorenzo Da Ponte also collaborated with several other musicians, yet today's music scholars often overlook this quietly working librettist. Many mention Lorenzo Da Ponte only in passing when studying Mozart's music. While indeed the primary focus of musicologists is the music, and Mozart is an

exceptionally brilliant musician, the contribution and impact of librettists on opera cannot be neglected.

Opera as a genre consists of libretti, lyrics, content, and melodies; it is a collaborative art form, not something that a musician can accomplish alone. As musicologists, to understand music, one must also comprehend the libretto. The combination of music and libretto is fundamental to studying this genre. To draw an analogy, if the opera libretto is the foundation of a building, then the lyrics of the arias are the basic framework, and the music of the opera is the cement and exterior finish. The final product, the building we see, is the result of the combination of both. Thus, to study an opera, both the libretto and the music are indispensable. The work and contribution of the librettist are also essential elements of research.

Some musicologists, when studying Mozart's operas, often say that Mozart excelled at depicting characters' traits and internal conflicts. I firmly agree with this but also recognize that characters' personalities first emerge in the libretto, and the musician then interprets these characters through music, presenting them to us more vividly and dynamically. The result is a collaboration between the librettist and the musician, not solely the musician's achievement. Therefore, the librettist is indispensable in both the creation and the study of opera.

This article begins with the importance of the libretto and the librettist, exploring the contributions made by the opera librettist Da Ponte during his time in Vienna to Italian opera buffa.

1.2 Current State of Research Domestically and Internationally

During the initial phase of gathering information, I found that articles specifically about Da Ponte are scarce. A search on JSTOR using 'Da Ponte' as the keyword yielded 2,014 results, but the majority of these are articles about a particular work of Mozart, where Da Ponte is merely mentioned. For example: Martin Nedbal's *Mozart's Figaro and Don Giovanni, operatic canon, and National Politics in Nineteenth-Century Prague*.¹⁾ A portion of these articles are about Mozart and Da Ponte. For example : Daniel Hertz's *Mozart and Da Ponte*²⁾ . A search in RISS with 'Da Ponte' as the keyword yields articles that are mainly about Mozart's opera buffa. This suggests that in South Korea, there is virtually no research specifically focused on Da Ponte.

Although I recognize that musicologists' research on Da Ponte needs to be grounded in musical works, and thus inevitably involves discussions about Mozart, I believe that to fully discuss Da Ponte's contribution to Italian opera buffa, the scope should be much broader. It is important to understand Da Ponte's journey before his collaboration with Mozart, how he came to write opera buffa librettos, how he found his own creative features through failures, his achievements and self-improvement through collaborations with other musicians, and how he eventually reached the pinnacle of Italian opera buffa alongside Mozart. The author considers understanding the process of these events

1) Martin Nedbal, "Mozart's Figaro and Don Giovanni, Operatic Canon, and National Politics in Nineteenth-Century Prague," *19th-Century Music*, Spring, 4/3. (2018), 183-205.

2) Daniel Hertz, "Mozart and Da Ponte," *The Musical Quarterly*, Winter, 79/4. (1995), 700-718.

to be more significant than merely discussing Da Ponte's collaboration with Mozart.

1.3 Research Methods

To thoroughly and comprehensively explore the life and librettos of Lorenzo Da Ponte, this study adopts a variety of complementary research methods. Firstly, literature review, as a fundamental approach, involves extensive reading and analysis of historical, literary, and musicological documents related to Da Ponte and his era. This includes studying primary sources and referencing the research findings of modern scholars, which helps in constructing a comprehensive framework of theory and historical context.

Next, score analysis will focus on examining the musical details of the operas Da Ponte wrote for composers like Mozart. This involves delving into melodies, harmonies, rhythms, and the interaction between lyrics and music, to better understand the integration of his text with musical elements and its artistic innovation.

Additionally, historical background analysis will uncover Da Ponte's life and creative environment, and understand the significance and impact of his librettos in the society of his time. An interdisciplinary research approach will combine theories and methods from literature, musicology, history, and cultural studies to fully comprehend Da Ponte's librettos and their influence across various domains. Crucially, a comparative analysis will be conducted, focusing on the librettos Da Ponte provided for different composers. This comparison will not only reveal the uniqueness

of his librettos but also help understand how he adjusted his textual creations to suit the styles and demands of different composers.

Through these comprehensive research methods, this study aims to provide a multi-faceted, multi-layered analysis, delving deeply into Lorenzo Da Ponte's artistic achievements and his significant place in the cultural history of 18th-century Europe.

1.4 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation will be divided into six chapters. The first chapter is the introduction. The second chapter primarily explores the life trajectory of Lorenzo Da Ponte before he moved to Vienna to develop his career, with the aim of discussing how he gradually transitioned from a poet to an opera librettist. The third chapter mainly introduces how he became a poet at the Italian theatre in Vienna, his growth into an outstanding librettist for Italian opera buffa, the librettos he did, the musicians he collaborated with, and his contributions to Italian opera buffa. The fourth chapter delves into his collaborations with different composers, adapting his libretto and lyric writing to each musician's characteristics, with *Una cosa rara* and *Così fan tutte* as case studies. The fifth chapter briefly describes the work Lorenzo Da Ponte did after leaving Vienna, with a focus on his contributions to opera buffa. The sixth chapter is the conclusion.

1.5 Research Purpose

This study is dedicated to a thorough exploration of Lorenzo Da

Ponte's life and librettos, aiming to emphasize the importance of opera librettists in musicological research and to reshape their image in the public eye. My goal is to understand and reevaluate the role of opera librettists, highlighting their contributions to music history and opera creation, especially in the complex artistic process of integrating libretto with music. Through detailed study of Da Ponte's librettos, I hope to encourage musicologists to pay more attention to the contributions of librettists and to conduct in-depth analyses of opera texts. Furthermore, this research also aims to enhance public awareness and appreciation of these unsung literary and musical contributors, bringing their contributions back into public recognition and respect. Ultimately, I hope this study will provide new perspectives and methodologies for future opera research, especially in analyzing opera librettos, to consider more balanced interactions between music and text, thereby fostering a comprehensive understanding of the combination of opera literature and music and promoting recognition of the importance of opera libretto creation in the history of music.

2 Lorenzo Da Ponte³⁾

Life trajectory before going to Vienna

2.1 Ceneda Period

Lorenzo Da Ponte, originally named Emanuele Congliano, was born on March 10, 1749, in Ceneda, a small town in the Venetian Republic. He was of Jewish descent. His father was a local leather merchant, and his mother passed away when Da Ponte was only five years old. His father neglected his early education, and it wasn't until later that he realized the importance of providing education to Da Ponte. At the age of 11, Da Ponte could barely read and write. It was then that his father arranged for a teacher to instruct Da Ponte in Latin. This teacher had a certain influence on Da Ponte, although not a positive one. In his memoirs, Da Ponte mentions...

...The son of a peasant, who, in exchanging ox and plow for the schoolmaster's ferule, retained even in the classroom the harsh and uncouth manners befitting his birth. This fellow put Alvaro's grammar into my hands and made a pretense of teaching me Latin. I studied for several months—and learned nothing! ...⁴⁾

It can be inferred from this passage that Da Ponte didn't learn much

3) The life and work discussed in this dissertation is primarily taken from Da Ponte's *Memoirs* and Sheila Hodges' book *Lorenzo Da Ponte*.

4) Lorenzo Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, trans. Elisabeth Abbott (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2000), 6.

from that teacher. And in his memory, he also mentioned that the teacher used a rude teaching style. When Da Ponte's father found out about this, he dismissed the teacher. For the following three years, no one discussed Latin with Da Ponte. His father always believed that Da Ponte's inability to learn Latin was due to his dislike of the teacher. However, only Da Ponte knew how much he yearned to learn. It was only after he discovered some books in the attic of his house, which he referred to as the family library, that his desire to read and learn was further strengthened. It was here as well that he encountered the poems which profoundly influenced him, and in his *Memoirs*, he wrote: "the author I read twice was the Poet Laureate of Austria whose verses aroused in my soul the very emotions of music itself."⁵⁾ Perhaps Da Ponte's love and longing for poetry truly began from that point. He connected the poet's verses with music as a metaphor, and perhaps this was also the reason why he was destined to have a connection with music as a poet.

On a day in August 1763, Da Ponte's father brought his three sons to be baptized, becoming Christians. Da Ponte legally adopted the name Lorenzo Da Ponte, departing from his original name, Emanuele Congliano.⁶⁾

During that time, the status of Jews was very low, and they had limited job opportunities. Jews were often subjected to the control of

5) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 7.

6) According to local customs, the bishop, Lorenzo Da Ponte, bestowed his surname upon the new converts, and the eldest son also inherited the bishop's given name. Da Ponte's father, originally named Geremia Conegliano, had his surname changed to Da Ponte after the baptism, becoming Casparo Da Ponte. The eldest son, Emanuele Congliano, also changed his name to Lorenzo Da Ponte. The other two sons were named Giloramo Da Ponte and Luigi Da Ponte.

Christians, and every Jew faced difficult circumstances. Additionally, there was another reason for Da Ponte's father's decision. He wanted to remarry with a Christian woman, Orsola Pasqua Paietta. Since Jews were not allowed to marry Christians at the time, he had to undergo baptism and become a Christian before getting married. In the same year, Da Ponte's father married Orsola Pasqua Paietta, who was much younger than him, and in fact, not much older than Da Ponte himself.

Da Ponte does not extensively mention the experience of him and his family undergoing baptism in his Memoirs. However, this experience of converting to Christianity had a profound impact on him. For Da Ponte, embracing Christianity opened the door to the knowledge he had long desired. After their baptism, Bishop Lorenzo Da Ponte provided significant assistance to their family. For example, he helped Da Ponte and his two brothers gain admission to Ceneda Seminary for their education. Bishop Lorenzo Da Ponte's kindness was not limited to words alone; he took action as well. Despite being a Venetian aristocrat, he spent very little on himself and instead devoted himself to helping those in need. He contributed most of the funds for the reconstruction of the church and even provided clothing and shelter to hundreds of people each year, even when he fell ill. He also ensured that the teachers at his seminary were upright and knowledgeable, creating an environment conducive to the children's learning.

After entering Ceneda Seminary, the Da Ponte brothers received a good education and had access to the library. Da Ponte's family had initially wanted him to become a priest, but he knew that the priesthood

was not aligned with his personality. Nevertheless, he had to undergo training in the manner of becoming a priest. Although he learned Latin and acquired a certain degree of refinement, which was tasteful, he mentions in his memoirs that he did all of this for different purposes. In other words, he did not aspire to become a priest, but he had a thirst for learning and reading. Whenever he had the opportunity to study, he would not let it go to waste.

In Da Ponte's memoirs, it is mentioned that within less than two years, he could write a lengthy Latin speech in half a day and compose passable Latin poetry of around fifty lines. However, he remained completely ignorant of his mother tongue, Italian, to the extent that he would make over a dozen errors even when writing a short letter.⁷⁾ Indeed, during that time, Da Ponte made mistakes in his mother tongue, Italian, as he had not received any literary education in Italian. Da Ponte was fortunate because during his time at Ceneda Seminary, a priest named Abbé Cagliari arrived from Altivòle. Abbé Cagliari had recently graduated from the University of Padua. Prior to his arrival, Ceneda Seminary did not teach any language other than Latin, as most of the students were destined to become priests, and Latin was considered crucial. However, Abbé Cagliari, having been encouraged to study authors such as Dante, Petrarch, Virgil, and Horace during his time in Padua, had exposure to new ideas and had read various books. When Abbé Cagliari began teaching at Ceneda Seminary, he introduced Italian poetry and literature to his students, sharing his own passion for Italian

7) Sheila Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte: The Life and Times of Mozart's Librettist* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 6.

literature and poetry. It can be said that Da Ponte's later career as an Italian poet owes much to the influence of Abbé Cagliari.

Michele Colombo was an important Italian writer and critic in the 19th century. He was a significant friend of Da Ponte during their time at Ceneda seminary. Both of them entered the seminary around the same time, but Michele Colombo had already completed his foundational studies under the guidance of renowned teachers before joining Ceneda seminary. He was two years older than Da Ponte and they would often engage in discussions about poetry. Michele Colombo would also share his own poems with Da Ponte and offer him encouragement. Their friendship grew quickly and lasted until their respective passing. However, they would occasionally have disagreements. In Da Ponte's memoirs, he mentions an incident when he wanted to ask his father for some financial support and wrote a sonnet:

A SONNET⁸⁾

Mandatemi, vi prego, o padre mio,
Quindici soldi o venti, se potete,
E la cetera in man pigliar vogl' io,
Per le lodi cantar delle monete.

Send me, I pray you, O father mine,
Fifteen soldi, or twenty, if you can,
And the zither I will take in hand
To sing the praises of pennies!

This was Da Ponte's first attempt at writing poetry, a very naive little

8) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 10.

piece, but it was secretly read and mocked by his good friend Michele Colombo. It's not that Michele Colombo had bad character; their friendship was just so close. Nevertheless, Da Ponte felt humiliated and cold-shouldered Michele Colombo for several days. Although Michele Colombo teased Da Ponte about his first poem, he continued to encourage him after the mischief. In the following six months, Da Ponte underwent a devilish training regime. He read works by Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso, even memorizing significant portions of Dante's "Inferno" and Petrarch's sonnets and songs. He also practiced numerous sonnets in secret. In his memoirs, Da Ponte mentions...

After this training, and after having composed secretly, and burned, more than two thousand verses, I hoped I would be able to test my strength with my fellow students and to write verses not solely to be thrummed on the blindman's lute. ⁹⁾

After his training, the first opportunity for Da Ponte to showcase his achievements came when they bid farewell to their dean, who had been appointed to another position. On this occasion, all the students presented their works, and Da Ponte was no exception. When Da Ponte finished reading his piece, only Michele Colombo believed that it was truly his creation. The skepticism of his classmates served as a motivation for him, and he began to wholeheartedly immerse himself in the study of poetry, spending day and night reading and researching. He dedicated

9) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 11.

two years to this pursuit at Ceneda Seminary.

Da Ponte started gaining reputation at Ceneda Seminary for his poetry, but he did not let it make him arrogant. Instead, he saw all the praise as fuel to propel him forward, recognizing that their encouragement stemmed from their desire to inspire him to work even harder. He and Michele Colombo often discussed poetry together, taking turns in writing lines. Their synergy was so seamless that others would not suspect it was the work of two individuals, as they had not prearranged anything. Their harmony was natural.

Da Ponte's intense longing for books led him to make a foolish deal with a bookstore owner, which involved him stealing leather from his father to pay for books. However, during the execution of the plan, he was discovered by his stepmother, who informed his father. His father became furious, but when the bishop heard about the incident and learned the whole story, he chose to forgive Da Ponte and helped him pay for the books. However, the good times didn't last long. Fate played a joke on Da Ponte as he fell ill, possibly with malaria. In Da Ponte's memoirs, he wrote, "A terrible illness, which kept my family for more than six months in constant fear of losing me, various domestic difficulties that came to beset my father in those days." ¹⁰⁾

Furthermore, their family faced another blow when Monsignor Da Ponte passed away during the summer of 1768. This caused them to lose their financial support and left Da Ponte and his two brothers unable to continue their education. In order to sustain their livelihood, Da

10) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 14.

Ponte had to sell his beloved books, using some of the proceeds to cover household expenses while keeping a portion to maintain his dignity.

In 1769, the three Da Ponte brothers embarked on a new path of learning, this time with the help of Monsignor Girolamo Ziborghi, the Bishop of Ceneda. He assisted them in attending the seminary of Portogruaro, a place located between Ceneda and Venice. At the seminary of Portogruaro, Da Ponte ventured into new fields of study, developing an interest in mathematics and philosophy, without abandoning his love for poetry. Although he could continue his studies, he was not entirely content, as he had to give up a noblewoman whom he deeply loved, a girl named Pierina Raccanelli ¹¹⁾, due to previous illness and poverty. Furthermore, his studies at the seminary were aimed at preparing him for priesthood, a profession he felt was not suitable for him, as mentioned in his memoirs.

The state of poverty, in which my family found itself at that time, caused me to renounce the hand of a noble and beautiful girl whom I tenderly loved, and induced me to embrace a career wholly contrary to my temperament, my character, my principles, and my studies, thus opening the doors to a thousand dangers and strange vicissitudes of which the envy, hypocrisy, and malice of my enemies rendered me for more than twenty years a pitiable victim. Permit me, gentle reader, to cover with a veil of mystery this grievous moment in my

11) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 14.

life, thus sparing my pen a resentment that would arouse bootless remorse in a heart which, in spite of everything, I do revere, and which I shall never cease to revere. ¹²⁾

However, Sheila Hodges mentioned in her book *Lorenzo Da Ponte* that the accounts provided by Da Ponte in his *Memoirs* are not the complete truth but only a portion of it. Sheila Hodges also noted that based on a thorough examination of all available literature, Lorenzo Da Ponte did not express any opposition to this profession at that time.¹³⁾

In January 1770, in a letter to Michele Colombo, Da Ponte mentioned that he and his brothers were sent to Venice for a retreat, as they had fallen ill, most likely with a recurring bout of malaria. He also mentioned that due to the carnival season, a festival not suitable for monks, he could only converse with the Muse¹⁴⁾ at home.¹⁵⁾ Ten days later, Michele Colombo received a letter from Da Ponte, sent from Portogruaro, in which Da Ponte complained about the vulgar behavior of some students at the theological college. However, in early February, Da Ponte sent another letter to Michele Colombo from Venice, expressing his weariness of the carnival season, as he had already been at home for ten days. It appears that Da Ponte spent the summer of that same year in Venice.¹⁶⁾

In the August letter, Da Ponte informed Michele Colombo that he would be going there on the following Sunday, but a month later, Da

12) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 14-15.

13) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 9.

14) The Muse here is not explained in the original text, I speculate that it is Da Ponte's prayer to the divine as priest.

15) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 11.

16) *Ibid.*.

Ponte was still in Venice. Before the start of the school year in November, Da Ponte told Michele Colombo that he had enjoyed a pleasant vacation at the countryside estate of his late benefactor, Bishop Lorenzo Da Ponte. Da Ponte's frequent presence in Venice or its vicinity must have had some significant reasons. According to Hodges, scholars generally believe that during this period, Da Ponte encountered his first true love, Angiola Tiepolo. She belonged to a branch of the Tiepolo family that was poor, but part of one of the oldest and noblest families in Venice. Supporting this speculation is Da Ponte's mention in his memoirs that he was in a relationship with Angiola Tiepolo for three years. However, after leaving Portogruaro and living in Venice for only a total of 12 months, he had only known Angiola Tiepolo and started their relationship when he first arrived in Venice. It is worth noting that Da Ponte did not mention the period of his recuperation in Venice in 1770 in his memoirs. Perhaps this omission was due to Angiola Tiepolo still being a married woman during that time, or it could be for other reasons that Da Ponte did not mention Angiola Tiepolo in his letters to Michele Colombo. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly one of the significant reasons for Da Ponte's later departure from Portogruaro to live in Venice.

At the seminary of Portogruaro, although Da Ponte began to explore mathematics and philosophy, their main academic task was Latin, which is understandable as it laid the foundation for their future as priests. The boys were required to speak Latin only within specific timeframes, and any mistakes or use of Italian would result in punishment. Three

evenings a week, the exceptional students gathered to discuss eminent classical poets, strengthening their command of Latin in this manner. After three years, the outstanding students were allowed to study Greek and Hebrew freely. However, hardly anyone delved into their mother tongue, Italian, and students who wished to study Italian had to do so secretly.

In November 1770, Da Ponte was appointed as an instructor, and the following year he became a professor of languages. In the spring of 1772, at the invitation of Bishop Monsignor Gabrielli, he assumed the position of vice-rector. This change in his status was somewhat reluctant for him, as he expressed in his memoirs. He desired to continue diligently studying and enhance his knowledge, particularly in Hebrew and Greek, recognizing the importance of mastering these languages to become a poet. However, Monsignor Gabrielli managed to persuade him during his hesitation. The main reason that convinced Da Ponte to accept the invitation was his consideration for his father, as it would alleviate his father's burden. Thus, he embraced this proposal and faced a transformation in his role without giving up on his studies.

After becoming a teacher, Da Ponte frequently engaged in discussions with his students about the poets he deeply admired. He also maintained correspondence with Michele Colombo, sharing details of his recent life and offering analysis and criticism of the poems they exchanged. Through this mutual exchange, they progressed together, sustaining their friendship. In his letters to Michele Colombo, Da Ponte mentioned his responsibilities, which included managing discipline, delivering the

opening and closing academic speeches each year, and teaching pure Italian language. Da Ponte explained to Michele Colombo that these duties kept him busy, but it was the praise and recognition from the bishop and the rector that led to him being entrusted with such responsibilities. This seemed to serve as an explanation for his limited time for poetry and perhaps a way to boast to Michele Colombo about his significance.

In Da Ponte's memoirs, he mentioned that his colleagues were jealous of him and mocked him for not studying physics, considering him merely a boastful poet without scientific knowledge. Therefore, he decided to choose "la fisica particolare" (Particular physics) as the theme for his 1772 academic report. He wrote numerous poems about physics in Italian and Latin, which garnered praise and appreciation from the bishop, as well as respect from his students and the local community. Da Ponte believed that this further fueled the jealousy of his colleagues. He endured it for a while but reached his breaking point in the autumn of 1773 when he resigned from his position and left Portogruaro for Venice. It is worth noting that it was also in that year when Angiola Tiepolo, after giving birth to their second child, was left by her husband to become a priest.

In other words, Da Ponte's decision to leave Portogruaro for Venice can be attributed to three main reasons. Firstly, he had a dislike for the profession of being a priest, so his resignation showed no signs of reluctance. Secondly, Da Ponte's talents were the target of jealousy from his colleagues, and he could no longer tolerate it, hence choosing to

leave. And thirdly, Angiola Tiepolo became single again, and he was eager to live with her. I believe this might have been the primary reason for his departure.

2.2 Venice Period

In my estimation, when Da Ponte left Portogruaro for Venice, he should have started his happy life, escaping from the profession he disliked, getting away from those so-called jealous colleagues. He should have been content and able to be with his beloved. However, in his memoirs, at the beginning of this journey, he used one word – “Unfortunately.” Clearly, what he started in Venice was not a good life, but a period of unfortunate experiences.

At this time, Venice was home to a prevalent group known as *cicisbeos*, or *cavalieri serventi*, which was a rather unique group predominantly comprised of men. Their role was to render a variety of services to married noblewomen, with the husband’s knowledge, accompanying them to social events, public entertainments, or church gatherings. In essence, this distinct group existed to ensure the happiness of married noblewomen. Sheila Hodges mentions in her book. “Presumably on occasion they also provided more intimate services.”¹⁷⁾ From this, one can boldly infer that Venice at this time was an incredibly open-minded city.

When Da Ponte arrived there in the autumn of 1773, Venice was at

17) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 13.

the pinnacle of its splendor. The poet Lamartine described this period in Venice as a "perpetual masquerade ball."¹⁸⁾ During this time, the people of Venice commonly wore masks, which allowed for a degree of freedom and blurred social distinctions. Unlike other Italian towns, Venice was a city of water, with streets on the islands not suitable for horse-drawn carriages, and horses were rarely seen. It was more like a sprawling residential area. Every corner of Venice had the potential for celebration, whether it was for religious ceremonies, visits from distinguished foreigners, noble weddings, or other events, all accompanied by parades and festivities. The streets of Venice were well-lit, with shops staying open until midnight or even later. Many cafes were filled with revelers who seemed to believe that life truly began when the midnight bells tolled. Nobles and beggars, craftsmen and poets, or even members of the royal family, all mingled and reveled together. They wore masks not only for protection but also to boldly express themselves.

In addition to this, Venice at the time was also characterized by two prominent elements: music and gambling. Venice was one of the birthplaces of opera, and from the Baroque period onward, Venetian opera houses were among the most popular performance venues in Europe. Additionally, Venice served as a significant Christian center, and religious music thrived there. Every gondolier would sing while working, adding to the rich musical culture of Venice. The people of Venice had music ingrained in their souls, and during that era, music accompanied revelry, parades, and celebrations. Even street vendors trying to attract

18) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 14.

customers used song. In essence, Venice during that period was constantly surrounded by music. Furthermore, Venice at this time was also heavily inclined toward gambling. Despite occasional government bans, this form of entertainment would resurface in private residences, taverns, or coffeehouses whenever public gambling houses were closed. In such an atmosphere, Da Ponte found himself drawn into a life of gambling and debauchery.

Eager and lively by temperament, and, as everyone said, attractive in person, I allowed myself, through the customs and examples about me, as well as by my own inclinations, to be swept away into a life of voluptuousness and amusement, forgetting or neglecting literature and my studies almost entirely. I had conceived a very violent passion for one of the most beautiful, but at the same time, most capricious ladies of that metropolis. She occupied all my time in the usual follies and frivolities of love and jealousy, in convivialities, carousals, and debaucheries: and with the exception of an occasional hour at night which I ordinarily devoted to some book or other, I do not think, in the three years' time that the affair lasted, that I learned a single thing I had not known before, or which was really worth knowing. ¹⁹⁾

This is Da Ponte's description in his *MEMOIRS*, where the beautiful

19) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 18.

woman referred to is Angiola Tiepolo. However, there may be some discrepancy in the mention of three years in the text. During this particular stay in Venice, Da Ponte only lived there for twelve months, and he and Angiola Tiepolo had parted ways by the time he left Venice. If Da Ponte and Angiola Tiepolo had been in a relationship for three years, it can be boldly inferred that they likely started dating even before Da Ponte's initial visit to Venice when he came there for medical treatment.

From this passage, it can be seen that Da Ponte led a very vibrant and, one might say, decadent life during his time in Venice. The man who was once deeply passionate about poetry and reading became absorbed in revelry and infatuated with Angiola Tiepolo. His obsession with Angiola Tiepolo led Da Ponte to become a slave to Angiola Tiepolo and her notorious brother, Girolamo. Although Angiola Tiepolo and her brother were members of a noble family, they had no private means of income, and the state did not allow them to engage in politics or the church. Initially, they were provided accommodation at public expense, in the parish of San Barnaba. By virtue of their birthright, they not only had a claim to the state's revenues but also had the right to participate in government, forming a corrupt, parasitic, and disorderly group within the highest council of Venice – the Great Council.²⁰⁾ However, Girolamo had a compulsive gambling habit, and thus, both brother and sister became financially dependent on Da Ponte.

Although Da Ponte lacked the willpower to break free from such a

20) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 14-15.

decadent lifestyle, he still made efforts to carve out time for reading. He would also visit the "caffè de'letterati" (coffee of literati), a gathering place for intellectuals and scholars. Here, he befriended Gasparo and Carlo Gozzi. Gasparo later became Italy's finest critic, while Carlo Gozzi went on to become a playwright, with two of his plays being adapted into *The Love for Three Oranges* and *Turandot*.²¹⁾ At this venue, Da Ponte engaged in discussions with intellectuals and immersed himself in literary conversations. He also secured a job as a private tutor due to his own literary pursuits. Nevertheless, in most other aspects, he was largely under the sway of Angiola Tiepolo and her brother Girolamo. Even so, Da Ponte's life remained quite fascinating.

One day, while wearing a mask at the "coffee of literati," a gondolier signaled for Da Ponte to follow him. Initially, Da Ponte thought it was his lover, Angiola Tiepolo, coming to take him home, so he didn't inquire further and followed the gondolier, boarding the boat. As they exchanged greetings, Da Ponte realized this wasn't his lover, but he still extended a courteous hand-kiss. Initially, the woman resisted and asked Da Ponte to leave, possibly due to his gentlemanly behavior. After a brief exchange, they agreed to meet at the same time and place. Da Ponte then departed.

From that day on, Da Ponte came to the "coffee of literati" daily, awaiting the arrival of the mysterious woman. Perhaps out of curiosity or growing disdain for Angiola Tiepolo and her brother Girolamo, he seemed to hope that this enigmatic woman could help him escape his

21) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 15.

troubles. After waiting for a while without encountering the mysterious woman again, Da Ponte's anticipation waned. His fear of Angiola Tiepolo and her brother's actions prompted him to briefly flee Venice for a few days. However, his longing for Angiola Tiepolo compelled him to return to Venice. He continued to frequent the "coffee of literati," where people informed him that during his absence, several individuals had come looking for him, reigniting his anticipation regarding the mysterious woman.

One day, while Da Ponte was walking down the street, he seemed to hear someone calling his name. He turned to see the boatman of the mysterious woman enthusiastically waving his arms. That evening, Da Ponte waited at the "coffee of literati" and finally met the woman he had been anticipating for so long. The two of them returned to the woman's boat and began a conversation. Through their discussion, Da Ponte learned that this lady was from Naples, and her name was Matilda. Her father was a duke, but despite his noble status, he held little sway within their household. When she refused a marriage arranged by her stepmother, she was confined to a convent. After several twists of fate, she managed to escape and found her way to Venice, where the practice of wearing masks to conceal one's identity wasn't out of the ordinary, reducing the chances of being discovered. There was once a young man who had helped her, but he turned out to be a gambler and ultimately abandoned her. Matilda seemed to harbor a deep sense of insecurity. After recounting her tumultuous past, she presented Da Ponte with a remarkably audacious proposition. If Da

Ponte's heart was unburdened, if he had the courage to leave his homeland, she was willing to give him all her wealth. She believed her fortune would afford them a respectable life wherever they chose to reside. She made it clear that as long as she was with Da Ponte, she wouldn't be concerned about safety issues. ²²⁾

Da Ponte, moved by her plight, captivated by her beauty, and enticed by her generosity, decided to take three days to contemplate before giving her an answer. As he grappled with this choice, he had several arguments with Angiola Tiepolo. In his *MEMOIRS*, during this period, Angiola Tiepolo transformed from the most beautiful woman into "that Venetian girl" and even a "demon." It's evident that Da Ponte's state of mind had undergone a change during this time. Although he continued to describe Angiola Tiepolo in his account as the person he loved the most and someone he had loved for a long time, ultimately, reason triumphed over his unbearable life, and he decided to leave with Matilda. Unfortunately, fate had other plans, for Matilda had already been taken away by officials from the dreaded religious tribunal and confined to a convent, making it too late to escape together.

This short story, as listeners, we find it challenging to discern its authenticity. Hodges addresses this story with the following passage: "Who can say whether this *Arabian Nights* tale is true or false? It appears that in the inquisitors' archives there is no mention of their officials having carried off anyone of Matilda's description—but this diabolical tribune, as Da Ponte calls it, worked in such deadly secrecy,

22) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 28.

and covered up its tracks so well, that the absence of any record is not necessarily proof that the event never happened."²³⁾

After this little episode, Da Ponte's relationship with Angiola Tiepolo improved somewhat. Under the influence of Angiola Tiepolo and her gambling-prone brother, Da Ponte gradually became a gambler himself. The three of them would indulge in gambling every night, often losing all their money, selling their clothing, jewelry, or borrowing from others. On one occasion, when they had depleted all their funds, a boatman to whom Da Ponte had frequently been generous noticed his predicament and lent him fifty gold coins. Da Ponte, armed with the borrowed money, rushed to the gambling table, won back everything he had lost, and even made a substantial profit, enabling him to repay the generous boatman and offer him a gift.

Da Ponte's collection of intriguing anecdotes doesn't end there. Once, after Angiola Tiepolo and her brother lost all their money, Da Ponte went to the "Room of Sighs," a gathering place for the heartbroken and unfortunate gamblers, where they lamented their miserable fates. While there, a masked individual asked Da Ponte for some change, and surprisingly, when Da Ponte searched his pockets, he found some gold coins. He gave one gold coin to the masked person, who requested that Da Ponte personally collect his reward at his home. Initially, Da Ponte didn't think much of it. However, after some time, he accidentally stumbled upon the playing card with the address the masked man had given him. Out of curiosity, he visited the masked man. Through their

23) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 16.

conversation, Da Ponte learned that the masked man hailed from Livorno and, due to lack of experience, had lost the business his father had left him. He later arrived in Venice, and to Da Ponte's surprise, this masked man, with no particular skills, had become a wealthy individual by begging. The reason was that he had married a wealthy widow, who had a beautiful stepdaughter. He wanted to marry off the stepdaughter to Da Ponte as a token of gratitude for the charity Da Ponte had bestowed upon him. Da Ponte declined, and in his *MEMOIRS*, he mentioned that his refusal was driven by his affection for Angiola Tiepolo, prompting him to forgo the favorable terms proposed by the masked man. Additionally, as a priest, Da Ponte couldn't marry this woman. Not long after, Da Ponte heard that the masked man's stepdaughter had married someone else, and the whole family had moved to Vienna. Later on, Da Ponte also briefly lived in Vienna and maintained friendly relations with the masked man's family.

When Da Ponte and his girlfriend were impoverished due to gambling, Girolamo continued to demand money from Da Ponte and threatened to marry his sister, Angiola Tiepolo, off to a wealthy man. In desperation, Da Ponte and his girlfriend concocted an enormous lie, claiming that Da Ponte practiced alchemy. Girolamo, driven by his intense desire for money, was willing to believe in the existence of alchemy for a short while, allowing them to deceive him. However, this was not a sustainable solution. As Girolamo couldn't obtain any money, he grew increasingly discontent with Da Ponte and pressured him to teach him alchemy. Da Ponte had no choice but to endure this situation. When

Angiola Tiepolo learned that Da Ponte had visited the home of the masked man, she subjected Da Ponte to various acts of violence, such as throwing objects at him. Unable to tolerate Da Ponte's absence from her sight, she took drastic measures, including cutting off his hair in the middle of the night, which directly resulted in Da Ponte losing his only source of income. The noble family for whom he had been tutoring came to visit him at his home, discovered he was living with unsavory characters, and promptly dismissed him. Da Ponte was left without a job and without a source of income. Angiola Tiepolo couldn't bear Da Ponte being out of her sight, and the only times he was allowed to leave the house were when he was with her, usually at night. They were deeply engrossed in gambling, often attending social gatherings and visiting theaters and opera houses. Venice was renowned for its opera houses at the time, with seven in the relatively small city, compared to just three in Paris at the time. While these activities were cultured, they were financially disastrous for Da Ponte, who had lost his means of income. Furthermore, luck in gambling had abandoned them, plunging Da Ponte into dire straits. In such dire circumstances, Da Ponte's personal freedom was constrained by Angiola Tiepolo, and he was also being extorted for money by Girolamo.

In desperation, he turned to his friend Michele Colombo for some financial assistance, not as a request but as an advance payment for books. He implored Michele Colombo not to disclose this matter to anyone, including Da Ponte's father. Such a plea for help was an act of sheer desperation. Da Ponte was deeply despairing of his life, and as a

former clergyman, he had found no success in Venice. His dissolute and debauched lifestyle had garnered widespread criticism, including self-criticism. While Venice during that era was rife with dissolute priests and nuns, Da Ponte's level of dissipation exceeded that of many others. This filled him with immense shame, making him even more reluctant to reveal his situation to his family or anyone in Ceneda.

Da Ponte's younger brother, Girolamo, was considered an outstanding priest and talented writer with a promising future. Although Da Ponte was reluctant to share the details of his dissolute life with his family, Girolamo had some knowledge of his situation. He had attempted several times to persuade his older brother to leave Venice, but without success. However, a turning point occurred when a former schoolmate from Portogruaro came to visit Da Ponte and, upon leaving, stole his cloak and sold it. When Da Ponte discovered his missing cloak and searched for it, he found it in a pawnshop and redeemed it. This incident prompted Da Ponte to reflect on how a former classmate had fallen into such moral decay, despite principles of religion, education, and honor. He realized that one could become a slave to passion even when guided by these principles. He immediately decided that he could no longer continue in his dissolute ways, resolved to quit gambling, distance himself from the woman he loved, Angiola Tiepolo, and leave Venice. With Girolamo's assistance, Da Ponte refused Angiola Tiepolo's entreaties and returned to Ceneda in the autumn of 1774. Coincidentally, the nearby town of Treviso had two vacant teaching positions at its theological college. One of these positions was offered to Da Ponte, while the other was given to

Girolamo. In order to be with his brother, Girolamo relinquished his position as secretary to the noble Giovanni da Lezze family in Venice.

However, almost immediately after Da Ponte took up his position, he was dismissed from it. The reason for his dismissal was an accusation by a priest that he had eloped with a woman from Ceneda and had committed other offenses. This priest claimed that this was the real reason for Da Ponte's previous expulsion from Portogruaro. Da Ponte felt desperate and confided in Michele Colombo about his despair. However, it wasn't long before, for reasons unknown, Da Ponte was reinstated. He did not mention this brief episode in his *MEMOIRS*, possibly out of shame or perhaps because his happiness at leaving the city of Venice, which had led him astray, overshadowed this minor unpleasantness.

Although Da Ponte had left Venice, the city that had once ensnared him, he had not entirely shaken off Angiola Tiepolo. She continued to write to Da Ponte frequently, attempting to entice him back to her side. Da Ponte wavered and was preparing to return when his former servant informed him that Angiola Tiepolo had found a new lover. These individuals, motivated by jealousy, were trying to trick Da Ponte into coming to Venice with the intention of assaulting him. Fortunately, when Da Ponte arrived, Angiola Tiepolo's lover had already departed. Da Ponte went up to her room, scolded her harshly, and then left, determined never to see or hear from this woman again. "It was as if at that point a ray of light from Heaven had descended on my mind to illumine my reason and cure me entirely."²⁴⁾

Da Ponte's journey in Venice can be described as rich and thrilling. He struggled through pain and debauchery, ultimately breaking free from the woman who had led him down a path of self-indulgence. This transformation turned him back into the person who was passionately captivated by literature and poetry. He should count himself fortunate for this change. Although Da Ponte's time in Venice was far from pleasant, living in a city so rich in musical culture for a period left an indelible mark on him. The influence of music on him during this time undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping his future career in music-related endeavors.

2.3 Treviso Period

The town of Treviso is a peaceful little town, with its picturesque canals along the streets resembling Venice, albeit without the bustling crowds. Despite suffering significant damage during both World Wars, with many ancient buildings destroyed in bombings, one can still sense an atmosphere of prosperity and vitality here. During Da Ponte's era, Treviso was often referred to as the summer refuge for Venetians. When summer arrived in Venice, citizens and nobles alike would escape to Treviso to avoid the putrid smell and noxious gases emanating from the canals of Venice. In Treviso, there is a highly renowned theater. In the 18th century, this theater belonged to the Onigo noble family, and it was restored and reopened in 1765.²⁵⁾ Many opera productions, concerts,

24) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 50.

25) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 21.

charity soirées, and balls took place here. Some of the finest singers from the Venetian opera houses performed here, and the audience's musical knowledge and appreciation were on par with those in Venice. Treviso was not only an entertainment hub but also a center of culture. Da Ponte, who came to Treviso, appeared to be very content and once mentioned, "Thus my liberated soul began anew to wander among the sweet and delightful fields of the Muses." ²⁶⁾ He enjoyed his time here, and his students were exceptionally bright and had their ideals. Their Monisgnor Giustiniani was erudite. Most of the people Da Ponte encountered in Treviso were cultured, refined, and sophisticated. Furthermore, Da Ponte was responsible for managing the library and had the authority to add any books he deemed useful to its collection. The cultural and natural environment here brought joy to Da Ponte's heart.

In his second year in Treviso, Da Ponte was promoted to the position of Master of Rhetoric, with his previous position being taken over by his brother Girolamo. Additionally, Da Ponte also became a Master of Gregorian chant. As a Master of Rhetoric, one of Da Ponte's responsibilities was to compose poetry in both Latin and Italian. He created a series of poems on the theme of human happiness, which were recited by his students at the end of the academic year for the bishop, city officials, and other important figures to hear. He chose a Rousseauian theme, exploring human happiness within societal systems and the state of nature. Some of these poems supported the idea that laws reduced happiness, while others argued that laws were necessary

26) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 50.

due to human frailty and the need for rules. The poems also delved into the relationship between wealth and happiness, as well as whether poverty affected the development of talent.

Da Ponte referred to these poems as "jokes," originally intended for students to practice recitation. He firmly claimed that he never anticipated the significant impact these poems would have. These poems reflected the open-mindedness of the intellectual circles in Treviso and mirrored the conversations among Da Ponte and his friends. However, Venice had keen ears and could detect dangerous ideas, especially as rumblings of the French Revolution were in the air. After the recitation of these poems (which took place around August 1, 1776), there wasn't an immediate strong reaction. However, rumors started to spread in the Serenissima region, a part of the Italian Republic of Venice, and trouble began to brew. Parish priests were shocked by the poems and questioned whether Da Ponte might be an atheist. Eventually, religious judge Padre Giuseppe Frassen reported the matter to the "Riformatori dello studio di Padova" (Reformers of the Padua Studio) at the University of Padua. Following this, Da Ponte, upon persuasion from family and friends, decided to go to Venice to defend himself. He sought support from relatives, friends, and influential figures, including Bernardo Memmo, a friend he met upon arriving in Venice, who was a senator, scholar, and patron of the arts, later becoming a member of the Council of Ten and the Procurator of San Marco. Gasparo Gozzi, who had long served as a censor and inspector of prints in Venice, was one of the most respected literary figures in the Republic. Pietro Antonio Zaguri, a

member of a prominent noble family known for his intelligence and education, was also a central figure in Venice's a certain social circles.²⁷⁾ These are all individuals of significant influence. In addition to these supporters, there were others willing to assist Da Ponte, providing sponsorship and aid to help him defend himself in this scandalous incident.

The Senate convened on December 14th to discuss the matter, but Da Ponte was not present. He received a vivid account of the meeting through Bernardo Memmo. Some of the poems were read aloud, delving into the relationship between human freedom and the law, which incited anger among the senators. Despite concerns for his freedom and life, Da Ponte scoffed at these worries. He was banned from teaching in educational institutions in Serenissima. The impact of this event extended to other regions and even garnered newspaper coverage. Da Ponte claimed that the Venetian authorities not only wanted to punish him but also sought to penalize his patron, Bishop Giustiniani. However, what he didn't know was that Bishop Giustiniani had written to the Senate, stating that the themes Da Ponte initially proposed for the academy were entirely different from those that were later approved, and he hadn't been informed or seen the final versions. Bishop Giustiniani vehemently distanced himself from any responsibility. Da Ponte might not have been aware of these actions taken by his patron, Bishop Giustiniani; otherwise, he wouldn't have praised Bishop Giustiniani in such enthusiastic language in his memoirs.²⁸⁾

27) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 24.

28) *Ibid.* 25.

On the day the Senate announced the verdict, Memmo accompanied Da Ponte home and organized a grand celebration. Da Ponte temporarily stayed with Memmo, enjoying Memmo's generous hospitality. Due to his previous conflicts with the Senate, Da Ponte ironically became more prominent in Venetian society. During this time, he formed connections with renowned scholars and respected nobility. Da Ponte, with his handsome appearance, impeccable manners, sharp wit, and courtesy, became the darling of Venetian beauties. Da Ponte established a close friendship with the poet Caterino Mazzolà, who had received his education at the Treviso seminary and was the first to master the creation of "dramma buffo" or comedy.²⁹⁾ "Dramma buffo," also known as comedy, refers to comedic theatrical works set to music. In the realm of art and theater, "dramma buffo," also known as comedy, refers to a form of theatrical production that is light-hearted, rich in comedic elements, typically accompanied by music, and suitable for stage performance. This theatrical form emphasizes humor, wit, and comedic plots, often achieving its effects through exaggerated performances and plot developments. The deep friendship between Da Ponte and the poet Caterino Mazzolà held significant meaning for Da Ponte. Despite the possibility of his popularity being a source of displeasure for the Senate, it did not deter Da Ponte from finding joy in Venetian life. This was especially true as, not long afterward, his brother Giloramo returned to work once again for the Giovanni da Lezze family. The two brothers also delved into a new field—improvising.³⁰⁾ During that period, Italy

29) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 26.

30) The improvisation that emerged in 18th-century Venice refers to a distinctive artistic

was renowned for its expertise in improvising various themes and rhythms in poetry and songs.

Da Ponte and his brother, along with local improvisers, engaged in improvisational performances to showcase their talents. Some of the well-known improvisers of the time included Maria Maddalena Morelli, La Corilla, and in the popular improvisational circles of Florence, figures like Mozart, Casanova, and Dr. Burney. Da Ponte believed that the elegance, melody, and richness of the Italian language were well-suited for improvisation. However, through experimentation, he discovered that this approach was not conducive to crafting beautiful poetry. Lines that sounded impressive when recited spontaneously often appeared mediocre when written down. Nevertheless, Da Ponte and Girolamo continued to demonstrate their skills in Italian to the delight of their audience, enjoying the praise they received. They became known as "The improvisers of Ceneda."

During this period, Da Ponte lived together with Memmo, and Memmo's family was very generous to him. Da Ponte enjoyed a comfortable and pleasant life in Venice, where he formed friendships with renowned intellectuals and aristocrats. However, this enjoyable time

form during that era, where individuals would spontaneously create poetry, songs, or other literary works. These spontaneous creators were known as "improvisatori," possessing the talent to improvise on various themes and rhythms without prior preparation. These improvisations took place in different settings, such as social gatherings, banquets, and cultural events. This art form emphasized the creator's wit, language proficiency, and creativity, making it highly popular at the time and holding a significant place in Venetian society. These improvisations could encompass poetry, songs, or other literary works, typically composed on the spot without pre-written drafts or scripts.

came to an abrupt end due to a misunderstanding between Da Ponte and Memmo. Memmo had a mistress named Teresa Zerbin, with whom Da Ponte had a strained relationship. It has been suggested that they had an affair, and that for this reason Da Ponte was shown the door.³¹⁾ In Da Ponte's *MEMOIRS*³²⁾, the incident is explained as follows: Teresa Zerbin fell in love with a young man, and initially, Memmo agreed to and supported their relationship. However, for some unknown reason, Memmo began to dislike this young man. Teresa Zerbin also wanted to marry him and believed that Da Ponte's influence had caused Memmo's change of heart. To achieve her goal of driving Da Ponte away, Teresa Zerbin publicly insulted him. Regardless, Teresa Zerbin succeeded in forcing Da Ponte to leave. Shortly after Da Ponte's departure, the young man whom Teresa Zerbin deeply loved was also expelled from Memmo's home. Teresa Zerbin, for reasons unknown, slandered Da Ponte in front of Memmo, falsely claiming that he had become infatuated with her. Perhaps this was the true reason for Memmo's misunderstanding of Da Ponte.³³⁾

From Memmo's house, Da Ponte left for the city where his younger brother Luigi lived - Padua. Da Ponte spent some time in Padua, where he, like his brother Luigi, had very little money but still had to maintain the concept of 'la bella figura,' a Italian idea that one must maintain a good appearance at all costs.³⁴⁾ His seemingly respectable appearance successfully concealed his very modest life. Here, he met some

31) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 27.

32) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 58-61.

33) *Ibid.* 65.

34) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 27.

intellectuals, including Melchiore Cesarotti, a renowned professor of Greek and Hebrew at the university, who was the author of many prose works and translations of Homer. ³⁵⁾ He spent most of his time idling, which left him weary of Padua. Shortly afterward, he returned to Venice. Back in Venice, Da Ponte met Mazzolà, who helped Da Ponte clear up the misunderstanding with Memmo. Although Memmo repeatedly invited Da Ponte to return and live with him, Da Ponte refused. Later, Da Ponte became the secretary and study companion of Pietro Antonio Zaguri. With the help of Pietro Antonio Zaguri's brother, Mario Zaguri, Da Ponte also secured a second job as the private tutor for Giorgio Pisani's sons.

When everything in Da Ponte's life seemed to be heading in a better direction, he suddenly left Venice, and there are varying accounts of the reasons behind this departure. "Some scholars have presented evidence suggesting that Da Ponte's exit from Venice was less than honorable; it was a forced departure related to his tumultuous and complex personal life."³⁶⁾ Da Ponte fell in love with a married woman, engaged in multiple illicit affairs with various women, disregarded his priestly duties, and fathered children with women, among other complications. His convoluted personal life led to an anonymous denunciation on May 28, 1779. The trial began on June 5, 1779, and approximately sixty witnesses testified. It was challenging to discern the truth from the accusations brought forth by these witnesses. Of course, according to Hodges' analysis, some of the accusations were baseless, which doesn't rule out the possibility of malicious individuals plotting against Da Ponte. However, it's likely

35) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 27.

36) *Ibid.* 28-33.

that some of the accusations had validity. After a trial lasting three and a half months, it wasn't until September 13, 1779³⁷⁾, that the order for his arrest was issued.³⁸⁾ However, by this time, Da Ponte had already escaped Venice with the help of friends. When the tribunal realized they couldn't apprehend Da Ponte, a final verdict was issued on December 17. This verdict was announced in Chioggia on December 24 and in Venice on January 5, 1780. The verdict stated: Padre Lorenzo Da Ponte was banished from Venice and from all other cities, lands and places of the Serene Republic for a term of fifteen years. If he defied this ban and was apprehended, he was to be imprisoned in a room without light for seven years. ³⁹⁾

However, in the first part of Da Ponte's own memoirs, his initial account of the reason for his forced departure from Venice is entirely different from the content mentioned above. The reason given is that one of his employers, Giorgio Pisani, who was referred to as the "Gracchus of Venice" at the time.⁴⁰⁾ According to Da Ponte's memoirs, Giorgio Pisani's talents, intelligence, and eloquence aroused fear and jealousy among some prominent figures in Venice. These individuals aimed to undermine Giorgio Pisani to secure their own positions, but Giorgio Pisani's wit and abilities not only foiled their plans but also garnered the support of many nobles. This seemed to cross a line for these influential figures, so they turned their attention to those around Giorgio Pisani. They made accusations against Da Ponte, such as finding an

37) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 28.

38) *Ibid.* 32.

39) *Ibid.*, 32-33.

40) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 66.

unscrupulous person to testify that on a certain Friday, Da Ponte had eaten ham, even though this witness had shared the meal with him. Alternatively, they accused Da Ponte of failing to attend Mass on a particular weekend. These accusations left Da Ponte feeling helpless, unable to endure such injustice in his homeland. Therefore, he had to leave Venice once again.

2.4 Gorizia Period

Da Ponte, upon leaving Venice, arrived in the little town of Gorizia, about 35 kilometers north of Trieste. It was part of the Austrian Empire.⁴¹⁾ Today, Gorizia is part of Italian territory. It served as a haven for Da Ponte, although he still longed to return to Venice and maintained contact with his friends. In fact, the town of Gorizia was not only a refuge for Da Ponte but also a suitable place to reside. The climate here is mild, attracting many Italian nobles who have their country villas in this area. Gorizia is also a center of knowledge, where many individuals spend their time dedicated to serious study. Furthermore, Gorizia boasts an excellent theater, becoming a hub of intellectual and cultural activities. The theater not only stages plays but also hosts concerts, including performances of composers such as Cimarosa⁴²⁾, Paisiello⁴³⁾,

41) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 35.

42) Domenico Cimarosa (1749–1801): Cimarosa was an Italian composer renowned for his opera works. His operatic compositions were highly popular across Europe, known for their smooth melodies, expressive vocal writing, and lively musical style. He served as the court composer in Vienna in 1791. Notable works include *Il matrimonio segreto*.

43) Giovanni Paisiello (1740–1816): Paisiello was a significant Italian composer known for his opera works. His music was influenced by the classical period and enjoyed great

Salieri⁴⁴). This environment made Da Ponte feel right at home, satisfying his interests in books, drama, and music. Da Ponte's erudition and passion for literature also facilitated friendly social interactions in this small town.

In Da Ponte's memoirs, he mentioned arriving in Gorizia in early September 1777.⁴⁵ However, based on the various events mentioned above, we can reasonably conclude that Da Ponte likely arrived in Gorizia in 1779. Perhaps Da Ponte's memory had become blurred when he wrote his memoirs, or perhaps it was intentionally done to conceal past scandals.

After arriving in Gorizia, Da Ponte found an inn where the owner was a beautiful and charming young woman. Her presence captivated the young Da Ponte, and he described her beauty and charm, especially how she dressed in German fashion. Despite not understanding each other's languages, they quickly fell in love through the use of dictionaries and pointing things out to each other. Due to financial issues, he had to move away from the inn and part from the landlady. Nevertheless, they maintained a friendly relationship. However, not long after, she passed away. Da Ponte wrote in his memoirs: "Many tears I shed for this beautiful and ami-able young woman who deserved to be a

popularity during his time, with widespread performances of his compositions. Notable works include *The Barber of Seville* and others.

44) Antonio Salieri (1750-1825): Salieri was an Italian composer born in the Republic of Venice and later residing in the Austrian Empire's Vienna. He was a contemporary of Mozart and was recognized for his diverse musical works and contributions to opera. He is also known for being a rival of Mozart. Notable works include *Le donne letterate* and more.

45) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 75.

princess, rather than keeper of an inn. She was beyond doubt one of the best women I have known in the eighty years of my life."⁴⁶⁾

After leaving the inn, Da Ponte decided to earn some money by writing poetry. He composed a celebratory ode for the Austria-Prussia Treaty of Teschen, which he named "*Le gare degli uccelli*" (*The Contests of the Birds*). He dedicated this ode to Count Cobenzl, who greatly appreciated it and had it printed and published. As a result, Da Ponte obtained the sponsorship he needed and began to be received favorably by some prominent noble families.

In 1690, fourteen writers united and founded an organization called *Ragunanza degli Arcadi*, dedicated to Italian literature, preserving the purity of language, and avoiding any obscene, irreverent, blasphemous, or defamatory content.⁴⁷⁾ During Da Ponte's era, Italians were also enthusiastic about joining similar organizations like *L'Accademia degli Arcadi*. These organizations were widespread throughout Italy at the time, symbolizing Italians' efforts to protect their language and culture from foreign influences. They often gathered at noble countryside villas, where they dined, drank, danced, listened to music, and recited their poetry aloud. While these gatherings had some elements of pretense and absurdity, and the poetry may not have always been of the highest quality, they served to lower social barriers, promote the integration of different groups, and make significant contributions to Italian culture, education, and tolerance, even contributing to national unity.⁴⁸⁾

46) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 80.

47) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 38.

48) *Ibid.* 38.

A few months after Da Ponte arrived in Gorizia, the city established an organization called the *Accademia letteraria degli Arcadi Romano-Sonziaci*. Da Ponte quickly joined and adopted the pen name Lesbonico Pegasio to participate. This organization was chaired by Da Ponte's patron, Count Cobenzl, with Giuseppe de Colletti serving as the founder and secretary. Colletti had a background as a soldier and later became a printer and historian. However, Da Ponte held a negative view of Colletti, considering him fervent, hypocritical, lacking genuine poetic taste, and even criticized him through a poem titled *Il capriccio*.

Da Ponte enjoyed a happy life in Gorizia, actively participating in literary activities, including translation and creative writing. He began to venture into the world of drama and translated scripts for theater companies. Da Ponte had a harmonious relationship with the Torriani family. Despite this, he still yearned to return to Venice, missing his brother and friends there. When he learned that his former employer and friend, Pisani, the man known as "Gracchus of Venice," had been appointed as a prosecutor to an important position in March 1780, Da Ponte believed that Pisani's influence could help lift his ban and allow him to return to Venice. However, his hopes were shattered when Mazzolà, on his way to Dresden⁴⁹⁾, passed through Gorizia and visited his friend Da Ponte. From Mazzolà, Da Ponte received devastating news that Pisani had been arrested. Da Ponte realized that he had no chance of returning, at least not in the near future. He then asked Mazzolà to help him find a position in Dresden, as Mazzolà had been appointed as a

49) Dresden is a city located in eastern Germany.

poet to the opera at the elector's court at that time.

Two months later, a letter signed by Mazzolà but not handwritten by him was delivered to Da Ponte. The letter summoned Da Ponte to come to Dresden to take up a good position at the court.⁵⁰⁾ After bidding farewell to his friends, Da Ponte set out on his journey to Dresden in early January 1781, carrying the necessary funds and a letter of recommendation from Count Cobenzl written to his son in Vienna. This marked the beginning of his next adventure.

When Da Ponte arrived in Vienna, Empress Maria Theresa had passed away just five weeks earlier on November 29, 1780, and the city was in mourning. During his three-day stay in Vienna, Da Ponte composed a fourteen-line poem titled *Per la morte di Sua Maestà l'Imperatrice Maria Teresa (In memory of Her Majesty Empress Maria Theresa's death)*.⁵¹⁾ Da Ponte presented Count Cobenzl's letter of recommendation to Count Philipp Von Cobenzl, who was now the State Vice-Chancellor. The young Count warmly welcomed Da Ponte and gifted him a book along with a hundred florins.

Da Ponte couldn't wait to leave Vienna and head to Dresden to meet Mazzolà. When Mazzolà saw Da Ponte, he was greatly surprised and inquired if Da Ponte had been "called to the theatre at St Petersburg." Despite his confusion, Da Ponte made an effort to conceal his feelings and simply replied that he had come to visit his friend Mazzolà, hoping to benefit from his friendship. Mazzolà responded, "Excellent! Perhaps you've arrived at just the right time?" They then went to an inn, where

50) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 86.

51) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 40.

they discussed various matters but did not mention Mazzolà's letter.

After returning to the inn, Da Ponte spent the entire night pondering what had transpired. The next day, when he met with Mazzolà again, Mazzolà admitted that he had indeed sent a letter to Da Ponte, but the content was to inform Da Ponte that there were no suitable positions for him at the court in Dresden at that time. Da Ponte was deeply perplexed by the stark difference between the contents of the two letters. He did not suspect that Mazzolà was intentionally playing a prank on him, as Mazzolà had no reason to do so.

After much thought and some detective work on Da Ponte's part, he came to a conclusion in his memoirs. He believed that Giuseppe de Colletti, the printer he had criticized in his poetry, had forged the letter with the intention of pushing him out and seeking revenge for Da Ponte's actions.⁵²⁾ It's worth noting that this is Da Ponte's own conclusion in his memoirs, and the actual truth remains a mystery. However, his deduction may very well be accurate.

Da Ponte did not share the content of the letter and his suspicions with Mazzolà, but he confided in a priest named Michael Hueber, who was also a friend of Mazzolà. Although Da Ponte was disheartened by not finding a suitable position at this time, he decided to stay in Dresden for a while because he had nowhere else to go. Mazzolà was not only friendly and welcoming, but Da Ponte could also assist him with his work. During this time, Da Ponte began to formally engage in music-related endeavors. For example, when Mazzolà was translating

52) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 90-91.

and adapting opera librettos for the theater, Da Ponte would share some of the workload. Sometimes it involved writing a recitative text, and other times it was a duet text. Mazzolà would also outline the scene for Da Ponte to complete.⁵³⁾ It seems that Da Ponte began to enjoy the work of composing and translating texts for operas. Subsequently, he translated the highly popular play written by the French playwright Philippe Quinault, *Atis et Cybèle*.⁵⁴⁾ At that time, this play had already been set to music and performed by Lully.⁵⁵⁾ Mazzolà was very pleased with Da Ponte's translation of this play and even suggested that Da Ponte should write librettos for Italian operas. Although Da Ponte considered this a good idea, he was aware that, at the time, the income for librettists in Italian opera was quite low. This led many poets and playwrights to leave Italy for other countries to make a living, all due to the presence of greedy agents in the Italian opera scene. "However, Mazzola's suggestion did not drop from my mind; indeed, it was there later on, as we shall see, to give me courage to try my luck in the operatic lists on one of the foremost stages in the world."⁵⁶⁾ It's clear that at this time, Da Ponte had already developed a desire to create texts for Italian operas. Not long after, he indeed made significant contributions to Italian opera with his librettos.

Da Ponte's decision to leave Dresden was influenced by several factors, including the competitive and financially unrewarding nature of his work there, which primarily involved improvisational performances.

53) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 91.

54) Ibid

55) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 41.

56) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 93.

He also seemed to sense that Mazzolà was concerned about the competition Da Ponte's talent might pose to him. Moreover, Da Ponte found himself entangled in a complex love affair. It began when Da Ponte wrote seven poems dedicated to Michael Hueber, showcasing his talent and leading to his social connections, including an encounter with an Italian painter. This Italian painter had two daughters and a beautiful wife, despite being close to forty. Both of the painter's daughters fell in love with Da Ponte, and he reciprocated their feelings passionately. Additionally, it appeared that the painter's wife enjoyed the flirtatious attention she received from Da Ponte. As the situation became increasingly complicated, the painter, unable to bear the pain of his daughters' simultaneous love for the same man, decided to leave Da Ponte and embark on a family trip. Devastated, Da Ponte received a letter from his father, bringing tragic news of his younger brother Luigi's death at the young age of 27. The loss of both love and family weighed heavily on Da Ponte. When he started to recover from this emotional turmoil, Mazzolà presented him with another letter, sent by a friend of Mazzolà from Venice. In the letter, this friend warned Mazzolà to be cautious of Da Ponte, as there were rumors in Venice that Da Ponte's arrival was motivated by a desire to take Mazzolà's position. While Mazzolà likely found the contents of the letter amusing and shared it with Da Ponte to lighten his mood, Da Ponte interpreted it as further confirmation of his earlier suspicions. Da Ponte did not hold any bitterness towards Mazzolà or blame him. In light of these circumstances, Da Ponte made the decision to leave Dresden and head to

Vienna.

Da Ponte bid farewell to his friends and also wrote a farewell letter to the painter's wife. He booked a ticket for the early morning of the next day, and Father Michael Hueber came to see him off, kindly preparing food, coins, and books for his journey. Just like the priest's blessing, "Go, my dear Da Ponte! My heart tells me that all will be well!"⁵⁷⁾ Da Ponte embarked on his journey to Vienna with his legendary reputation preceding him. Of course, this journey also included Mazzolà's parting letter of recommendation, addressed to Salieri.

My dear Salieri:⁵⁸⁾

My beloved Da Ponte will hand you these few lines. Do for him everything that you would do for me. His heart and his talents deserve everything. He is, more-over, *pars animæ dimidiumque meæ* .

Your Mazzola.

In 1781, Da Ponte left Dresden and embarked on a new journey to Vienna. Looking back on his life before arriving in Vienna, it seems that music was intertwined with every aspect of his existence. When he first encountered beautiful poetry, he associated it with music. Venice, where he lived, was a city that celebrated with music at every turn. He was introduced to improvised performances accompanied by music, and gradually, he began to work with opera libretti. All of these experiences connected him intimately with music. Perhaps it was the innate musical

57) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 103.

58) *Ibid*, 104.

talent of the Italians, or perhaps it was his growing aspiration for a career in music that led him in this direction. Regardless, as a poet, he had a deep appreciation for music, and he left an indelible mark on the world of opera, creating works that would be cherished by generations to come.

3. Da Ponte's Creation and collaboration in Vienna

In Vienna, Lorenzo Da Ponte reached a turning point in his career. This city of music not only provided a fresh artistic stage but also a place of both challenges and opportunities. With its enlightened monarch, rich artistic atmosphere, and a gathering of talented musicians, Vienna offered Da Ponte endless possibilities. During his time in Vienna, his talent was fully exhibited, adeptly meeting stringent artistic standards and catering to the ever-changing tastes of the audience. His collaborations with some of the greatest musicians of the era showcased his superb skill in libretto writing. The complementary words in his opera scripts were exquisite. His librettos were not just blueprints for performances but also a reflection of his profound understanding of music, stories, and characters. His librettos were filled with insights into human nature and critiques of social realities. In Vienna, Da Ponte's artistic career reached its zenith, with each of his librettos exploring and breaking new ground in the art form of opera. This period not only had a profound impact on Da Ponte's personal artistic journey but also left a significant mark in the history of opera.

3.1 Da Ponte in Vienna

1) The Vienna Era Background

The Enlightenment was the main hallmark of this new era, representing the second and more profound intellectual liberation movement in Europe after the Renaissance during the 17th and 18th

centuries. It emphasized human rationality, challenged traditions, and supported social reforms. The movement advocated for the development of cultural education among the populace, while also educating the people in the principles of democracy and freedom. The progressive ideas of the Enlightenment objectively aligned with the bourgeoisie's demands for social reform and reflected the working people's desire to break free from feudal rule. The development of capitalist economies spurred the increasing prosperity of urban economies across Europe. Consequently, artistic forms, including music, evolved to meet new societal needs. Music was no longer confined to the narrow realms of courts and churches; it started catering to a broader audience. Secular and mass-oriented music experienced rapid development.

Emperor Joseph II is considered one of the most representative monarchs of the Enlightenment era. Politically, he attempted to reduce the influence of the Church, abolish serfdom, and reform the judicial system. Culturally, Joseph II emphasized the importance of education and implemented school education reforms aimed at enhancing the cultural and scientific literacy of the populace. He supported the establishment of new schools and educational institutions, making education more widespread and modernized. Additionally, Joseph II was a passionate supporter of music and the arts. His encouragement of the arts and music helped transform Vienna into a cultural center for music and the arts in Europe. In terms of social structure improvement, through his reforms of the feudal system, Joseph II sought to create a more equitable and open society. He removed many of the restrictions that

governed Jewish life. Emperor Joseph II once said...

To me, toleration means only that in purely secular matters ...I am prepared to employ anyone, let anyone practise agriculture or a trade, or establish himself in a city, who has the required qualifications and would bring advantage or industry into my states.⁵⁹⁾

After personally taking control of the Imperial Theatres in 1775, Emperor Joseph II introduced the German Singspiel, a genre of musical theater that was particularly popular in German-speaking countries during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Singspiel is characterized by a combination of sung parts and spoken dialogue. This form of musical theater differs from Italian opera or French opera, as it is not composed entirely of music but intersperses dialogue between musical sections. Under Joseph II's influence, Singspiel replaced the previously dominant Italian opera in the theaters. This change was part of his broader efforts to promote cultural reforms and reflect the tastes and languages of the local population.⁶⁰⁾ However, after some time, Emperor Joseph II began to feel dissatisfied with his decision to prioritize Singspiel and ultimately decided in 1783 to reinstate the Italian opera troupe. Additionally, Joseph II was always on the lookout for talented singers and summoned them to Vienna. This included English soprano Nancy Storace and Francesco Benucci, one of the most famous bass-baritones of the time, as well as

59) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 48

60) *Ibid*, 46

the outstanding Irish tenor Michael Kelly. These decisions reflect Joseph II's commitment to fostering a diverse and vibrant musical culture in Vienna, recognizing the importance of different styles and talents in the realm of opera and music.

2) Da Ponte's Opportunities and Challenges

In such a favorable environment, Da Ponte arrived in Vienna seeking livelihood. The exact date of Da Ponte's arrival in Vienna is unknown, as he did not detail the journey from Dresden to Vienna in his memoirs. Regardless, Da Ponte's arrival in Vienna was fortuitous, but it was not without its challenges.

It is speculated that Da Ponte arrived in Vienna in the latter half of 1781, as it was during that year he published one of his most exquisite and charming pastoral poems in Vienna, titled *Filemone e Bauci* (*Philemon and Baucis*), based on a theme from Ovid. This work is considered one of his finest poetic creations.⁶¹⁾ This elegant and charming pastoral poem caught the attention of Metastasio, an elder who had served as a court poet for fifty years. In an era of rapid opera development, Metastasio's scripts had fallen out of fashion, leading to a period of relative inactivity. Nevertheless, as one of the greatest poets of his generation and a person of exquisite taste and manners, Metastasio held a high reputation and had no enemies. Da Ponte was fortunate to capture Metastasio's attention, especially considering Metastasio's general reluctance to engage with new things and people, which indeed spoke

61) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 45.

volumes about Da Ponte's high literary prowess. At a gathering, Metastasio read the first part of Da Ponte's *Filemone e Bauci* and invited Da Ponte to read the latter part to those present. This news spread quickly, and many people began to seek Da Ponte's acquaintance, partly because of Metastasio's praise and partly because of Da Ponte's personal charm.

Despite Metastasio's praise and the connections he formed with people, Da Ponte was unable to escape his financial difficulties. Out of necessity, he moved from a house in the center of Vienna to a more remote suburb. Fortunately, during these challenging times, Da Ponte befriended a generous and learned young man who had a passion for Italian literature. Although not wealthy, this young man was sufficiently generous to support Da Ponte for several months, covering his living expenses. Da Ponte made a note of this in his memoirs, acknowledging the significant support he received during this challenging period of his life.

To my good luck I made at that time the acquaintance of a cultivated and well-educated youth, a great lover of Italian letters, who, though not rich, was so generous as to supply me, with noble readiness, with enough to keep me from dire straits over many months.⁶²⁾

During these months, Da Ponte learned of Emperor Joseph II's intention to reorganize the Italian opera company. Holding onto a

62) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 108.

suggestion from Mazzolà, Da Ponte saw this as an opportunity. He visited Antonio Salieri, one of the most famous and popular composers of the time, the court composer in Vienna, and a favorite of the Emperor. Da Ponte shared his aspirations with Salieri, who encouraged him to pursue the position of poet and promised to help arrange a meeting with the Director of Spectacles, Count von Rosenberg-Orsini, who was highly trusted by Joseph II.

When Emperor Joseph II met with Da Ponte, he was very pleased with him. Despite Da Ponte's lack of experience in completing a libretto or a deep understanding of opera scriptwriting, Joseph II appointed him as the poet of the Italian theater. The Emperor's satisfaction was undoubtedly the best encouragement and motivation for Da Ponte. In his memoirs, Da Ponte wrote...

...This fact alone gave me strength to endure everything in my not un-prolonged theatrical career at the Viennese Opera;and it was of greater help to me than all the precepts and all the rules of Aristotle—little read by me and studied less.It was the soul of my inspiration,the guide of my pen,in most of the dramas composed by me for his theater.It brought me out victorious from a terrible conflict waged against me...⁶³⁾

Da Ponte's primary responsibility at the theater was to make necessary modifications to librettos written by other poets, which was not an easy task. On April 22, 1783, the opera company performed its

63) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 109-110.

first opera, *La scola de' gelosi*, composed by Salieri with a libretto by Mazzolà, following its reorganization. By the end of 1783, the theater had staged a total of nine operas, and Da Ponte was involved in all of them.⁶⁴⁾

Da Ponte was a talented poet, but he lacked experience in independently creating opera librettos. Recognizing his inexperience in this area, he visited a man named Varese, who had written opera librettos and possessed a valuable collection of about three hundred opera scripts. Varese was quite miserly and considered these scripts as treasures. He was reluctant to share his collection with Da Ponte and only permitted Da Ponte to read a few of them under his supervision.

However, this experience of reading Varese's "treasures" did not provide Da Ponte with much help. On the contrary, he discovered deficiencies in these librettos. The plots and characterizations were not ideal, the language was impoverished and lacked elegance, and the storylines were often illogical and uninteresting, with unreasonable scene divisions. He realized that writing opera librettos required not only logical plot development but also detailed characterization. Lavish language and rational scene divisions were also indispensable elements.

After reading a libretto by Casti, Da Ponte realized that even though Casti was a great poet with beautiful diction and wonderful choruses, these qualities alone did not guarantee a well-written opera libretto. This prompted Da Ponte to contemplate what was needed to improve his opera writing. He understood that mastering various techniques was

64) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 47.

essential, as was knowing the actors to ensure the suitability and effectiveness of the libretto. This understanding likely influenced Da Ponte's approach to creating librettos that were not only poetic and musically harmonious but also well-suited to the performers and engaging for the audience.⁶⁵⁾

Despite Da Ponte's efforts to think critically about how to structure librettos and improve opera writing, he overlooked a significant reality of the time: the status of poets and musicians was not high. They worked diligently on their creations, but there was no guarantee their works would be performed. Many performers were primarily concerned with whether their roles suited their preferences and showcased their technical skills. If a piece did not highlight a performer's abilities or include opportunities for them to showcase their talent, they would not commit to the work of the musicians and playwrights. Their focus was more on technique rather than a deeper understanding of the artistic value of the libretto.

This situation led to a chaotic environment where composers often disregarded basic musical principles and playwrights struggled to genuinely consider the logic of the script and how lyrics would interact with the music. As a result, composers and playwrights were often forced to cater to the performers, neglecting the depth and logical coherence of the music and storyline.

In the 18th century, the status of opera performers was far higher than that of composers and playwrights, a situation exacerbated by

65) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 115.

existing cultural norms and the inclinations of the opera-going audience. This limitation in the artistic environment not only affected the quality of works but also posed significant challenges for creators.

Around 1720, Benedetto Marcello wrote *Il teatro alla moda*, using exaggeration to satirize this chaotic situation. The book humorously critiqued the dominance of performers over the creative process and the resulting compromise in artistic integrity.⁶⁶⁾

Da Ponte, too, both in his memoirs and else-where, has a good deal to say of his own torment. The chief singers demanded –and got –arias which suited their voices, interpolating songs from completely different operas if they felt that these showed their virtuosity to advantage; they turned up at rehearsals or not as the whim took them, and bullied alike composer and poet. It was taken for granted that the audience would talk animatedly through the recitatives, only paying attention when one of their favourites began to sing an aria. Or else, as Da Ponte remarked,they all composed themselves comfortably for sleep.⁶⁷⁾

Despite the challenges posed by the low status of musicians and playwrights, audience preferences, and performers' demands, talented individuals can overcome these external difficulties. Da Ponte, with his unique talent for playwriting, overcame these challenges and stood out. His librettos showcased not just technical prowess, but a true integration

66) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*.; 49–50.

67) *Ibid*, 50.

of music, storyline, and character development. In addressing the preferences of performers and audiences, he skillfully balanced artistic integrity with market demands, creating librettos that met artistic standards and were beloved by audiences. This approach allowed Da Ponte to navigate the complex dynamics of 18th-century opera production and contribute significantly to the art form.

Da Ponte's work was not just about writing librettos; it represented a profound exploration and innovation in the arts. Most of his librettos were adaptations of existing opera scripts or literary works, but his approach to adaptation was far from mere editing or adding plot elements. Instead, he leveraged his extensive knowledge of classical and contemporary literature. He demonstrated thoughtful consideration of the relationship between text and music, the musicality of words, and his understanding of stagecraft. Da Ponte skillfully transformed textual sentences into poetry that aided the musical narrative of the plot.

His librettos were filled with social critique and satire, reflecting the lives and conflicts of different social classes through the dialogue between characters and their individual personality traits. He excelled at transforming complex storylines and character personalities into vivid opera scenes. His librettos offered not only deep emotional expression but also humorous depictions of social customs. They enabled audiences to appreciate beautiful melodies while gaining a deeper understanding of the characters' personalities. Da Ponte's contributions to opera were significant, blending artistic mastery with insightful social commentary, thus enriching the operatic experience.

Indeed, it was Da Ponte's ability to overcome numerous challenges in libretto writing and to leverage his strengths that enabled him to collaborate effectively with composers. These collaborations consistently demonstrated Da Ponte's skill in harmoniously blending text with music, further proving his talent in libretto creation. His adeptness at this art form allowed for a synergy between the narrative and musical components of the operas, enhancing the overall impact and appeal of the librettos. Da Ponte's contributions to opera were not only in the crafting of words but also in the way he understood and complemented the musical expressions, which was a testament to his creative genius in the realm of opera.

3.2 Da Ponte and Antonio Salieri

1) Who is Antonio Salieri

Antonio Salieri (1750-1825) was a Classical era Italian composer and conductor. Born in 1750 in Legnago, a small town in the Republic of Venice, Salieri began his musical education at an early age, learning the harpsichord and violin under the guidance of his brother. After the death of his parents, he continued his studies in Venice, where he met several notable musicians. In 1766, Salieri's talents caught the attention of Florian Leopold Gassmann, the conductor of the Vienna orchestra, who took him to Vienna. In 1786, Salieri composed what is recorded as his first opera, *Le donne letterate*, which was successfully performed at the court theater in 1770. Following Gassmann's death in 1774, Salieri became the court composer and maestro of the Italian opera in Vienna,

establishing a solid reputation in the musical world. In 1788, he was appointed the court conductor in Vienna, a position he held for thirty-six years. Salieri was not only an exceptional musician but also an outstanding teacher. His students included some of the most distinguished composers of the time, such as Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Schubert, and Franz Liszt. Salieri's influence extended far beyond his compositions, as he played a significant role in shaping the musical landscape of his era through both his own works and his mentorship of the next generation of composers.

Antonio Salieri's musical compositions, aside from several pieces of religious music, concertos, and variations, were primarily focused on opera. During his lifetime, a total of thirty-seven of his works were brought to the stage. Some of Salieri's most notable operas include *Le donne letterate*, *Il Talismano*, *Eraclito e Democrito*, and *Axur, Re d'Ormus*. These operas showcase Salieri's mastery in the field, illustrating his ability to blend musical complexity with dramatic narratives. Salieri's influence on the operatic genre was significant, contributing greatly to its development during the Classical era. His works are characterized by their innovative orchestration, melodic inventiveness, and the integration of various musical styles, which helped to pave the way for future developments in opera.

2) Their First Collaboration

After assuming the role of poet for the Italian opera company, Da Ponte's responsibilities included not only daily necessities but also the

independent creation of librettos. His first task as a librettist was to collaborate with Antonio Salieri on an opera. At the time, Salieri was an influential musician, favored not only by the emperor but also by Count von Rosenberg-Orsini. In 1783, Da Ponte provided Salieri with several themes to choose from for their opera. Da Ponte believed that Salieri chose a theme that was not particularly ideal. In his memoirs, Da Ponte recalled this event and wrote...“Unfortunately he elected the one which perhaps was least susceptible of beauty and of theatrical treatment – *Rich for a Day*.⁶⁸⁾

The theme for this opera came from Giovanni Bertati’s text *Il ricco d’un giorno*. Da Ponte believed that this libretto itself lacked sufficient diversity in characters and plot, resulting in dry dialogues and scenes. Da Ponte realized that the task of adapting the libretto was much more challenging in practice than he had anticipated. Finally, he completed most of the first act. When writing the finale of the first act, Da Ponte faced significant challenges. Composing the finale was complex; it needed to be closely connected to the overall opera plot while having independent comedic or operatic qualities. It required a new plot and points of interest that could propel the opera to its climax. Finales typically needed to achieve a grand dramatic effect, avoid expository tones, and incorporate various singing forms. Additionally, the finale had to showcase all the actors on stage, regardless of their number, including various types of choruses. If the plot did not naturally allow for this, the librettist had to find ways to make it work, posing a

68) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 111.

significant challenge for the playwright. A poorly executed finale could be a major disadvantage for the librettist in the opera's success.⁶⁹⁾ This creative process was an ordeal for Da Ponte, but it was also an important growth experience in his career. He documented this writing process in his memoirs, stating...

it will not be difficult to imagine the embarrassment in which I found myself in composing my first finale. Ten times I was on the point of burning what I had done, and going to beg leave to resign. At length, by dint of biting my nails, squinting my eyes, scratching my head, invoking the aid of Lucina and of all the saints and midwives of Pindus, I completed not only my first finale, but the whole opera.⁷⁰⁾

He seemed to think that his latest creation was very poor, so much so that he locked the newly created work in his closet for two weeks. When he finally mustered the courage to face it and took it out for a read, he found the experience even worse than before. However, at this point, he had no choice but to hand the script over to Salieri, as Salieri had already composed music for several scenes and needed the script for further musical creation. After Da Ponte braced himself for the impending storm, he handed the script over to Salieri with a heavy heart. Unexpectedly, Salieri's appraisal of the script was not bad at all:

69) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 112.

70) *Ibid*, 113.

It is well written, but we must see it on the stage. There are songs and scenes I like very much. On the other hand, I will need to have some little changes made here and there, more for the musical effect than for anything else.⁷¹⁾

Upon hearing such an appraisal, Da Ponte escaped from his despondency and left Salieri's place with a sense of pride. However, he was worried about Salieri's comment, "I will need to have some little changes." As it turned out, this concern was justified. Da Ponte wrote in his memoirs:

Of shortening or lengthening most of the scenes; of introducing new duets, terzets, quartets; of changing meters half way through a song; of mixing in choruses to be sung by a German ballet; in deleting almost all the recitatives, and therewith all the plot, all the dramatic quality of the action, if any there were. When the drama went on the stage, I doubt whether there remained a hundred verses of my original.⁷²⁾

After preparing the music, Salieri set off for Paris. During his absence, Giambattista Casti⁷³⁾ and Giovanni Paisiello⁷⁴⁾ arrived in Vienna

71) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 113.

72) Ibid.

73) Giambattista Casti, born in 1724 and passed away in 1803, was an Italian poet and satirist. He was renowned for his wit and sharp satirical librettos, particularly his commentary on the social and political issues of his time. Casti's librettos often incorporated deep social insights and incisive satirical techniques, which made them widely noticed and controversial during his era. Some of his librettos are considered

successively in the spring of 1784. The former was one of the most renowned poets in Europe, especially famous for his obscene stories, which were admirable in terms of poetry but shocking and blasphemous in terms of morality.⁷⁵⁾ Casti came to Vienna with the intention of succeeding the late Metastasio as the court poet. Da Ponte believed that Casti's aspiration for the position was partly due to his genuine talent and partly through the sponsorship of his very powerful friends, especially Count von Rosenberg, who had a high regard for Casti.⁷⁶⁾ Giovanni Paisiello, a famous and popular composer, was invited by the emperor to collaborate with Giambattista Casti on an opera, leading to the postponement of the premiere of *Il ricco d'un giorno*. Giambattista Casti and Giovanni Paisiello began working together on the opera *Il rè Teodoro in Venezia*, which was staged in August 1784. As expected, the opera was a huge success, which made Da Ponte even more anxious about his yet-to-be-staged *Il ricco d'un giorno*, while at the same time, he felt relieved about its delay.

important satirical literature in the history of literature, showcasing an aspect of the 18th-century European society and culture.

74) Giovanni Paisiello, a renowned Italian composer, was born on May 9, 1740, and passed away on June 5, 1816. He is famous for his operatic works, particularly "Il barbiere di Siviglia" (The Barber of Seville), which was popular well before Rossini's opera of the same name. Paisiello's musical style represented the late 18th-century Italian opera tradition, showcasing beautiful melodies and refined orchestral arrangements. Besides operas, he composed many religious music pieces, chamber music, and symphonies. His music was very popular in his time and was favored by royalty and nobility across Europe. Paisiello's significance in music history lies not only in his works but also in his profound influence on later composers like Rossini and Beethoven. Although many of his compositions are not as well-known today as some of his contemporaries, his contributions to music history are still widely recognized and appreciated.

75) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 114.

76) *Ibid*

Da Ponte read the script of Casti's opera, and this experience of reading the script deeply made Da Ponte realize an undeniable fact: "A great poet is not enough to write a good script."⁷⁷⁾ Indeed, Da Ponte began to think more deeply about how to write a good script.

After Salieri returned from Paris, the opera they collaborated on was scheduled to be performed. In February 1784, *Il ricco d'un giorno* was staged. The original lead soprano, Anna Storace, a singer dearly loved by the Viennese, suddenly fell ill, and another singer replaced her role. Unsurprisingly, the opera *Il ricco d'un giorno* was a complete failure. This opera was Da Ponte's first attempt at writing an opera script, so failure was somewhat inevitable. Although Da Ponte partially attributed this failure to the machinations of his rivals, he also honestly believed that the failure was justified. He also thought that 'the libretto was positively awful and the music not much better'.⁷⁸⁾

Despite various factors contributing to the failure of *Il ricco d'un giorno*, Da Ponte's enemies tried to convince people that it was all his fault. Da Ponte believed that while lyrics are important in opera, usually serving to support a beautiful framework, in this case, his lyrics were seen as the key to the opera's success or failure. Supporters of Casti, poets competing for the position of court poet, even singers, and Salieri himself, all expressed negative comments about the script and lyrics of *Il ricco d'un giorno*. They criticized how Da Ponte's lyrics could be memorized by the actors and even questioned how the maestro Salieri could set them to music. Furthermore, there were claims that Salieri

77) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 115.

78) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 53.

swore he would rather lose his fingers than compose music for Da Ponte's poetry again.⁷⁹⁾

In this situation, Casti became the only supporter of Da Ponte, but his way of support further damaged Da Ponte's reputation. By praising Da Ponte's talent, taste, and capabilities, Casti was actually insinuating that Da Ponte was not adept at writing opera. This superficial praise was in fact a worse form of hostility, as it lent more credibility to Casti in the aspects he chose not to praise. Da Ponte felt an unprecedented level of disappointment and defeat. In fact, the script itself was not as bad as these people claimed, and the harsh criticisms were likely motivated by some ulterior purpose.

The libretto is in fact considerably better than its detractors made it out to be, and, since it is set in Venice, portrays a society which Da Ponte knew well. One of the visual splendours that must have evoked loud hurrahs –for opera audiences of the day demanded immensely costly and elaborate scenery and effects– was an illuminated gondola which appeared on the stage.⁸⁰⁾

The failure of his first opera script left Da Ponte too ashamed to face the emperor. However, he unexpectedly encountered Emperor Joseph II during a morning walk. Joseph II kindly comforted Da Ponte and expressed anticipation for his next opera script. It was precisely because

79) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 118.

80) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 54.

of Joseph II's encouragement and practical support that Da Ponte did not become disheartened by this failure. The emperor's encouragement and support filled Da Ponte with renewed energy and motivation.

3) Other Collaborations Between the Two

After the successful staging of *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Una cosa rara*, Salieri seemed to forget his past vow of chopping off his fingers and once again expressed his desire to collaborate with Da Ponte. At the same time, another composer also extended an invitation to Da Ponte for collaboration.

The second collaboration between the two was based on a previous work composed by Salieri in France - *Tarare*. Da Ponte was tasked with freely adapting the script of this work, infusing it with an Italian style. While completing most of the first act, Da Ponte decided to change the name of the opera's script to *Axur*.⁸¹⁾

Tarare is a French opera created by the French playwright Beaumarchais in collaboration with Salieri, which premiered in France in June 1787. At the request of Joseph II, Salieri and Da Ponte transformed this opera into an Italian-language opera. Initially, the adaptation involved a simple translation of the script, but during the process, both felt dissatisfied. Salieri thought the melodies he had written for the French audience were not suitable for Italian singers. When the melodies were adjusted, Da Ponte began to feel dissatisfied with his own lyrics.

Finally, on Salieri's suggestion, the two decided to undertake a major

81) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 156.

rewriting of the opera, adapting the original plot to suit the Italian opera style. This new opera, *Axur, Re d'Ormus*, premiered in Vienna on January 8, 1788, under their collaboration. The opera received immense praise and was regarded as one of Salieri's finest works.

Axur, Re d'Ormus, an opera seria, was a genre in which Da Ponte was less proficient compared to opera buffa. However, in this opera, he adeptly handled plots involving intrigue and disguise. He skillfully used clever and technical characteristics, infusing the entire opera with dramatic effect. It is said that for this script, Da Ponte received not only the remuneration stipulated in the contract but also a substantial additional payment as a gesture of goodwill.⁸²⁾

In 1788, Da Ponte also provided another opera libretto for Salieri titled *Il talismano*, adapted from a play by Goldoni. This opera did not particularly endear itself to audiences, seemingly with the lyrics drawing more criticism than the music.⁸³⁾ However, possibly due to Salieri's influence, the opera was still performed numerous times.

In early February 1789, during the carnival season, "Il pastor fido," a collaboration between Da Ponte and Salieri, premiered. It is said that this opera was written by Da Ponte for his lover, Ferrarese^{84).}⁸⁵⁾ The opera did not create much of a stir, for which Salieri blamed Da Ponte, but the actual reason might have been the timing of the performance.

In 1789, *La cifra*, the last opera Da Ponte wrote in Vienna, was also a collaboration with Salieri. This opera did not receive favorable reviews

82) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 94.

83) Ibid

84) A female opera singer

85) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 98.

for either its libretto or music. The character development in the script lacked distinctiveness, and the music was not very satisfying.

At that time, Salieri was battling illness and was no longer the Salieri that people knew. ⁸⁶⁾ Nevertheless, the opera was still performed multiple times.

4) Special Collaborations Between the Two

When it comes to *Così fan tutte*, we often associate it with Mozart, and that's correct. This opera is a classic collaboration between Mozart. However, before their collaboration, this opera had an interesting history related to Salieri.

The original name of *Così fan tutte* was *La scuola degli amanti*. Before Mozart composed the music for this opera, it is highly likely that Salieri was involved in the musical composition of this opera. However, for some unknown reasons, Salieri did not complete the music for this opera. Scholars have discovered Salieri's handwritten manuscript for *Così fan tutte* in the Austrian National Library.⁸⁷⁾ This further confirms that Salieri was indeed involved in the composition of this opera. Although it was not ultimately a collaboration between Da Ponte and Salieri, this discovery is indeed an interesting one.

⁸⁶⁾ Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 99.

⁸⁷⁾ Bruce Alan Brown and John A. Rice, "Salieri's *Così fan tutte*," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Mar, 8/1. (1996), 20.



[Fig. 1]

The first page of *E la fede delle femmine* from the autograph of Antonio Salieri's *Così fan tutte* (A-Wn, S.m. 4531)⁸⁸⁾



[Fig.2]

The first page of *La mia Dorabella* from the autograph of Antonio Salieri's *Così fan tutte* (A-Wn, S.m. 4531)⁸⁹⁾

88) Brown and Rice, "Salieri's *Così fan tutte*," 21.

89) *Ibid.* 31.



[Fig.3]

The recitative *Terminiamo una volta* from the autograph of Antonio Salieri's *Così fan tutte* (A-Wn, S.m. 4531) ⁹⁰⁾

The collaboration between Da Ponte and Antonio Salieri, while not achieving remarkable success, was an extremely important partnership for Antonio Salieri. Without Antonio Salieri, Da Ponte might not have had the opportunity to meet Joseph II and, subsequently, become the court poet of the theater. Their first collaboration, although not entirely successful, was an indispensable experience in Da Ponte's career. Through the failed attempt of *Il ricco d'un giorno*, Da Ponte began to realize that the key to writing librettos lay in a deep understanding of singers and composers, capturing their respective characteristics. This experience of failure transformed Da Ponte from a mere poet into a successful opera librettist. Antonio Salieri was not only a master figure in the music world at that time but also an indispensable partner in Da Ponte's career.

90) Brown and Rice, "Salieri's *Così fan tutte*," 34.

3.3 Da Ponte and Martin y Soler

1) Who is Martin y Soler

Vicente Martin y Soler (1754-1806) was a composer of classical Spanish opera and ballet during the Classical period. While his name and works may not be as well-known today, during his time as an opera composer, he was on par with Mozart. Martin y Soler was born on May 2, 1754, in Valencia, and he passed away in early 1806. His father was a tenor at the town's cathedral, and Martin himself was a singer in the cathedral choir. Later, he studied music in Bologna under Giovanni Battista Martini. Around 1775, Martin y Soler moved to Madrid, where his first opera, *Il coache burlato*, premiered in 1775. By approximately 1776, he began serving the Prince of Asturias, who would later become King Charles IV of Spain. Shortly after, he relocated to Naples, where he composed works for the Teatro di San Carlo and several opera series and ballets for Ferdinando I. During this time, he collaborated with choreographer Charles le Picq on four ballets. In 1782, his career took a significant turn when Martin y Soler moved to Venice and began primarily composing opera buffas. His talent quickly gained recognition in various European courts, including Turin and the Duchy of Parma.⁹¹⁾

In 1785, he once again relocated, this time to the music capital, Vienna. In Vienna, his career reached its zenith, particularly through his collaboration with the renowned librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, earning him immense acclaim. Their collaborative works, including *Il burbero di buon*

91) Dorothea Link, "Martín y Soler (Atanasio Martín Ignacio) Vicente (opera)," *In Grove Music Online*, Published online (2002). 1.

cuore (1786), *Una cosa rara* (1786), and *L'arbore di Diana* (1787), achieved significant artistic success, with the latter two becoming highly popular at the time. In 1788, Martin y Soler was appointed as the Court Composer by Catherine the Great of Russia. While this provided him with prestige and financial security, it somewhat slowed down his artistic achievements. During his time in St. Petersburg, he composed some Russian operas and ballets but failed to replicate the brilliance of his earlier works. In 1794, he briefly moved to London and resumed his collaboration with Da Ponte, creating two operas, with *La scuola dei maritati* being particularly well-received. Shortly thereafter, he returned to St. Petersburg, continuing his musical career until his passing.

2) Their First Collaboration

After Da Ponte's setback with the opera *Il ricco d'un giorno*, he was encouraged by the Emperor to regroup and make a brave attempt once again. It was at this time that Martin y Soler arrived in Vienna. Despite being Spanish, Martin y Soler had a keen taste for Italian music, and upon the recommendation of a friend, he sought out Da Ponte and expressed his desire to collaborate. After some consideration, they decided to choose a well-known subject, opting for Goldoni's outstanding play *Il burbero di buon cuore*.

Carlo Goldoni, as one of the most outstanding and prolific playwrights of the 18th century, left an indelible mark on Italian comedy and made profound contributions to the modernization of the Italian theater. Goldoni is renowned for his desire to depict real-life social situations,

encouraging actors to shed their masks and perform in a more natural and authentic manner. He also innovated dramatic forms by abandoning conventional fixed roles and adopting lively, witty, and colloquial dialogues that breathed life into his works.⁹²⁾

Goldoni, a Venetian native, was about forty years older than Lorenzo Da Ponte, and their paths never crossed. By the time Da Ponte arrived in Venice, Goldoni had long departed for Paris, where he spent his later years. Despite criticisms from Venetian literati who often discussed him in disparaging terms, claiming that his use of vernacular language in his works debased the purity of the Italian language, Da Ponte drew profound inspiration from Goldoni's works and adapted several of Goldoni's plays.⁹³⁾

Goldoni initially wrote *Il burbero di buon cuore* (originally titled *Le bourru bienfaisant*) in French. This play is filled with the finest elements of the comedy opera tradition, telling the story of a kind-hearted but rough-mannered old man. Its purpose was to celebrate the wedding of the then Dauphin, later Louis XVI, and Marie Antoinette.⁹⁴⁾ Da Ponte learned some valuable lessons in lyric writing during this time, especially in the year when "Il ricco d'un giorno" was a failure. He began to realize that a poet must have a deep understanding of the actors to make the characters fit them. He also observed the mistakes of other playwrights, including his own, and learned how to make improvements.⁹⁵⁾

92) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 57.

93) Ibid.

94) Ibid. 57.

95) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 115.

Da Ponte's adaptation of Goldoni's text was not a simple translation. He studied the work, understood the various complex techniques used in it, and then applied his own skills to create the libretto. As his rival Casti claimed,:

it is a brisk, very skillful adaptation and reduction, with interesting and by no means conventional character development, and with the lilt which the best of Da Ponte's libretti always possess.⁹⁶⁾

Da Ponte's adaptation of *Il burbero di buon cuore* indeed showcased his extraordinary talent. He skillfully crafted deep and nuanced characters while depicting the complex dynamics between different social classes. His use of humor and misunderstandings added layers and interest to the plot, demonstrating his profound understanding of dramatic structure and character psychology. These techniques and insights laid the foundation for his subsequent success in writing opera librettos.⁹⁷⁾

The successful premiere of *Il burbero di buon cuore* on January 4, 1786, was indeed a significant achievement for Da Ponte. It not only served as a powerful response to his competitors' doubts but also provided recognition of his skill in libretto writing. The opera's success demonstrated that Da Ponte had a keen understanding of what worked well on the operatic stage and that his adaptations of Goldoni's work were highly effective.

96) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 57.

97) *Ibid.* 58.

3) Their Second Collaboration

This success further ignited Da Ponte's passion for opera composition. He began to contemplate the theme of the next opera for Martin y Soler, while also promising that Mozart would compose an opera libretto for him. He was well aware of the distinct styles of these two composers, so he carefully considered the direction for creating opera librettos for both of them.

To prevent interference from competitors in their collaboration, Da Ponte and Martin y Soler decided to keep this collaboration secret. This time, Da Ponte chose a Spanish-themed script for Martin y Soler. To better understand the Spanish theatrical atmosphere, Da Ponte read many Spanish works and ultimately selected Calderon⁹⁸⁾'s *La luna de la Sierra* for adaptation. Da Ponte retained the historical background and some Spanish elements from the original work. The entire script embraced a pastoral style, making pastoral elements predominant throughout the opera. While carefully considering the script, Da Ponte also took into account the characteristics of the actors.

The theme of this comedy is quite simple. The Prince of Spain falls in

98) Calderon, whose full name is Pedro Calderon de la Barca (1600 - 1681), was a Spanish playwright and poet. He was a significant figure in Baroque literature and Spanish theater, regarded as one of the greatest playwrights in Spanish literary history. His works are known for their intricate plots, profound themes, and exquisite poetry. His plays often deal with moral, philosophical, and religious issues, filled with symbolism and deep psychological exploration. Calderon's dramatic works had a profound influence on later generations, not only in Spain but also across European literature. His works have been frequently adapted into various forms of performing arts, including opera, ballet, and film.

love with a beautiful country girl. However, this country girl is deeply in love with her fiancé and firmly rejects the prince's advances. She is the embodiment of chastity. Hence, the title was chosen as *Una cosa rara*, which translates to "A Rare Thing - Beauty and Virtue."⁹⁹⁾

The libretto and music of this opera were quickly created, which seemed like a promising start. However, before the opera's performance, it faced protests from the actors. At that time, the actors didn't know who the librettist was, so their objections were solely directed at Martin y Soler's music. The reasons for their objections were absurd, ranging from one actor claiming not to like this Spanish composer. Disharmony among the actors arose, with some finding the melodies too high and others feeling there were too many recitatives. But what pleased Da Ponte was that the reviews of the libretto said: "that the poetry was very beautiful, the characters interesting, the subject entirely original; that the play, in a word, was a masterpiece, but the music weak and trivial."¹⁰⁰⁾ However, these were just minor incidents, and despite the almost frantic complaints from the singers, which even reached the Emperor's ears, with the Emperor's patronage, all these issues would become a thing of the past.

This opera premiered on November 17, 1786, at the Burgtheater in Vienna. The cast consisted of actors known to Da Ponte, and he understood their characteristics, crafting a script that suited them. With the right timing and circumstances, it's not difficult to imagine that this play was a great success.

99) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 147.

100) *Ibid.*

After the premiere, *Una cosa rara* became extremely popular, to the extent that it swept the entire city into a frenzy.¹⁰¹⁾ Everyone praised the elegance, sweetness, and melodies in the music, as well as the novelty and humor in the script, delighting the audience.¹⁰²⁾ People were curious about the poet who had written the script, and amidst the praise, it became known that the author of *Una cosa rara* was Da Ponte. This revelation left the conspiratorial individuals feeling embarrassed.

The opera *Una cosa rara* caused a sensation as soon as it premiered, winning the favor of the Emperor and the Viennese audience. Its music featured delightful and enchanting melodies that harmonized perfectly with the beautiful lyrics, creating an irresistible charm that captivated the audience's senses. The opera's immense popularity quickly made it a cultural phenomenon and a fashionable trend of its time.

In conclusion, the tremendous success of this opera greatly elevated the reputation and status of the composer Martín y Soler and the librettist Da Ponte in the world of music. In *Una cosa rara*, Da Ponte and Martín y Soler found a harmonious collaboration that suited them perfectly. This was not only a pinnacle of their artistic partnership but also laid the foundation for their future works.

4) Their Third Collaboration

After the successful performance of *Una cosa rara*, the Emperor suggested that Da Ponte should once again create an opera libretto for Martín y Soler. Even Count Casti, who had been in opposition to Da

101) Dorothea Link, "Una Cosa rara". In *Grove Music Online*. Published online, (2002), 2.

102) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 149.

Ponte, expressed friendliness towards him.

Martin y Soler, Mozart, and Salieri, who had once sworn to cut off his fingers if he ever composed music for Da Ponte's libretto again, all approached Da Ponte around the same time, expressing their desire to collaborate. Da Ponte made the ambitious decision to work on three separate projects simultaneously, embarking on a period of intense and frenzied work.

Da Ponte was well aware of Martin y Soler's strength in crafting sweet and captivating melodies that touched the heart. Therefore, he wanted to choose a compelling theme for Martin y Soler. *L'arbore di Diana* was a challenge as it was an original libretto by Da Ponte. In his memoirs, Da Ponte expressed that he considered it his best work among all his librettos, both in terms of creativity and poetry. He described it as "luxurious without being obscene and continuously engaging."¹⁰³⁾

The story behind the creation of the libretto for *L'arbore di Diana* is quite intriguing. When Da Ponte was working on it, he didn't have a specific concept or outline in mind. On one occasion, while Martin y Soler and his friends were visiting Da Ponte, he informed them that he already had the idea for the opera, naming it *L'arbore di Diana*, even though he had no concrete content for the libretto. To buy some time for thinking, he pretended to have other matters to attend to and left the room temporarily. In less than half an hour, he had conceived the entire plan for the opera. This plan was not only innovative but also cleverly aligned with the recent policy enacted by Emperor Joseph II, which

103) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 156-158.

aimed to abolish the convent system.¹⁰⁴⁾

The opera's general plot is as follows: Diana, the goddess of chastity, has a garden with a tree whose fruits can determine the purity of the nymphs. If the nymphs remain chaste, the fruits shine brightly and emit heavenly sounds. Conversely, if they are impure, the fruits darken and harm them, with the severity of punishment corresponding to their transgressions. The Love Deity, discontent with these strict rules, disguises himself as a woman to enter the garden and seduces the gardener, teaching him how to seduce the nymphs. The Love Deity also orchestrates a love affair between Diana and a mortal man. When Diana's priestess discovers the wrongdoing and demands that all nymphs face judgment by the tree, Diana, to conceal the truth, orders the miraculous tree to be cut down. In the end, the Love Deity declares that Diana's garden will henceforth become the domain of love.

This opera premiered on October 1, 1787, as part of the celebration for Maria Theresa's arrival in Vienna. She was the daughter of Leopold, the brother of Joseph II, and the bride of Prince Anton of Saxony.¹⁰⁵⁾ The premiere was highly successful, and the opera was well-received, comparable to the reception of *Una cosa rara*. It was not only performed multiple times locally but also in various opera houses across Europe, including Milan, Leipzig, Madrid, London, and others.¹⁰⁶⁾

This opera, the third collaboration between Da Ponte and Martin y Soler, continued some of the basic patterns established in *Una cosa rara*

104) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 156-157.

105) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 82.

106) *Ibid.*

while introducing new and novel themes to complement Matin y Soler's sweet music. Although this work may have faded into relative obscurity today, we cannot deny its popularity during that era and the artistic achievements of Da Ponte and Matin y Soler.

Da Ponte's creation of the libretto for *L'arbore di Diana* combines mythological elements with real-life themes, making it a fusion of opera buffa and opera seria. It is a work that is both humorous and profound, with underlying political metaphors. Through the character of the goddess Diana and her nymphs, it explores themes of chastity and love, revealing the complex dynamics between gender and societal norms. It also portrays the tension and interaction between individual desires and societal expectations. Matin y Soler's music in the opera is concise and beautiful, highlighting the lighthearted and satirical characteristics of opera buffa while aligning with the aesthetic standards of the time. The stage design and production of the opera are creative and vibrant, offering many opportunities for spectacular stage effects and mechanical devices, including what appears to be one of the earliest attempts at a revolving stage.¹⁰⁷⁾ This presents the audience with a visually captivating experience that blends tradition with modernity. These elements enhance the opera's entertainment value.

5) Artistic Fusion of Da Ponte and Martin y Soler

While Martin y Soler began his opera composition career before arriving in Vienna, his expertise in the field of ballet had a significant

107) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 82.

influence on his musical style. Ballet music typically avoids complex polyphonic structures and makes less use of multi-voice music. It tends to favor smooth melodies, structured forms, and strong symmetry. Therefore, Martín y Soler often incorporated similar elements into his opera compositions, which aligned well with the musical preferences of the audiences at the time.

Martín y Soler's music is characterized by its prominent melodic elements, creating a unique musical expression.¹⁰⁸⁾ His works exhibit structural and formal periodicity and regularity, tending to express lyrical characteristics rather than conflict-driven, dramatic expressions. He blends various styles in his works and, while adhering to traditional frameworks, cleverly incorporates varying degrees of musical lyricism.¹⁰⁹⁾

His collaboration with Da Ponte greatly shaped Martín y Soler's operatic style. Da Ponte provided him with scripts that aligned with his lyrical talents, with lyrics reflecting the periodicity and regularity of his music, while also providing guidance in character development. For example, in the creation of the script for *Una cosa rara*, Da Ponte adopted an approach that didn't emphasize stark character contrasts to better suit Martín y Soler's style. Consequently, he reduced the sharp contrasts between the characters in the script: Queen Isabella, although still recognizable as a beloved 15th-century monarch, appeared without historical embellishments (such as attendants or ceremonial scenes); the comical shepherd couple lost some of their vulgarity; the prince gained some of Corado's authority, while Corado gained some of the prince's

108) Dorothea Link, "Martín y Soler (Atanasio Martín Ignacio) Vicente (opera)", 2.

109) Ibid.

innocence. Lilla and Lubino, as the ideal shepherd couple, remained unchanged.¹¹⁰⁾

In their first collaboration on the opera *Il burbero di buon cuore*, they were still in the exploratory stage of their partnership, and Da Ponte's script didn't fully showcase the composer's musical talents. However, in their second collaboration on the opera *Una cosa rara*, they found the key to success and received significant acclaim. In their third collaboration on the opera *L'arbore di Diana*, they continued in a similar fashion, with Da Ponte's collaboration greatly harnessing Martin y Soler's lyrical gifts. Martin y Soler was generally regarded by his contemporaries as a composer catering to amateur enthusiasts and his works were widely accepted. Thus, his compositions were popular for appealing to public taste, which in turn encouraged him to further develop his lyrical style.

3.4 Mozart and Da Ponte

1) Who is Mozart

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was indeed one of the prominent figures of the Classical period in Vienna. He was born in Austria in 1756, and his father was a renowned violinist and composer, which had a significant influence on Mozart's musical upbringing. Mozart had a prolific and highly acclaimed compositional career, and his works continue to have a strong presence and enduring appeal to this day.

110) Dorothea Link, "Una Cosa rara", 2.

Mozart was indeed a musical prodigy rarely seen in history. He began learning the piano at the age of four, started composing at the age of five, and by eight, he was already creating sonatas and symphonies. At the age of eleven, he composed his first opera. At the tender age of six, Mozart embarked on a tour of Europe under the guidance of his father. They visited various countries, including Munich, Vienna, Germany, Belgium, France, England, the Netherlands, and Italy. This decade-long touring had a positive impact on Mozart's artistic growth, and it fueled his passion for music. During the tours, Mozart had the opportunity to meet many musicians and literary figures, and he was exposed to the musical traditions of countries like France and Italy. This exposure played a crucial role in shaping him into the most versatile composer of his time.

In late 1773, Mozart returned to Austria, and by this time, he had already matured as a composer. Many of his famous works were completed during this period. In an effort to break free from various constraints, Mozart moved to Vienna in 1781. He became the first composer in European musical history to liberate himself from the influence of the court and the church, prioritizing personal dignity. The ten years that Mozart spent in Vienna were a period of brilliant musical creativity. Many of his iconic works were composed during this time. While Mozart gained artistic freedom in terms of creativity, thought, and action, he also had to navigate the challenges of his personal life. Despite these challenges, he refused the position of court composer offered by King Frederick William II of Prussia. After a long period of

hard work and dedication, Mozart passed away on December 5, 1791.

Mozart's musical compositions spanned nearly every genre of music. He excelled in opera, symphonies, sacred music, piano concertos, piano sonatas, violin concertos, piano and violin sonatas, string quartets, and more. His versatility and mastery of various musical forms contributed to his status as one of the greatest composers in the history of music.

When it comes to Mozart, people first think of him as a foremost opera composer, and his career was indeed closely intertwined with opera throughout his life. During his time in Vienna, he composed a remarkable series of operas that have become classics. These include the German operas *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*) and *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*), as well as the Italian opera buffa *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*), *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*. These operas are considered timeless masterpieces and represent his highest achievements in this genre.

2) Mozart's Music Characteristics and Requirements for Opera Art

Mozart's music is filled with optimism, confidence, and a positive spirit, which, although not in line with his life experiences, reflects the unique spirit of optimism and confidence in the future that characterized the Enlightenment era. The artistic features of harmony, symmetry, logical weight, and moderation in Mozart's music are the best representations of Classical aesthetics. While his musical compositions may not exude grand heroic sentiments, they exhibit the noble and pure qualities of Classical aesthetics. The lightness, elegance, delicacy, and

brightness expressed in his music often allow people to experience pure happiness and tranquil transcendence from the depths of their souls.

Mozart's operas, whether based on literary works or mythology, possess a strong sense of realism, allowing audiences to strongly feel the essence of real life and the spirit of the times. In Mozart's opera works, vocal and instrumental elements are inseparable and naturally blend together to serve the purpose of revealing the development of the dramatic plot. Mozart's operas are characterized by their powerful musical expressiveness, beauty, and fluency. He excelled in portraying the inner characteristics of different characters, making his music vivid and distinct. In his operas, vocal expression forms a unified yet diverse artistic whole. Mozart was skilled in using ensemble forms to depict dramatic conflicts and operatic climaxes. His achievements in opera composition stand as a monument in the history of Western opera's development.

Mozart had very high standards when it came to the language in opera librettos. He strongly disliked librettos that compromised the language for the sake of rhyme. He expressed this view in a letter to his father in 1781 :

A opera, as long as it has a carefully designed plot and lyrics created exclusively for music, without resorting to poor rhymes - by which I mean those phrases or complete verses that could damage the composer's entire conception - then, this opera's poetry is bound to be successful. For music,

poetry is indeed the most indispensable element, but pursuing rhyme as the sole objective is the most detrimental.¹¹¹⁾

In another letter to his father, Mozart mentioned...

I should say that in an opera the poetry must be altogether the obedient daughter of the music. Why do Italian opera buffas please everywhere—in spite of their miserable libretti?...Just because there the music reigns supreme and when one listens to it all else is forgotten." "The best thing of all, 'he wrote in the same letter,' is when a good composer, who understands the stage and is talented enough to make sound suggestions, meets an able poet, that true phoenix..¹¹²⁾

These contents all indicate that Mozart had very strict requirements for the librettos and lyrics of his operas. Apart from Da Ponte, there were other Italian poets who wished to provide librettos for Mozart, but the librettos and poetry they offered did not meet Mozart's artistic standards for opera.

As Jahn, one of Mozart's earliest biographers, writes, The

111) 莫扎特,《我是你的莫扎特:莫扎特書信集》,錢仁康譯,陽軍編選(北京:中國財政經濟出版社,2016),136. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *I Am Your Mozart: Mozart's Letter Collection*, translated by Qian Renkang, edited by Yang Jun. (Beijing: China Finance and Economics Publishing House, 2016), 136.

112) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 62.

words of an opera have a definite object; they provide foundation and support for the musical expression, and are therefore not absolutely independent, as in the drama, but are obliged to recognize and respect the laws of music, as well as those of poetry ...The poet must be “intelligent”, clever, and cultivated enough to fall in with the intentions of the musician, and poet enough to retain his poetical powers in spite of these limitations.’¹¹³⁾

3) Mozart and Da Ponte’s Collaboration

Da Ponte was a clever poet and a qualified opera librettist who could provide scripts that met Mozart’s requirements for opera librettos. It is precisely because of this that their collaboration resulted in three timeless masterpieces for future generations.

Both of them arrived in Vienna in 1781, and it seems like fate brought them together. In 1783, they met at the home of a mutual friend, and by this time, Mozart’s German opera “Die Entführung aus dem Serail” (The Abduction from the Seraglio) had achieved considerable success. During this meeting, Da Ponte and Mozart agreed to collaborate on an opera together. Afterward, Da Ponte took the time to understand Mozart’s style of opera composition and realized that Mozart’s music was distinct from that of Martin y Soler, another composer. Da Ponte was determined to choose a libretto that would be more suitable for Mozart. Their collaboration didn’t begin immediately but started in earnest after Da

¹¹³⁾ Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 62

Ponte had finished a series of other work commitments.

(1) *Le Nozze di Figaro*

The first collaboration between the two was *Le Nozze di Figaro*, an opera with a libretto adapted from the French playwright Beaumarchais' play of the same name. This opera has strong anti-feudal elements, celebrating the people of the Third Estate. It exposes the hypocrisy of the feudal aristocracy, mocks their actions, and portrays the clever and brave character of Figaro. Beaumarchais' play bestows praise and sympathy on the shrewd and capable Figaro and his fiancée, Susanna. It embodies the class antagonism on the eve of the French Revolution, mercilessly attacking the old regime and making the royalty realize that the play mocks everything considered sacred. As a result, it was banned in Paris for three years, only being performed in 1784. In 1785, a German troupe brought Beaumarchais' play to Vienna, but the emperor had already instructed censors to either ban it or allow it only after all lascivious elements were suppressed or altered.¹¹⁴⁾ In order to ensure the successful staging of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Da Ponte removed many inappropriate scenes. He transformed a French five-act play into an Italian four-act libretto, reducing the number of characters from 16 to 11. However, he did not damage Beaumarchais' classic structure, and certainly, this was not a mere translation.

When Emperor Joseph II learned that the opera *Le Nozze di Figaro* was based on Beaumarchais' play of the same name and that the

114) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 66.

composer was Mozart, he was not particularly interested. However, he chose to trust Da Ponte, believing in his ability to rewrite the script and his taste in music. Despite this, the inclusion of a ballet scene in the opera faced opposition from a conspiracy group. Da Ponte's response was ingenious; he removed the music for the ballet part from the score, canceling the ballet performance but leaving the plot unchanged. This led to a rehearsal day scene reminiscent of a puppet show for Joseph II, with no music or singing, only actors on stage performing various actions. Joseph II halted the performance and inquired about the reason. With the emperor's intervention, the conspirators' sabotage was thwarted, and everything in the script was restored. The music was reinstated, and the dancers resumed their dance.

The opera premiered on May 1, 1786. Despite the attitude of "perhaps" and "we shall see" held by all other masters and their supporters, and despite opposition from Rosenberg, Casti, and many others, it received widespread acclaim. In the eyes of the emperor and true connoisseurs, it was considered sublime, almost sacred.¹¹⁵⁾

In this opera, Da Ponte vividly articulated the characters' traits through his script, while Mozart brought these characters to life with his music. Although the opera is an opera buffa, there was no deliberate effort to pander to the audience or to entertain for the sake of entertainment. Both the playwright and the composer used their talent and ability to emphasize the characters' traits. In terms of musical composition, Mozart maintained his characteristic focus on expressiveness

115) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 141.

and lyricism. Together, Da Ponte and Mozart's collaboration in the opera's libretto and music conveyed the optimism, enterprising spirit, and confidence characteristic of the Enlightenment era.

The opera *Le Nozze di Figaro* was a success, and although it did not achieve a sensational level of popularity at the time, the collaboration of the two artists left a classic work for future generations.

(2) *Don Giovanni*

Don Giovanni, the opera, represents the second collaboration between Mozart and Da Ponte. While writing the libretto for this opera, Da Ponte also worked on operatic scripts for Martin y Soler and Salieri. The character of Don Giovanni has been shaped by many musicians and writers in the West. As early as the 17th century, the character of Don Giovanni had already become synonymous with the villain in Spanish drama.¹¹⁶⁾

However, in Da Ponte's libretto for *Don Giovanni*, the character is portrayed as a libertine who is also a rebellious individualist, daring in his actions and defiant in his resistance. Although Don Giovanni is promiscuous, scornful of morality, disrespectful of love, and even mocks asceticism, treating faith and honor as worthless, his approach to relationships is predominantly individualistic. Despite his selfish and possibly cruel nature, the character is not depicted as a deceitful schemer or an utterly wicked person. He also displays charm, handsomeness, and sophistication. Da Ponte's portrayal of Don Giovanni

116) 肖玲,《歌剧<唐璜>的人物塑造与启示》,中国艺术研究院,(2013),13.

Xiao Ling, "Characterization and Revelation of the Opera Don Giovanni", (Master's thesis, Chinese National Academy of Arts, 2013), 13.

is both lovable and detestable, reflecting the complexities of human nature as encountered in real life. These characteristics, fixed in the script through words and plot, are brought into sharper relief by Mozart's extraordinary talent, who used music to vividly depict Don Giovanni's traits.

Mozart excels at character portrayal through music, and the characters depicted in his compositions are vivid and close to real life. The character of Don Giovanni is no exception. But it's undeniable that Mozart's operatic creations benefited greatly from Da Ponte's libretto writing. Da Ponte created a new Rococo-style comedy that is light and bright, without losing the necessary sophistication. The language is elegant and dignified, maintaining interest without resorting to obscenity or vulgarity. The overall structure of the script is neat, compact, and clear. Even just considering Da Ponte's script, it appears to be a commendable literary work in its own right.

The character of Don Giovanni is remarkably close to real life, which seems to bear a resemblance to certain aspects of Da Ponte's own life trajectory. It's reasonable to boldly speculate that in shaping the character of Don Giovanni, Da Ponte may have drawn on some of his own life experiences.

Don Giovanni is categorized as an opera buffa, but it also incorporates elements of opera seria. Some characters in the opera are shaped through comical and humorous methods, such as Don Giovanni's servant, Leporello, who is endowed with comical characteristics. Musically, Mozart interprets Leporello's traits with light and humorous music. In

contrast, some scenes are conveyed with serious plots and profound music, exhibiting characteristics of opera seria, for example the scene where Don Giovanni faces his ultimate fate. In terms of plot, the opera includes not only misunderstandings and comical scenes between characters but also encompasses moral conflicts, desires, fears, death, betrayal, and revenge. These elements are typical of opera seria.

Don Giovanni premiered in Prague on October 29, 1787, and following the premiere, Mozart immediately wrote to Da Ponte to convey the joyous news of its great success.¹¹⁷⁾ Emperor Joseph II was also very eager to see the opera performed.¹¹⁸⁾ The following year, *Don Giovanni* was successfully staged in Vienna as well.

However, at that time, the public's musical preference leaned more towards the melodious music of Martin y Soler. Mozart's music, being more profound and intricate, required time and attention to be fully appreciated, so its acceptance by the general public was not immediate.

Although *Don Giovanni* was performed 14 times that year and received increasing applause and praise each time, the frequency of its performances did not increase further until after Mozart's death.¹¹⁹⁾ It was only posthumously that scholars began to recognize this long-neglected masterpiece.

The success of the opera *Don Giovanni* is widely acknowledged. However, its success cannot be attributed solely to Mozart or solely to Da Ponte. In this opera, the libretto and the music are not two separate

117) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 159.

118) *Ibid.*

119) 肖玲,《歌剧<唐璜>的人物塑造与启示》, 11.

Xiao Ling, "Characterization and Revelation of the Opera *Don Giovanni*", 11.

entities; rather, the seamless collaboration between Mozart and Da Ponte was the key to its success. Both elements are indispensable and complement each other, resulting in the creation of *Don Giovanni*, a classic work that endures for future generations. The synergy of their talents in storytelling and musical composition is what makes *Don Giovanni* an enduring masterpiece.

(3) *Così Fan Tutte*

Così fan tutte, also known as *La scuola degli amanti*, is the third and final opera resulting from the collaboration between Mozart and Da Ponte. It is an original libretto by Da Ponte and is characterized by a very concise plot and a small number of characters, devoid of complex relationships and storylines.

However, it remains a unique and exquisite work. Mozart and Da Ponte extensively utilized ensembles to drive the plot forward, ensuring that this brief yet potent opera was neither dull nor uninteresting. Their creative approach in this opera demonstrates their ability to craft engaging and meaningful works even within a simple narrative framework.

Così fan tutte, this opera is an opera buffa, with a humorous, concise plot that embodies the characteristics of the genre. The emotional contrast between the two acts is vividly depicted by Da Ponte and further accentuated by Mozart's musical portrayal, making the contrast between the two acts even more striking. The first act is filled with humor, lightness, and joy, while the second act is imbued with remorse

and sadness, culminating in a very satisfying conclusion. While the opera appears to be a comical farce on the surface, it actually prompts the audience to reflect on societal rights and wrongs, and perhaps even contains a hint of satire. This blend of humor and deeper social commentary is a hallmark of the skillful collaboration between Mozart and Da Ponte.

The opera tells the story of two ladies whose fiancés go off to war, which is actually a ruse as part of a wager on the women's fidelity. The women find themselves in a difficult situation when faced with the ardent pursuits of new suitors. This scenario unavoidably brings to mind the experiences Da Ponte encountered in Venice. It's bold, yet plausible, to speculate that Da Ponte infused his own experiences into the creation of the libretto. Furthermore, the opera portrays women quickly succumbing to new romantic temptations, which seems to reflect Da Ponte's somewhat extreme views on women in love. This may be related to his own experiences of frequently falling in love with married women. This aspect of the opera could be seen as both a reflection of Da Ponte's personal life and a commentary on the societal norms and expectations of his time.

Così fan tutte premiered on January 6, 1790, at the Burgtheater in Vienna. It was performed only five times initially.¹²⁰⁾ Following the death of Emperor Joseph II, performances of the opera were temporarily halted due to the period of mourning. It was not until June of that year that *Così fan tutte* returned to the stage, and even then, only four more

120) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 99.

performances were held until August.

Subsequently, there were changes in personnel at the Vienna Italian Opera House, leading to Da Ponte's dismissal. *Così fan tutte* was also curtailed due to poor box office performance. This period marked a challenging time for the opera, which despite its artistic merits, struggled to find sustained success in its early performances.

It is noteworthy that both Da Ponte and Mozart were facing challenging circumstances while creating *Così fan tutte*. Mozart, who was gravely ill, passed away in December 1791, meaning that at the time of the opera's composition, he had only two years left to live.¹²¹⁾ He was also struggling with financial difficulties. Meanwhile, Da Ponte was fighting to retain his position, and his patron, Emperor Joseph II, was suffering from illness, making Da Ponte's job security uncertain. Da Ponte was surrounded by conspiracies and uncertainties. Despite these personal challenges, the difficulties faced by Da Ponte and Mozart did not manifest in the opera. Instead, they produced a work with an interesting theme and enchanting music. This masterpiece did not receive the recognition or appreciation it deserved during Mozart's lifetime and only gained proper evaluation and admiration after his death, when the world re-examined and appreciated this outstanding work.

In *Così fan tutte*, Da Ponte demonstrated a new pinnacle in the art of rhyming, especially notable in the recitative sections. His skillful use of repetitive rhyming techniques made each scene, event, and emotion in the opera more vivid and prominent, thereby enhancing the dramatic

121) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 101.

tension and comedic effect of the entire work. Despite Mozart's expressed dislike for lyrics that rhyme for the sake of rhyming, Da Ponte's deep understanding and flexible use of the Italian language ensured that the rhymes were not mere fillers, but rather an integral part of the narrative and musical composition. This ability to create satisfying librettos was something other playwrights could not offer Mozart. In *Così fan tutte*, Da Ponte's mastery of rhyming, fueled by his extensive cultural knowledge, seems to completely command the technique. This skill was not only evident in the script but also dynamically presented in the arias and ensembles, artfully reflecting the era's opera seria. Da Ponte's craftsmanship in this regard was not just a display of linguistic ability, but also a crucial contribution to the opera's overall artistic success, blending seamlessly with Mozart's music to create a cohesive and engaging work.

4) The Artistic Fusion of Da Ponte and Mozart

It is well-known that Mozart had very high demands for poets in his operas. The poetry had to absolutely conform to the music; this was an unchangeable requirement of Mozart for opera librettos. However, Da Ponte was able to meet Mozart's requirements for opera librettos. This was not only due to Da Ponte's literary background but also his keen insight into the characteristics and preferences of the composers he collaborated with. Da Ponte might not have been the greatest poet and most of his librettos were not original works, but he had a strong ability to understand the needs and capabilities of musicians. Although a poet,

he understood music and could see Mozart's traits in his compositions, thus creating librettos, arias, and ensemble pieces that were suitable for Mozart's music. Moreover, there seemed to be an uncanny alignment between Da Ponte's understanding of the relationship between music and lyrics and Mozart's. Da Ponte once wrote:

In order to translate an opera from one language into another, it is necessary to know more than just how to write verse. One must do it in such a way that the accents of the poetry respond to those of the music, which few can do well, and especially necessary is a musical ear and long experience.¹²²⁾

This passage fully demonstrates that Da Ponte also believed that lyrics should serve the music.

Mozart once expressed in his opera compositions that he disliked forced rhyming in poetry, as it not only disrupted the music but also loosened the content. However, Da Ponte's mastery of rhyming in Italian was deeply ingrained, which doesn't mean Mozart made concessions just because it was Da Ponte. Their continued collaboration and creation of three timeless masterpieces were because Da Ponte's rhyming was always based on music-first reasonable rhyming.

During his time in Vienna, Mozart left behind three Italian opera buffa, all of which he composed, and all of which were librettos written by Da

122) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 64.

Ponte. This clearly demonstrates that Da Ponte's libretto writing captivated the musical genius of Mozart. The works created in collaboration between Da Ponte and Mozart also captivated the world.

3.5 Da Ponte's Other Librettos in Vienna

1) Da Ponte's Collaborations with Other Composers in Vienna

During his time in Vienna, Da Ponte collaborated with other musicians besides the three composers Salieri, Martin y Soler, and Mozart. However, as a librettist with high standards for music, he did not devote the same level of effort to every composer's request. For example, Giuseppe Gazzaniga, whom Da Ponte described as a somewhat talented but passé musician, was given an adaptation of the French comedy *La aveugle clairvoyant*. Da Ponte hastily completed this adaptation in just a few days, resulting in the opera *Il finto cieco*. It was performed for only three days before being shelved. The libretto was indeed unsatisfactory, nearly a hodgepodge that lacked both rhythm and sense.¹²³⁾ Yet, this did not affect Da Ponte's already established reputation. Afterwards, Da Ponte continued to focus on developing librettos for Mozart and Martin y Soler.

Vincenzo Righini, with Salieri's help, commissioned Da Ponte to write an opera. Righini was a music teacher and a composer. The libretto Da Ponte wrote for him was *Il demogorgone ovvero Il filosofo confuso*. This opera also ended in failure, being performed only four times before disappearing from the repertoire.¹²⁴⁾ Kelly, an actor who played the role

123) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 128.

124) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 73.

of a poet in the opera, imitated Da Ponte's dress and walking style during the premiere, not as a tribute to Da Ponte, but as a mockery of him. No matter how cultivated a person Da Ponte was, such a situation would have been very uncomfortable for him.

Afterwards, intending to strike back at the conspirators, Da Ponte saw an opportune moment when *Le Nozze di Figaro* achieved great success. Stephen Storace, requesting the emperor's approval for Da Ponte to write a libretto for him, coincided with Da Ponte's plans for retaliation against the conspiracy group. Thus, he secretly plotted with Martin y Soler to create *Una cosa rara*. Da Ponte believed others would not expect him to be working on two operas simultaneously. For Stephen Storace, Da Ponte chose a subject from one of Shakespeare's comedies, *Gli equivoci*. Regarding this opera, Da Ponte condensed Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* into a two-act opera buffa, yet retained almost all the key elements. Stephen Storace, a student and close friend of Mozart, was musically influenced by Mozart and showed great promise, but unfortunately, he died young.¹²⁵⁾

Kelly, the singer who had previously mocked Da Ponte by imitating him in *Il demogorgone ovvero Il filosofo confuso*, also participated in the performance of *Gli equivoci*. He praised Da Ponte's adaptation of the libretto, stating that it was highly suitable for the opera and retained all the major plot elements and characters.¹²⁶⁾

In 1936, Alfred Einstein also praised Da Ponte's adaptation of this opera's libretto. Alfred Einstein expressed high admiration for Da Ponte's

125) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 78.

126) *Ibid*, 79.

work. He mentioned that Da Ponte, despite his humility, cleverly adapted Shakespeare's comedy into an excellent opera buffa. He particularly emphasized Da Ponte's skill in dramatic techniques, especially in condensing Shakespeare's five-act play into a two-act opera. Alfred Einstein believed that Da Ponte's technique was a model that many librettists of the 20th century could learn from. He also noted Da Ponte's outstanding performance in composing the finale, as well as his profound understanding and appreciation of the most brilliant parts of Shakespeare's comedy.¹²⁷⁾

The year 1786 was undoubtedly extraordinary for Da Ponte. Between January and December of that year, the Burgtheater in Vienna had almost continuous performances, with only a break for six weeks during Lent. Each month, there were approximately eleven to fifteen performances. During this period, a total of twenty-two Italian operas were performed, including ten premieres. Da Ponte wrote the librettos for six of these new operas, including one of the greatest operas of all time, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, as well as the popular works *Il burbero di buon cuore* and *Una cosa rara*. Additionally, he actively participated in the adaptation and staging of other productions, as that was his profession. His achievements in that year showcased the peak of his career during his time in Vienna.

Da Ponte also wrote a libretto for Francesco Piticchio's opera *Il Bertoldo*. Da Ponte had a strong dislike for this opera and for collaborating with Francesco Piticchio, whom he considered to be of

127) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 79.

mediocre intelligence and completely lacking in musical talent.¹²⁸⁾ *Il Bertoldo* was performed eight times within two months, despite its excessive length, absurd plot, and unremarkable libretto. It surprisingly gained popularity among the audience.¹²⁹⁾

After collaborating with Francesco Piticchio, Emperor Joseph II specifically summoned Da Ponte and advised him not to write librettos for composers of that caliber again. He indicated that working with composers like Salieri, Martin y Soler, and Mozart would be a better choice.¹³⁰⁾

In around July 1788, due to issues with war funding, Emperor Joseph II considered dissolving the Italian theater company. To prevent this, Da Ponte came up with a plan to lease boxes for an extended period to sustain the financial needs of the Italian theater company.

Subsequently, Da Ponte created a work titled "L'ape musicale." This work was a collage play based on Goldoni's text, with Da Ponte himself selecting arias from the contemporary operas of popular composers like Salieri, Martin y Soler, Cimarosa, and Gazzaniga, and connecting them with recitatives. In the introduction, Da Ponte wrote, "A little comedy – now imitation, now alteration, now with the original words intact – introduces us to the most delightful arias we have heard in opera up to now."¹³¹⁾ In his introduction, he mentioned that the program would change from evening to evening, with the unpopular items being removed. The dialogues connecting the arias were sharp, witty, and

128) Da Ponte, *MEMOIRS*, 153.

129) *Ibid.*

130) *Ibid.*, 154.

131) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 98.

highly entertaining. The entire project demonstrated Da Ponte's understanding of singers, his in-depth knowledge of opera repertoire, and his lively sense of humor.¹³²⁾

2) Reasons for Da Ponte's Departure from Vienna

In 1790, Emperor Joseph II passed away, and with the loss of his protector, Da Ponte's situation became very precarious. All the conspirators and enemies began to show their true colors. First was Salieri, who had once been Da Ponte's close collaborator, but at this point, they were competitors vying for control of the Italian theater company. Clearly, without the protection of Emperor Joseph II, Da Ponte lacked a favorable position in this competition.

Furthermore, the opera's deputy director saw Emperor Joseph II's intention to dissolve the Italian theater company as an opportunity to revive the German opera house. However, all of these plans were thwarted by Da Ponte's strategy of renting boxes. Additionally, Da Ponte was well aware that this deputy director was using his position as a financial manager to make extra money.

Furthermore, during his time in Venice, Da Ponte had a well-known lover named Ferarrese. Da Ponte's open favoritism and care for his mistress Ferarrese caused strong resentment among others. Additionally, Da Ponte faced accusations from Salieri related to his efforts to secure roles for Ferarrese in the opera.

These factors ultimately forced Da Ponte to leave Vienna. Without the

¹³²⁾ Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 98.

protection of his patrons, he became the target of numerous accusations and charges from his enemies. Although Martin y Soler extended an invitation to Da Ponte in Russia and his contract had not ended, he missed the opportunity and ultimately chose to leave Vienna.

4. The Importance of Collaboration Between Da Ponte and Musicians

Una cosa rara and *Così fan tutte* as Examples

Scholars have pointed out that Da Ponte would collaborate with composers based on their individual characteristics.¹³³⁾ Therefore, this chapter will compare Da Ponte's collaborations with Mozart and Martín y Soler. It discusses how Da Ponte tailored the storylines, character portrayals, and adjustments in duets and arias in *Così fan tutte* and *Una cosa rara* to align with the composers' styles. Despite these two operas having contrasting central themes and outcomes about women's love, both are Da Ponte's librettos from his Vienna period, thus warranting a joint discussion for their value.

Da Ponte's collaborations with Mozart and Martín y Soler fall under the category of Italian opera buffa. opera buffa is an indispensable genre in Western music history, developed from inheriting and promoting traditional Western opera. The growth of classical opera buffa is not only credited to musicians but also to playwrights' cooperation.

4.1 The Origins of Italian Opera buffa

From its inception in 1600 until the early 18th century, opera experienced significant development but also faced drawbacks, such as

¹³³⁾ John Platoff, "A New History for Martín's *Una cosa rara*," *The Journal of Musicology*, Winter, 12/1. (1994), 87.

excessive focus on vocalists' technical skills at the expense of dramatic elements, and prioritizing stage and costume decoration over logical plot progression. Consequently, by the early 18th century, these apparent flaws led to a waning interest in traditional opera, paving the way for the emergence and popularity of opera buffa, a new opera form that resonated with audiences.

Originally, opera buffa was a brief interlude performed in opera houses during set changes between acts of opera seria, commonly known as intermezzo. Its characteristics included short duration, humor, flexible form, and content often based on real life, featuring common people as protagonists, with nobles often portrayed as foolish figures for comic relief. This format gained popularity among the lower-class audience, as it provided a satirical take on the aristocracy. Eventually, these interludes evolved into a standalone genre of opera, known as opera buffa. A key figure in Italian opera buffa was Pergolesi, renowned for his work *La serva padrona*.

While opera buffa was beloved, it didn't replace opera seria. Gluck reformed opera seria, aiming to return it to its original essence as established by the Florentine Camerata. He advocated for music to serve the plot and emotions, emphasizing simplicity and authenticity. Although this was a reform of opera seria, Gluck's principles guided Italian opera towards a healthier direction, positively influencing subsequent musicians in opera composition.

Opera buffa often draws from folk tales, typically revolving around the romances of common people. The protagonists are usually one or two

pairs of men and women whose love faces obstacles, but they eventually overcome these to be united. In terms of character setup, they can generally be categorized into three types: parte seria (serious), mezzo carattere (middle character), and parte buffa (comic).¹³⁴⁾ In opera buffa, "parte seria" refers to characters akin to those in opera seria, like the prince and queen in *Una cosa rara*. Parte buffa denotes characters unique to opera buffa, typically depicting the lower class. Mezzo carattere represents characters whose personality and musical portrayal don't align with their social status. For example, in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, the Count, despite being an aristocrat, is greedy and mean-spirited, lacking the grandeur in his music; whereas Susanna, a maid, is portrayed as intelligent and dignified, with more solemn and serious music, making her a mezzo carattere character.

Opera buffa and opera seria represent completely different opera styles. Opera seria draws from mythological stories and heroic characters, reflecting a moral perspective of self-sacrifice for justice and others' salvation. In contrast, opera buffa, sourced from everyday life, mirrors a morality of resisting corrupt elites, protecting loved ones, and oneself. While opera seria teaches grand moral lessons, opera buffa illustrates the negatives in life and how to act right. Both convey positive messages. Post-Gluck's opera reform, overtures became integral to operas, not just audience cues. This applies to both opera buffa and seria.

The overall characteristics of Classical period music include significant

134) 이가영. "파이지엘로(Giovanni Paisiello), 솔리(Vicente Martin y Soler), 치마로사(Domenico Cimarosa) 그리고 모차르트의 오페라 부파 들여다보기". 『서양음악학』 Vol. 12, No. 2. (2009). 29-56.

themes, rationality, grandeur, strong logic, and strict structure, mainly in homophonic style, avoiding excessive emotional expression. Thus, opera buffas of this period also embody these traits.

4.2 Analyzing Composers' Musical Characteristics Through Overtures

1) *cosi fan tutte*

Sonata form																			
Introduction	Exposition							Development					Recapitulation			Coda			
	Principal section			Bridge section	Secondary section		Closing section	Lead-in	Development			Dominant preparation	Principal section		Secondary section				
	a	b	b'		c	d			e	f	g		a	b	b'	d	d'	Coda1	Coda2
7+7	13	8	8	12	8	14	16	11	9+8	10+8	8+8+8+10	14	4	8	8	10	9	13	21
C				G	gm	em	G		A	gm, C	F, dm, ⁴ A	G	C						

[Fig. 4]

Formal Analysis Structure Chart

The overture of *Così fan tutte* adopts the sonata form structure, consisting of an introduction, exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda. The key is C major, with a 4/4 meter and an Allegro tempo.

The introduction is at an Andante pace, composed of two sections. The first section features strong pillar chords played by the orchestra and a lyrical melody played softly by the woodwinds. The second

section is a tutti cadential passage using a choral texture, which lays the harmonic groundwork for the entrance into the exposition while clearly defining the tonality.

The exposition shifts to an Allegro tempo and includes four sections: principal, transition, secondary, and closing. The principal section, in the tonic key and in binary form, consists of three phrases. The main theme (a) begins on the tonic note, decorated with auxiliary notes and a rising scale framework, with the melody played by the violin, leading to a full orchestral pillar chord climax on the dominant note, continuing with auxiliary notes in the melody and ending with a half cadence on the tonic chord. The second phrase offers a contrast, with the woodwinds alternating melodies, starting with an upward third leap followed by a descending scale, and then modulating. The third phrase repeats the second. The bridge uses the principal theme, stabilizing in the tonic before moving to the dominant key of G major with full orchestral chords, enhancing the sonority, and leading to the secondary theme in binary form with contrasting phrases in g minor and e minor, ending firmly in G major. The closing section repeats the second phrase of the principal theme in G major, ending the exposition with a perfect authentic cadence.

The development includes an introduction, development, and dominant preparation sections for the home key. It starts with material from the first phrase of the exposition's principal theme, emphasizing the dominant chord of A major, preparing for the modulatory development that follows, which elaborates on the principal material in A major and

then modulates through various keys, leading into the dominant preparation in F major, utilizing material from the secondary theme.

The recapitulation is a compressed recapitulation, including only the principal and secondary themes, with the principal theme returning in the tonic key and the secondary theme dynamically recapitulated in C major, leading into the coda.

The coda is divided into two sections: the first uses a choral texture to thicken the texture and consolidate tonality, while the second revisits the first phrase of the principal theme, ending the piece on continuous tonic chords.

In the overture to *Così fan tutte*, Mozart's exquisite compositional skill and profound musical understanding display meticulous and logical musical conception. Through clear, expressive melodic lines, he precisely conveys rich emotional nuances, showcasing the beauty of melody and adding depth through contrast and interweaving. Mozart skillfully manages the relationships between dynamics, articulation, and tempo, achieving a dynamic, harmonious, and dramatically conversational music. Additionally, his extraordinary skills in harmony and orchestration not only create a narrative musical space but also maximize the sonic potential of each instrument. These creative traits not only demonstrate his exceptional talent as a composer but also reveal his deep insight and limitless creativity in music.

2) *una cosa rara*

Sonata form													
Exposition							Development				Recapitulation		Coda
Principal section		Bridge section	Secondary section			Closing section	I	II	III	IV	Principal section		
a	b		c	d	e					a	a		
8	8	8	8	9	5	11	12	8+8	6+10	6+12	8	8	8+8
C							G		dm	am	C		

[Fig. 5]

Formal Analysis Structure Chart

The overture is structured in sonata form, consisting of the exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda, in the key of C major. It is in 6/8 time, with a fast tempo.

The exposition is divided into four parts: the principal theme, transition, secondary theme, and closing section, all presented in the tonic key. The principal theme is in binary form, made up of two contrasting phrases. The theme, lasting 8 bars and divided into two 4-bar phrases, uses parallel motion with the tonic triad ascending to the dominant note as the framework, then leaping to the tonic before returning to the third. The theme enters softly, played by the violins and woodwinds, with the rest of the strings sustaining the tonic. The second phrase reverses the beginning and end of the first, ending with a perfect half cadence. The second phrase, also divided into two parts, develops the theme with an upward modulation of a sixth, maintaining a parallel

structure and ending on the tonic chord for a perfect authentic cadence, concluding the principal section. The transition, consisting of one phrase divided into two 4-bar phrases with a repetitive relationship, develops broken chord melodies with the cello and double bass playing pedal tones to solidify the tonality, ending on the tonic chord before transitioning to the secondary theme. The secondary theme is in binary form, composed of three contrasting phrases. It contrasts with the principal theme with continuous sixteenth notes, offering a passionate melody played by the strings with the rest forming a choral texture. The second phrase has a sequential structure, with ascending and then descending melodies, adding novelty with leaps in the flute and oboe. The third phrase, played by the woodwinds, uses auxiliary notes, ending the secondary theme on a dominant chord for an open cadence, leading into the closing section. The closing section recapitulates the principal theme, followed by a timbral shift between winds and strings, showcasing the orchestra's tension, and ends the exposition with a brief appearance of the tonic chord.

The development enters under a timbral shift, divided into four parts. The first part develops the secondary theme's second phrase in G major, with the woodwinds and brass playing quarter-note melodies and the strings on broken chords. The second part expands on the bridge material, combining ascending scales with broken chords and dotted rhythms, featuring timbral shifts and call-and-response within the orchestra. The third part develops the principal theme's material in D minor, with the strings on broken chords and winds on ascending scales,

ending with a tutti on the theme's developed material. The fourth part is a transposed repetition of the third into A minor, preparing for the recapitulation.

The recapitulation succinctly reiterates the principal theme and repeats it, ending on a brief cadential figure before the coda. The coda, divided into two 8-bar phrases, develops the secondary theme's final phrase, with the second phrase an octave higher, ending the piece on a perfect authentic cadence in the tonic key.

From the form analysis diagram, it can be seen that the structure of *Una cosa rara* is relatively regular. It commonly features an 8-bar phrase, and structures of 8+8 bars for a section are also frequent. The symmetrical structure and the use of sequence technique not only highlight the theme but also make the musical structure more stable, greatly showcasing the attractiveness of the melody and making it easier for listeners to remember.

In the overture of *Una cosa rara*, Martín y Soler extensively uses dotted notes, which appear throughout the overture. These dotted notes not only exhibit strong sense of motion and vitality but also enhance the rhythm of the music. This rhythmic treatment gives the overture distinct characteristics of ballet music. Additionally, the frequent use of sixteenth notes and note tremolos further enhances the fluidity of the music. The melodic lines in the overture are beautiful and smooth, embodying the typical style of classical music, with melodies that are easy to remember and pleasing to the ear. This beautiful melody runs through the entire opera.

In terms of harmonic texture, the music maintains traditionality and stability. All instruments are divided into two parts, and although there is no strong contrast effect between the same instruments, this approach enhances the overall sense of harmony and continuity of the music.

In the overture, Martín y Soler skillfully uses simple harmonic techniques to depict elegant musical lines. He is adept at using sequence techniques to highlight the core motives of the music, which also implies that the central theme of the entire opera will be repeatedly emphasized. Through harmonious musical language, he caters to the aesthetic preferences of the audience at the time. This approach reflects one of Martín y Soler's major characteristics: enhancing the melodiousness and attractiveness of the music while maintaining its beauty.

4.3 Integration of Scripts and Composers' Musical Features

The distinct characteristics of the two composers are evident. Mozart's music requires careful appreciation, while Martín y Soler's compositions are more delicate, effectively using modulation to emphasize script content and musical themes. Hence, Da Ponte crafted scripts that leveraged the strengths of both composers, allowing their musical characteristics to be more cohesively expressed.

Da Ponte had previously collaborated with both composers before creating these two operas, so their musical characteristics were already evident. Da Ponte's scripts for the composers were crafted based on their musical styles. An opera is primarily a story with a basic plot, logic, narrative flow, motives, and conflicts, all serving its central theme.

Therefore, analyzing the script after understanding the composers' musical traits is crucial to grasp the opera's essence fully.

1) Summary of the Plot of *Così fan tutte*

Così fan tutte tells a love story of two young couples. Fiordiligi and Guglielmo are lovers, as are Dorabella and Ferrando. Fiordiligi and Dorabella are sisters, and Guglielmo and Ferrando are young officers. The story also features two main characters: Don Alfonso, an old bachelor philosopher, and Despina, a cunning maid.

The story begins with two young officers, Guglielmo and Ferrando, boasting in a bar about their fiancées' love and fidelity. Their conversation catches Don Alfonso's attention, who joins in and challenges their belief in women's fidelity. A bet ensues, leading the officers to feign departure for war and return in disguise to woo each other's fiancées. Initially resistant, Fiordiligi and Dorabella eventually succumb to the disguised men's advances. Upon the officers' return in their true identities, they reveal the deception orchestrated by Don Alfonso and Despina. Ashamed, the sisters seek forgiveness, and the story ends with the couples happily reunited.

Così fan tutte closely mirrors life, and Mozart vividly contrasts the emotions in its two acts. The first act is filled with humor, lightness, and joy, while the second shifts to remorse and sorrow. This opera, seemingly a farcical comedy, prompts the audience to reflect on societal right and wrong, possibly with an undercurrent of satire.

In *Così fan tutte*, the opera goes beyond a superficial theme of

women's fidelity to a more profound, complex emotional world. The script, revolving around a test of love, delves into whether women can remain utterly loyal to one man. While seemingly straightforward and potentially controversial, this framework allows Da Ponte to provide a script that not only showcases Mozart's exceptional musical talents but also highlights his distinct musical style. Importantly, Da Ponte constructs intricate interpersonal relationships and internal worlds. Mozart's skill in character portrayal brings these characters to life through music, vividly presenting the opera's narrative.

Lorenzo Da Ponte's script played a crucial role in aligning with Mozart's musical characteristics. He skillfully constructed contrasts and conflicts between characters, maximizing the depth and detail of the plot. Each character is portrayed not as a one-dimensional stereotype, but as a nuanced, multi-dimensional individual.

The script intricately constructs a series of contradictions and conflicts, not only driving the plot forward but also revealing the complexities of human nature and the multifaceted nature of love. The central contradiction lies between the two couples - Fiordiligi and Guglielmo, Dorabella and Ferrando. Initially loyal, their relationships undergo severe tests due to Don Alfonso's scheming and their own wavering emotions, especially for Fiordiligi and Dorabella, whose internal struggles reflect the fierce battle between loyalty and infidelity. Guglielmo and Ferrando, too, face moral conflicts, raising profound ethical questions.

The script of *Così fan tutte* explores thematic contradictions and conflicts. It delves into the clash between the ideal and reality of love,

contrasting idealized loyalty with potential changes. The conflict between loyalty and betrayal is central, with Fiordiligi and Dorabella's dilemma between original partners and new attractions reflecting the tension between loyalty and new love. Additionally, Guglielmo and Ferrando's self-perception versus self-deception highlights the complexity and fragility of self-awareness.

Mozart's music vividly illustrates these conflicts, emphasizing characters' inner feelings and evolution. His rich musical language precisely conveys emotional states, from joy and pain to contradiction and conflict. His melodies, harmonies, and instrumental usage add profound emotional depth to the opera.

Così fan tutte appears simple but is emotionally rich and profound. The collaboration between Mozart and Da Ponte transforms a seemingly simple story into a deep exploration of human nature, love, and morality, showcasing their artistic talents and the immense potential and impact of opera as an art form.

2) Summary of the Plot of *una cosa rara*

In *Una cosa rara*, Queen Isabella, her son Prince Giovani, and the knight Corrado encounter the runaway highland girl Lilla while hunting. Lilla has fled from a marriage arranged by her brother Titus, as she loves her fiancé Lubino. The Queen promises to help Lilla and entrusts her to Corrado, unaware that both the Prince and Corrado are smitten with Lilla. The Prince's advances are rejected by Lilla, and meanwhile, another couple, Ghita and Titus, argue over the details of a double

wedding. Lubino arrives in search of Lilla, mistakenly believes he has been deceived, and threatens to kill Titus but is arrested by the governor's men. Ghita convinces Titus to abandon his plan to force Lilla to marry the governor. Lilla and Ghita meet at the Queen's residence, where Lilla accuses Ghita of being part of the conspiracy, but the Queen intervenes, calling for reconciliation. Corrado expresses paternal feelings towards Lilla, and the Prince confesses his love again but is rejected once more. Lubino appears, demanding justice, and Lilla hides to prevent Lubino from seeing her with the Prince. Titus finally admits his mistake and accepts the wedding of Lilla and Lubino. The Queen announces the weddings of both couples: Lilla and Lubino, Ghita and Titus.

Later, Lubino and Titus go to the city to buy gifts for their wives. Ghita gives Lilla a necklace from the Prince and suggests she accept his courtship. As night falls, Lilla and Ghita eagerly await their husbands, mistaking Corrado and the Prince for Lubino and Titus. However, Lubino and Titus suddenly appear, casting doubt on their wives. Titus finds the necklace and a bag of gold coins, suspecting Lilla's loyalty. Lubino and Titus seek justice from the Queen. The Prince asks Corrado not to reveal the truth. Corrado takes full responsibility, is stripped of his position, and exiled. Eventually, the Queen and her entourage return to hunting, and both couples express their joy.

In the opera *Una cosa rara*, the plot's development is driven by conflicts and contradictions, prompting reflection on the praise of love and loyalty. The central conflict revolves around Lilla's emotional struggle, as she faces demands to marry the governor, the Prince's

unyielding love, and Corrado's fatherly affection, which is mixed with his desire for her to accept the Prince. Despite external threats and misunderstandings, the heroine remains loyal to her fiancé. The script downplays the heroine's inner conflict, emphasizing the steadfast appreciation and fidelity in love. In the face of power and temptation, her feelings for her fiancé never waver. The subdued contrasts and conflicts in the script lean towards a narrative that highlights the theme.

3) Summary of Libretto coordination

These script settings were custom-tailored by Da Ponte to suit the musical style of Martín y Soler, minimizing plot-driven conflicts and clarifying the storyline to complement Soler's lyrical and gentle music, thereby enhancing the opera's narrative beauty. This not only highlights Martín y Soler's musical characteristics but also adds a unique charm to the opera.

Exploring Da Ponte's collaborations with different composers, his work with Martín y Soler and Mozart is particularly striking. In his collaboration with Martín y Soler, Da Ponte demonstrates his unique ability to adapt to the composer's style. Martín y Soler's music is known for its simplicity and clarity, which is fully reflected in their joint works. Da Ponte's custom scripts for Soler, while seemingly simple narratives with many characters, subtly highlight Martín y Soler's musical traits. In *Una cosa rara*, the complex plot and conflicts are not the focus; instead, the direct and efficient narrative technique showcases the theme, allowing Soler's music to display its unique charm in a more

straightforward setting.

In contrast, Da Ponte's collaborations with Mozart presented a distinctly different scenario. On the surface, their librettos might seem to revolve around comedic tales, but a closer analysis reveals Da Ponte's skillful construction of complex character relationships and internal conflicts. This internal structure aligns perfectly with Mozart's profound and layered musical style. In these collaborations, Da Ponte not only depicted the superficial humor of the stories but also delved deeper into the subtle relationships and inner transformations of the characters, thereby providing an ideal stage for Mozart's expressive music.

Through this comparison, we can see that Da Ponte was not just an outstanding librettist but also an artist capable of flexibly adjusting his creative style according to the characteristics of different composers. His ability to tailor scripts specifically for various composers not only provided librettos that matched the creative features of the musicians but also maximized the display of the composers' musical strengths and nuances within the scripts. This adaptability underscores his unique talent in enhancing the synergy between the narrative and the music, enriching the overall operatic experience.

4.4 The Matching of Character Personalities and Music in Scripts

In character portrayal, Da Ponte set different levels of character depth for the two musicians. In *Una cosa rara*, after understanding Martin y

Soler's musical style, Da Ponte designed character images that downplayed individual personalities. There was no particularly strong contrast in character traits; all plots and individual characters' personalities and inner thoughts served to strengthen the theme. Such character settings aligned more closely with Martin y Soler's gentle musical style. In the opera, the image of the queen, conventionally surrounded by many attendants and grandeur to highlight royal demeanor, is depicted differently. Instead, the opera shows the queen encountering Lilla, a country girl, easily during her return from hunting, indicating fewer attendants around the queen. However, she is certainly portrayed as a benevolent monarch, as evidenced when she meets Lilla and, instead of being angry, tells her: "Tell me your desires, and they shall be fulfilled." This not only praises the queen but also highlights the theme that rare qualities should be protected.

On the other hand, Mozart believed that characters in the world are unique, and Da Ponte, understanding Mozart's music, also believed that Mozart's music could shape unique characters. The world isn't perfect, and there's no need for a necessary antagonist in the storyline; every person is complex and multifaceted. This is well reflected in Da Ponte's opera scripts. For example, in *Così fan tutte*, Don Alfonso is just a man who doesn't believe in women's fidelity in love. He isn't necessarily trying to break up lovers; he is just overly convinced of the infidelity of women's love. Such an antagonist is not evil for personal gain or without reason. This character portrayal aligns with real-life personalities, bringing the portrayal closer to reality.

The main characters in *Così fan tutte* possess multifaceted traits. On one hand, the two young officers are confident that their fiancées love only them, stemming from self-confidence. On the other hand, they are subconsciously inclined towards Alfonso's opinions. They need to use a bet to affirm their self-confidence rather than their fiancées' loyalty. Their agreement to test their fiancées in such a way partly stems from a hope that their love is steadfast, and partly to prove their own charm, believing that women will be captivated by them, be it their fiancées or new pursuits.

In *Così fan tutte*, the two young officers, Guoliemo and Ferrando, have their respective fiancées but engage in a bet with Don Alfonso. Guoliemo and Ferrando are portrayed as similar characters, but Da Ponte distinguishes their personalities in the script. Both are very confident, but Guoliemo is shown to be more confident, almost to the point of arrogance. This is evident from the beginning of the first act, where they start boasting about the loyalty of them, FERRANDO La mia Dorabella capace non è: fedel quanto bella il cielo la fe'. (My Dorabella couldn't Do such a thing: Heaven made her As faithful as she's fair.) GUGLIELMO La mia Fiordiligi tradirmi non sa: uguale in lei credo costanza e beltà. (My Fiordiligi simply Couldn't betray me: I believe her constancy Equals her beauty.) This clearly shows that Ferrando regards Dorabella's loyalty as a gift from heaven, feeling grateful to the divine for bestowing such a trait on his beloved. In contrast, Guoliemo believes Fiordiligi will never betray him. Although he also praises Fiordiligi, the emphasis is on her absolute fidelity. This distinction starkly highlights

Guoliemo's more confident character trait compared to Ferrando.¹³⁵⁾

Da Ponte establishes a contrast in character at the beginning, yet Guoliemo and Ferrando belong to the same 'team' in the opera. Therefore, Mozart gives the same melody to these lines of lyrics for both characters. This not only allows the audience to feel their fundamentally aligned stance, but also to discern the slight differences in the characters of the two men through the lyrics.

FERRANDO.

Lamia Do-ra-bel-la ca-pa-ce non
Nein,nein, Do-ra-bel-la vermöch.te das

è, ca-pa-ce non è fe-del quanto bel-la il cie-lo la
nie, vermöch.te das nie, wie rei.zend und schön,so bestän-dig ist

GUGLIELMO.

fe, fe-del quanto bel-la il cie-lo la fe. Lamia Fior-di-
sie, wie rei.zend und schön,so bestän-dig ist sie! So ist Fior-di-

li-gi tra-dir-mi non sa, tra-dir-mi non sa, u-gua-le in lei
li-gi auch lau-ter wie Gold, auch lau-ter wie Gold, sie bleibt oh-ne

cre-do co-stan-za e bel-tà, u-gua-le in lei cre-do co-stan-za e bel-
Wan-del ge-treu mir und hold,sie bleibt oh-ne Wan-del getreu mir und

[Fig. 6]

135) Caryl Clark, "recall and reflexivity in Così fan Tutte, in Mozart: Essays on His Life and His Music, ed," *Stanley Sadie* (1996), 339.

This collaboration of lyrics and melody aptly allows for a very clear understanding that while the two officers are on the same team, they also possess slightly different individual characteristics.

Guoliemo's more confident personality is also reflected in the aria "Non siate ritrosi" (Act 1, Scene 11, No. 15). Regarding the lyrics:

{Table 1}

<p>Non siate ritrosi, Occhietti vezzosi; Due lampi amorosi Vibrate un po' qua. Felici rendeteci, Amate con noi; E noi felicissime Faremo anche voi. Guardate, Toccate, Il tutto osservate: Siam forti e ben fatti, E come ognun vede, Sia merto, sia caso, Abbiamo bel piede, Bell'occhio, bel naso; Guardate, bel piede, osservate, bell'occhio, Toccate, bel naso, il tutto osservate: E questi mustacchi Chiamare si possono Trionfi degli uomini, Pennacchi d'amor.</p>	<p>Be not wayward, Dear beguiling eyes; Let two loving lightning flashes Strike for a moment here. Make us happy, And love with us; And we will make you in return The happiest of women. Look at us, touch us, Take stock of us: We're crazy but we're charming, We're strong and well made, And as anyone can see, Whether by merit or by chance, We've good feet, Good eyes, good noses. Look, good feet; note, good eyes; Touch, good noses; take stock of us; And these moustaches Could be called Manly triumphs, The plumage of love.</p>
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Although *Non siate ritrosi* is a love aria, it's easy to discern Guoliemo's frivolity and excessive confidence in his words. He not only urges women not to be coy but also extensively praises his own masculine charm. The line about charming eyes casting loving glances towards him also reflects his subconscious belief about women's fickleness in matters of the heart. He seems to think that women are already captivated by his appearance but refrain from accepting his love due to the presence of others or out of shyness. On the other hand, he is self-satisfied with his fiancée's rejection of other suitors, not just because he feels close to winning their bet, but also because it internally affirms his belief that his charm will prevent Fiordiligi from betraying him. This arrogance is also reflected in the music of the aria.

In terms of music, Mozart used instruments like the flute, bassoon, first and second violins, viola, cello, and double bass in the orchestration of this piece. The flute, with its clear and bright timbre, often conveys light and joyful emotions. The piece totals 67 measures, in 2/4 time, and maintains a stable key in G major throughout. The introduction, from the upbeat to the eighth measure, features woodwind instruments, with the flute and bassoon participating. The flute's sound in the intro sets the overall cheerful tone of the piece.

The first section, from measures 9 to 32, is divided into two phrases: measures 9 to 16 and 17 to 32. This part seems to express Guoliemo's assumption that his love interest is already moved and urges her not to be shy. The music shifts at the second beat of the 8th measure, where the woodwind section rests, and the first violin melody becomes flowing

and continuous.

Nº 15. Aria.
Andantino.

Flauto.
Fagotta.
Violino I.
Violino II.
Viola.
GUGLIELMO.
Violoncello e Basso.

Non sia - te ri.
Er - hört unser

tro-si, oc-chiet-ti rez-so - si, due lam - pia - mo - ro - si vi - brate un po qua. Fr. O
Flehen, lasst Gna - de er - ge - hen, ver - wei - let und wend - et auf uns Eu - ren Blick. O

li - ci ren - de - te - ci a - ma - te con no - i, e noi fe - li - cis - si - me fu -
las - set uns glücklich sein durch zärt - li - che Lie - be, da - für werden wir Euch weihn die

[Fig. 7]

The string accompaniment and vocal parts are stable, reflecting Guoliemo's relaxed state and his confidence in his own charm. The phrase ending at measure 16 lands on a dominant seventh chord, audibly conveying Guoliemo's confidence. This open-ended half cadence also sets the stage for the following music.

Measures 17 to 32 continue the previous stable pattern, further emphasizing his ease.

From measure 28, rapid triplet figures emerge, coupled with the lyrics "Guardate, Toccate" (look, touch), combining the rapid triplets in the music with the lyrics to vividly depict Guoliemo's frivolous attitude and excessive confidence.

The image shows a musical score for measures 27 to 35. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 27 to 32, and the second system covers measures 33 to 35. The piano accompaniment features rapid triplet figures starting at measure 28. The lyrics are in Italian and German.

Measure 27:
 re - moanche vo.i. / sii - sse sten Triebe.

Measures 28-32:
 Guar.da.te, toc.ca.te, il tut - to osser - ra.te: s'iam forti e ben fat - ti, e
 Betrachtet, be ach tet wo nach Je.de trachtet: wir sind wackre Män.ner, es

Measures 33-35:
 co - me ognun re - de, sia me - ri.to, o ca - so, ab - bin.mo, bel pie.de, bell' oc - chio, bel na - so, bell' oc - chio, bel
 rüht je.der Ken.ner und sieht mit Ver - lan.gendie Locken, die Augen, die Lip.pen, die Wangen, die Lippen, die

Handwritten annotations include 'cresc.' and 'p' (piano) markings in the piano part.

[Fig. 8]

From measures 33 to 44, the second part of the aria features Guoliemo encouraging his love interest to take a good look at him and boasting about his appearance. Here, Guoliemo is extremely confident, seemingly believing that women haven't observed him properly due to shyness, and that a closer look will surely attract them to his charm. The accompaniment remains string-only, with the mood stabilizing similarly to the first part but with the addition of a few staccato notes. The vocal part doesn't show significant fluctuations, maintaining a similar feel to the first part. However, the staccato in the accompaniment suggests a slight impatience in Guoliemo, possibly due to women not looking at him with the admiration he expects.

The image shows a musical score for measures 33 to 44. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: *na-so, guar-da-te, bel pie-de, os-ser-va-te bell' occhio, toc-ca-te, bel na-so, il Wangen, be-trachtet die Augen, und beach-tet die Lippen, be-achtet die Wangen, wo-*

[Fig. 9]

The woodwinds, particularly the flute, then re-enter, bringing a light and cheerful melody. This seems to bring Guoliemo back from his momentary impatience, reminding him of the bet. His happiness stems

both from his belief that their fiancées are loyal to them and from the possibility of winning the bet.

This aria, with Guoliemo's narcissistic yet confident courtship, although unsuccessful in winning love, vividly captures his transition from self-admiration to slight impatience, and then to happiness about the women's loyalty. Mozart's music, in conjunction with Da Ponte's lyrics, clearly interprets these emotions, bringing Guoliemo's vanity and inner turmoil to life.

Similarly engaged in the bet, Ferrando's courtship efforts are less smooth compared to Guoliemo's. While Ferrando is also confident, he lacks Guoliemo's self-absorption and instead displays a degree of sincerity. His emotional expression is earnest, albeit somewhat naive. In Act 2, Scene 6, when confronted with Fiordiligi's evasion, Ferrando reveals his true nature, despite being involved in the bet.

Ferrando's sincerity and less self-centered approach contrast with Guoliemo's more narcissistic attitude. This difference in character is not only evident in their interactions with others but also reflects in the musical treatment of their respective arias and scenes. Ferrando's music tends to convey his genuine emotions and perhaps his internal struggle with the situation, whereas Guoliemo's music emphasizes his confidence and self-assurance. These distinctions further highlight the diverse character portrayals by Da Ponte and the nuanced musical interpretations by Mozart.

{Table 2}

<i>lietissimo</i>	<i>Extremely happy</i>
Ah, lo veggio, quell'anima bella	Ah, I see, that beautiful soul
Al mio pianto resister non sa;	Cannot resist my tears;
Non è fatta per esser rubella	She is not made to be rebellious
Agli affetti di amica pietà.	To the affections of friendly pity.
In quel guardo, in quei cari	In that look, in those dear sighs
sospiri	A sweet ray flashes in my heart:
Dolce raggio lampeggia al mio	You already respond to my warm
cor:	desires,
Già rispondi a' miei caldi	You already yield to the tenderest
desiri,	love.
Già tu cedi al più tenero amor.	(<i>sadly</i>)
<i>mesto</i>	But you flee, merciless, you remain
Ma tu fuggi, spietata, tu taci	silent
Ed invano mi senti languir?	And in vain you hear me languish?
Ah, cessate, speranze fallaci:	Ah, cease, deceitful hopes:
La crudel mi condanna a morir.	The cruel one condemns me to die.

In the lyrics, there are two parts before the mood of dejection. Initially, Ferrando speaks of his love for Fiordiligi in a more romantic language, telling her that he has felt her reciprocated emotions. The second part reveals his sadness over Fiordiligi's avoidance. The lyrics show Ferrando's confidence; he has sensed Fiordiligi's response and never doubts himself due to her current avoidance. Unlike Guoliemo's frivolity, Ferrando's language reveals his perplexity and patience during his expression, hinting at his somewhat naive character traits.

Musically, Mozart seems to want to convey Ferrando's incomprehension towards Fiordiligi's current avoidance, as well as to distinguish Ferrando from Guoliemo's frivolity. Although the lyrics are repeated several times, each repetition is slightly different musically, allowing us to sense a character with a naive personality trait, shaping someone who uses repeated phrases to express confusion. The variations in melody reflect his emotional fluctuations. The way he expresses confusion and the tendency for the melody to remain steady showcase Ferrando's lack of overconfidence and frivolity. This repetition in the lyrics also reveals Ferrando's confidence, to some extent, that Fiordiligi has feelings for him, but he is puzzled by her avoidance, seemingly hoping that repeated persuasion will encourage her to openly accept his love.

sà: non è fat - ta per es - ser ru - bel - la —
 stehn, nim - mer kann sie mein Werben verschmähen, — ni

tà, — non è fat - ta per es - ser ru - bel la,
 Flehn, nim - mer kann sie mein Werben verschmähen,

fat - ta per es - ser ru - bel - la,
 kann sie mein Werben verschmähen,

[Fig. 10]

When the mood of dejection later erupts, leaps in the music and an increase in the number of staccato notes in both the vocal and accompaniment parts, as well as a relative increase in speed, significantly display the emotional turmoil Ferrando experiences due to Fiordiligi's continual avoidance. This music, both lyrically and musically, effectively reflects Ferrando's character traits and vividly shows the contrast in his emotions in a short span of time.

la - ci, spe - ran - ze fal - la - ci, la cru - del mi condanna a mo -
Hoffnung, auf e - wig die Hoffnung, und mir bleib nur Verzweiflung zu -

sen - ti lan - guir? Ah. ces - sa - te spe - ran - ze fal -
seht' ich das Glück? Wohl, so schwinde auf e - wig die

[Fig. 11]

Ferrando and Guoliemo, two young officers in the opera, are positioned in the same tier, seemingly sharing common goals and beliefs. However,

the playwright and composer, through their collaboration, cleverly showcase the differences between them, creating a striking contrast. This is not only evident in their unique personalities and behaviors but also deeply reflected in their respective emotional worlds and thoughts. On one hand, they share remarkable similarities in certain views and attitudes, like two comrades in arms; on the other hand, they exhibit distinctly different ways of expressing themselves when faced with similar situations. This contrast in inner emotions not only adds more layers and depth to the characters but also makes them closer to real-life individuals. Each person is unique, with a complex and ever-changing emotional world, just as we experience in real life. These characters, through their actions and words, showcase the multifaceted and complex nature of humanity. In the opera, these contrasts in emotions and internal struggles are vividly presented through music and dialogue, allowing the audience to see not only the characters' actions in the external world but also to peer into their true feelings deep inside. Such a creative approach not only makes the characters more rounded and realistic but also makes the entire story more captivating, allowing the audience to see themselves in these characters and to feel the authenticity and depth of the myriad human experiences.

This character setup in the script was created by Da Ponte in line with Mozart's musical characteristics. Da Ponte's focus in his collaborations with Martin y Soler was distinctly different.

In *Una cosa rara*, the character of the Prince, though a royal, is not portrayed as prominently. Traditional impressions of a prince include

nobility, composure, and wisdom. However, in this opera, the Prince's character is diminished, blurring his distinguishing traits from other male characters. This is not a flaw of the composer or the playwright but an adjustment made by Da Ponte to align with Martin y Soler's musical characteristics.

In the first act of the script, Lilla's entrance is striking as she presents her plight to the Queen. After the Queen promises assistance, she assigns Corrado to escort Lilla away. With the Queen's exit, the Prince is left with Corrado and Lilla, who are about to depart. At this moment, the Prince exhibits a manner of courtship that is incongruous with his royal status. He first expresses a wish, that it would be wonderful if he could switch roles with Corrado and escort Lilla himself. Then, he asks Lilla to give him her hand in a very personal and intimate manner and poses a heartfelt question, asking if it's possible to fall in love with two people at the same time. These actions and words, unbecoming of his princely status, render his character somewhat blurred compared to the other male characters in the script. This not only diminishes the traditional traits associated with his princely identity but also offers a unique perspective in the construction of his character. Such a characterization has its advantages; the pursuit of a girl by a prince who doesn't easily succumb to authority highlights Da Ponte's central idea in the script, emphasizing Lilla's steadfast attitude towards love and loyalty to her fiancé. This reinforces Lilla's admirable qualities, not only setting the theme of the opera at the outset but also laying the foundation for the composer's musical creation.

After Corrado and Lilla leave in Act 1, Scene 5, the Prince is secretly saddened by his unsuccessful courtship. The lyrics reflect the Prince's affection for Lilla, praising her loyalty and beauty. He also expresses sorrow over not being able to win Lilla's love and his reluctance to let her go.

[Table 3]

Più bianca di giglio, Più fresca di rosa, Bell'occhio, bel ciglio, Vivace, graziosa. La mano a un villano la lilla darà? Almen, crude stelle, Non fossi chi sono... Ma val più d'un trono Sì rara beltà.	Whiter than a lily, Fresher than a rose, Beautiful eye, loely lash, Lively, graceful. Will Lilla give her hand to a peasant? At least, cruel stars, If I were not who I am... Bu such rare beauty is worth More than a throne.
---	---

In the lyrics, Lilla is compared to a white lily and a red rose, symbolizing her loyalty and appearance. The pure white lily represents her fidelity in love, while the vibrant red rose signifies her exceptional beauty. The coexistence of these two qualities in a country girl is itself a rare and precious phenomenon. Moreover, Lilla's rejection of a prince highlights Da Ponte's emphasis on the central theme of the script. The aria's lyrics reiterate this central idea, not only emphasizing the key point but also reinforcing the Prince's determination to continue his pursuit.

Musically, Martín y Soler employs his customary technique to repeatedly emphasize Lilla's admirable qualities and the Prince's ongoing pursuit of her. This not only strengthens the emphasis on the theme but also effectively portrays the Prince's sorrowful and longing psychology. The segment is in C major, and as the Prince reflects on Lilla's virtues and beauty, the melody is flowing with a tinge of melancholy. Accompanied by a tenor voice, it transports the listener into a world of coexisting disappointment and yearning. The accompanying instruments include violins, oboe, clarinet, viola, bassoon, cello, and double bass. Apart from the bass voices, Martín y Soler continues the pattern from the overture, using a two-voice texture for the other parts.

The piece is in 2/4 time, a rhythm that can convey a sense of order and solemnity. The introduction plays out the main motive of the piece, with Martín y Soler utilizing the clarinet's aptitude for expressing melancholy and lyricism, combined with a steady and fluid rhythm, to prioritize the portrayal of the Prince's emotions at this moment, enabling a deeper understanding of his mindset. The extensive use of eighth notes and dotted eighth notes not only exemplifies the fluidity of the music but also interprets the sorrowful atmosphere of the lyrics. Additionally, the frequent use of fermatas seems to reflect the Prince's regret as he praises Lilla's virtues, which he has yet to attain, and a sigh of relief from an emotional climax during lyrical moments. Combining the coordination of the lyrics and the music, I perceive these fermatas as extensions of emotion, resembling a preparation for the emotional spread that follows a sigh.

The entire aria carries a uniform emotional tone, and although there are no marked emotional shifts or contrasts, the Prince's unwavering pursuit of Lilla, like a thread running through the opera, aptly emphasizes the theme. The close integration of lyrics and music profoundly depicts the Prince's regret over Lilla's rejection and his continued conviction to pursue her, thus reinforcing the Prince's singular character trait.

In *Una cosa rara*, Corrado, who belongs to the same team as the Prince, expresses a father-like affection for Lilla, but this is merely an excuse to alleviate her fear of him. He harbors an unrealistic naivety, believing that if Lilla could abandon her loyalty to her fiancé and accept the Prince's love, she might also be open to his. This notion first manifests in Act 2, Scene 4, where he hopes Ghita will successfully persuade Lilla to accept the Prince's love. He waits in anticipation, hoping that once Lilla's loyalty to love is compromised, she might develop feelings for him.

[Table 4]

<p>Io spero che la Ghita abbia dato l'assalto alla fortezza. Io non son senza speme. Or che ceda la Lilla a me sol preme. Ceda pur a l'infante; purché a sentir l'amante ella s'avvezzi</p>	<p>I hope that Ghita has launched the assault on the fortress. I am not without hope. Now, what matters to me is that Lilla surrenders. Let her surrender to the infant;</p>
---	--

<p>che la prima caduta è sempre la difficile... Vien Ghita...</p>	<p>as long as she gets used to listening to the lover, the first fall is always the hardest... Here comes Ghita..."</p>
---	---

Such a portrayal of Corrado is naive, a naivety that does not align with his age or status. Even after Ghita's unsuccessful persuasion, Corrado still hopes she will continue the endeavor. This remains true even after Ghita discerns that he has fallen in love with Lilla. Although he makes excuses, he still naively believes that a woman would acquiesce to a man she does not love because of certain qualities.

{Table 5}

<p>Osserva questo crine, ch'è fatto omai d'argento, il curvo collo osserva, la voce e l'andamento che indebolisce e snerva il peso dell'età. Fui già d'amor seguace or son d'amor nemico, amo la bella pace e la tranquillità. Conosco i danni miei, sì pazzo non sarei</p>	<p>"Observe this hair of mine, now turned to silver, observe my curved neck, the voice and the pace that weaken and enervate under the weight of age. I was once a follower of love, now I am love's enemy, I love beautiful peace and tranquility. I know my damages, I would not be so foolish</p>
--	---

<p>di por mai speme in femmina, ch'un vecchio amar non sa. Malandrina, tu ridesti, e lo so che tu sapresti diventar d'un orso amante per contante o per bontà.</p>	<p>to ever place hope in a woman, who does not know how to love an old man. Mischievous one, you laughed, and I know that you would know how to become a lover of a bear for cash or for goodness."</p>
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This aria is Corrado's response after Ghita perceives his feelings. The lyrics start with a self-mocking tone, expressing his age and disbelief in love. However, his naivety leads him to think that a woman would abandon her fidelity for some commendable quality, thus expressing his naive longing.

The tempo of the aria is *Allegro moderato*, setting a light and relaxed emotional tone. The use of easygoing music and repetition in this aria serves to convey Corrado's denial of Ghita's suspicions and responds to them in a light-hearted manner. He finds it almost comical, hence, despite self-mockingly acknowledging his old age and lack of intense desire for love, the composer's use of repeated musical phrases, along with the lyrics and abundant staccato, seems to betray a hint of nervousness in his heart. Simultaneously, the extensive use of staccato vividly represents Corrado's childlike naivety – his hope and longing that Lilla would forsake her loyalty to fall in love with the Prince and then him.

In this aria, despite some self-deprecating lyrics, there is no significant emotional contrast or shift. Corrado's character remains in love with

Lilla throughout, and although his way of expressing love is different from the Prince's, their goal is the same. In portraying these characters, the script does not emphasize their differences but rather blurs their traits. For example, certain behaviors of the Prince during his courtship, like using money to win Lilla's heart, are not typical of royalty but rather resemble actions of a minister like Corrado. On the other hand, despite his age, Corrado displays an unusual naivety, more akin to the characteristics of a prince who grew up in court and was well-protected.

In this opera, both characters maintain consistent beliefs and expectations for the same goal and person from beginning to end. When Da Ponte provided the libretto for this opera to Martin y Soler, he subtly diluted the character traits to highlight the theme and complement Martin y Soler's musical style. All characters and plots were designed to emphasize the central theme and to enhance Martin y Soler's musical style. This approach not only reflects Da Ponte's thoughtful consideration of the script but also demonstrates his ability to provide librettos and character portrayals that facilitate the composer's strengths.

In both operas *Una cosa rara* and *Così fan tutte*, collaborated on by Da Ponte with Mozart and Martin y Soler, the theme revolves around women, but the male characters are the dynamic forces in understanding the opera. Their characteristics not only reflect the playwright's ingenious creation of the script but also show the adjustments made by the playwright in collaboration with different musicians.

4.5 Duets Ratio and Lyrics with Music

1) Ratio of Duets

When collaborating with the two composers, Da Ponte wrote scripts tailored to their individual musical characteristics. This adaptation is evident not only in the plot and character portrayal but also in the use of duets.

It is clear in the librettos of *Una cosa rara* and *Così fan tutte*, written by Da Ponte, that the ratio of duets he incorporated for the two composers varies. This doesn't imply a comparison of strengths and weaknesses between the two composers but highlights their distinct musical styles. In collaboration, Da Ponte could effectively adjust to these styles. Such adjustments not only distinctly present the composers' traits to the world but also demonstrate Da Ponte's flexibility in scriptwriting.

In *Una cosa rara*, Da Ponte set only 8 duet segments according to Martín y Soler's musical characteristics,¹³⁶⁾ This includes four duets, two trios, one sextet, and one septet. In the entire opera, the atmosphere is primarily conveyed through the chorus. Martín y Soler's lyrically beautiful musical style led Da Ponte to give more weight to arias in the script he provided for Martín y Soler. This not only highlights the composer's unique musical talents but also aligns with the audience's

136) Note: The term 'duet' here does not include the choruses or ensemble singing by all actors at the end of each act. Such scenes in Italian opera buffa are typically understood as a special type of ensemble singing, which combines the characteristics of both duets and choruses, while showcasing the complex interactions and emotional layers among characters in the opera. Therefore, in this discussion, such ensemble pieces are automatically excluded when talking about choruses or duets.

musical aesthetics of the time.

In *Così fan tutte*, the libretto Da Ponte provided for Mozart contains as many as 19 ensemble pieces. These include eight duets, six trios, two quartets, two quintets, and one sextet. Since Mozart excelled in using ensembles to depict dramatic climaxes and story conflicts, Da Ponte's script for Mozart fully utilized this musical characteristic.

The ratio of ensembles demonstrates Da Ponte's ability to adapt to the composer's style to varying degrees, with these adaptations reflecting the composer's musical creation traits. Similarly, in the lyrics of the ensembles, whether it's the content or length, Da Ponte also tailored them according to the composer's musical style.

From our previous analysis, we know that Martín y Soler's music often uses progressive musical forms and frequently employs repetitive elements to emphasize key points in the lyrics, also effectively using this technique to highlight characters' emotions. In the opera *Una cosa rara*, the trio in Act 1 involving the Prince, Corrado, and the Queen is set as a trio by Da Ponte, with similar lyrics for all three characters, perfectly fitting the progressive musical type for a trio.

[Table 6]

PRINCIPE	Perché mai nel sen, perché, cara madre ognor per te palpitarmi il cor dovrà?	"Why ever in the heart, why, dear mother, always for you must my heart beat?"
REGINA	Perché mai nel sen, perché, caro figlio, ognor per me	"Why ever in the heart, why, dear son, always for me

	palpitarti il cor dovrà?	must your heart beat?"
CORRADO	Perché mai nel sen, perché, gran Regina, ognor per te palpitarci il cor dovrà?	"Why ever in the heart, why, great Queen, always for you must our heart beat?"
REGINA, PRINCIPE E CORRADO	Deh, conserva a chi t'adora una vita al ciel sì cara.	"Oh, preserve for those who adore you a life so dear to heaven."
REGINA	Meco godi, amato figlio, e discaccia il tuo timor.	"Rejoice with me, beloved son, and cast away your fear."
PRINCIPE E CORRADO	In te vive il figlio ancora, in te vive il genitor.	"In you the son still lives, in you the parent lives."

The lyrics create a very harmonious atmosphere, with the Prince expressing his love for his mother, the Queen happily reciprocating her son's love, Corrado expressing his admiration for the Queen, and the Queen also cherishing her minister.

This trio's musical characteristics continue the features found in the overture, not only employing progressive and staggered musical methods but also incorporating the cyclical music Martin y Soler is adept at using. The music is set in the dance-like 3/4 time signature, suggesting fluidity and a cheerful ambiance. Combined with the lyrics where Corrado and the Prince jointly express their admiration for the Queen, the mood of the music is very lively and harmonious. Moreover, being in C major, this segment indicates a stable effect, both emotionally and

musically.



[Fig. 12]

In the segment, similar lyrics are staggered and progressed across different vocal parts, not only showcasing the harmony between characters but also their interaction within the piece. In the music, the elegant melodic lines in the vocal parts, accompanied by numerous brief rests, create a cheerful and graceful atmosphere for the audience audibly. This, combined with the harmonious lyrics, reflects the harmonious relationship among the three characters and the mutual admiration of the Prince and the minister for the Queen, who, in turn, cherishes her son and ministers.

The beautiful music and harmonious lyrics, while setting the mood, also foreshadow the Queen's attitude upon Lilla's arrival. A monarch

revered and loved is unlikely to blame a well-meaning subject. Here, Da Ponte has already begun to show the audience the character setup provided for Martin y Soler, where the minister and the Prince jointly admire the Queen. While it's natural for subjects and a prince to love their queen, one might boldly speculate that the character setup in Da Ponte's script for Martin y Soler is being revealed from this point.

In this segment, the Prince and Corrado, being on the same team, suggest that they will also be in the same camp when they fall in love with Lilla. In the opera, the Prince is a tenor, typically a character in opera seria, and tenors in opera seria are often used for positive characters. Corrado is also set as a tenor, which seems to again confirm their belonging to the same camp. Furthermore, the segment where Corrado and the Prince jointly express their admiration for the Queen, despite some differences in lyrics, seems to hint at a certain ambiguity in the characterization of the two.

In *Così fan tutte*, Da Ponte provided Mozart with numerous ensemble pieces, tailored to Mozart's musical style. Mozart's polyphonic music excellently portrays the conflict and drama in ensemble segments. Therefore, Da Ponte made corresponding changes in both the length and content of the lyrics, aligning with Mozart's compositional traits and enriching the content of the segments.

Following the overture of the opera, Act 1, Scene 1, begins with Guglielmo and Ferrando boasting about the virtues of their fiancées, followed by Alfonso joining the conversation, leading to a clash of opinions between the two camps.

{Table 7}

Ferrando	La mia Dorabella Capace non è: Fedel quanto bella Il cielo la fé.	My Dorabella couldn't Do such a thing: Heaven made her As faithful as she's fair.
Guglielmo	La mia Fiordiligi Tradirmi non sa: Uguale in lei credo Costanza e beltà.	My Fiordiligi simply Couldn't betray me: I believe her constancy Equals her beauty.
Don Alfonso	Ho i crini già grigi, Ex cathedra parlo; Ma tali litigi Finiscano qua.	My hair is already grey, I speak with authority; But let's have done With argument.
Ferrando e Guglielmo	No, detto ci avete Che infide esser ponno; Provar ce'l dovete, Se avete onestà.	No, you've told us They could be faithless; If you're honest You will prove it.
Don Alfonso	Tai prove lasciamo...	Let's not trouble with proof.
Ferrando e Guglielmo	No, no, le vogliamo: O, fuori la spada, Rompiam l'amistà.	No, no, we demand it: Or out with your sword And we'll break up this friendship,
Ferrando e Guglielmo	fra sé Sul vivo mi tocca chi lascia di bocca sortire un accento che torto le fa.	He strikes at my honour Who allows his lips To utter a word Which does her wrong.
Don Alfonso	fra sé O pazzo desire!	fra sé O what folly

	Cercar di scoprire Quel mal che, trovato, Meschini ci fa.	To try to discover The wrong which will make us wretched When we've found it!
--	---	--

The lyrics not only display the stances of the opposing sides but also highlight the subtle differences among characters on the same team. In terms of length and complexity of content, this is richer than the trio of the Queen, Prince, and Corrado in *Una cosa rara*. Positioned at the beginning of the opera, the trio in Da Ponte's libretto for Mozart's *Così fan tutte* introduces the characters' relationships and displays the content and theme of the conflict. This segment, filled with dramatic intensity and character traits, is encapsulated in a single trio, aligning well with Mozart's compositional style.

The 4/4 rhythm of the segment, with one strong beat and one weaker beat per measure, suits scenes with differing opinions. The key of G major, often used for harmonious and bright scenes, suggests that although Ferrando and Guglielmo disagree with Alfonso's statements, the three men are similar in some respects. The joint lyrics of Ferrando and Guglielmo suggest that Alfonso's claims about women's disloyalty are offensive to their honor rather than a belief in women's fidelity. This implication is also reflected in the introduction of the trio, where the steady rhythm of the second violins and the frequent trills of the first violins create a cheerful atmosphere, representing their underlying harmony. Although the introduction starts with Ferrando and Guglielmo boasting about their fiancées to satisfy their pride, the accompaniment's

trills don't diminish with Alfonso's entrance. Instead, they are joined by staccato rhythms and triplets, enhancing the rhythm and sustaining the cheerful atmosphere. After Alfonso's statements about women's lack of fidelity, the men seem emotionally unsettled due to their wounded pride, with brief sequences of 32nd notes in the accompaniment hinting at internal changes. However, they quickly return to the original mood, reaffirming the suspicion that all three men fundamentally doubt women's fidelity.

In this brief trio segment, Da Ponte and Mozart effectively convey the story's inciting incident, character relationships, and essential character portrayals through the music and lyrics. This showcases Da Ponte's ability to provide appropriate librettos and segments according to the composer's musical characteristics.

2) Lyrics and Music

In the composition of operas in any language, whether it is arias, recitatives, choruses, or ensembles, factors such as the number of syllables in the lyrics and the placement of stressed syllables have a crucial impact on how musicians compose the music. These factors can directly influence the direction of the melody's development, as well as the length and rhythm of the musical phrases. Naturally, these considerations are not meant to limit the musician's creativity, but to compose music that flows naturally and smoothly, these factors must be taken into account. In Italian opera, considerations of syllable count and stress are also essential. Therefore, it is evident that the lyricist's work

in opera composition is extremely important.

Since its inception in Italy in 1600, opera has predominantly featured lyrics not in prose or colloquial language, but in verse that inherently possesses rhythm and meter. As Italian operas became popular across Europe, the structure of Italian verse and its corresponding musical settings gradually formed a conventionally accepted pattern of creation. In this regard, the achievements of Mozart and Martin y Soler in Italian opera buffa owe much to Da Ponte's contributions.

Following Gluck's opera reforms, the overture became unique to each opera, advocating that music should serve the lyrics. While this approach directed the opera genre towards a healthier development path, it also led to certain disorders. For instance, poets writing solely for the rhythm of the lyrics without considering the music. In such scenarios, it's even less likely for poets to tailor scripts and lyrics according to a composer's musical style. In this light, Da Ponte's contribution to libretto writing is particularly valuable. Although he may not be the only poet to work in this manner, he is certainly a figure worth contemplating.

We know that Mozart had a special passion for music composition and opera creation. He believed that lyrics in music should not disrupt the emotions conveyed by the music; the lyrics must be the obedient daughter of music. This is clearly evident in the letter he wrote to his father in the previous chapter.

A poet ingrained with a sense of rhythm can provide Mozart with the type of lyrics he desires, demonstrating not only a profound understanding of the Italian language but also a deep appreciation of

music. Furthermore, studies have shown that the stressed final syllables and the number of vowel sounds in Italian verse provided by librettists can influence the rhythm and melodic development in a composer's musical creation.¹³⁷⁾ This aspect is crucial in the librettos Da Ponte wrote for different composers, and it's a significant reason why Da Ponte would first understand a composer's style before creating a libretto for them.

Mozart excelled in portraying characters with depth, moving away from the previously typical typified characters, and vividly expressing individual personalities through music. He was also stringent with his requirements for lyrics. Martín y Soler's musical talent lies in his ability to compose beautiful and tender melodies, resulting in Da Ponte's lyrics being more concise and gentle when collaborating with him.

In *Così fan tutte*, the famous aria *Come scoglio immoto resta* uses three different tempos: Andante Maestoso, Allegro, and Più Allegro, to represent three different emotions of Fiordiligi at that moment. The piece is in B-flat major, a key that can be described as warm and empowering, signifying that even faced with new temptations, Fiordiligi remains steadfast, drawing strength from her fiancé. As the tempo of the aria gradually increases, it indicates Fiordiligi's increasingly resolute heart. The piece uses many primary chords, creating a stable auditory experience, and Mozart concludes with a perfect cadence, ending on the major triad of the tonic chord. This seems to depict Fiordiligi's

137) 沈雕龍. "歌劇里, 詩必須是音樂的乖順女兒." 音樂研究 2015.11. p.1

Shen, Diao Long. "In Opera, the Poetry Must be the Obedient Daughter of Music," *Music Studies*, (2015), 1

unwavering fidelity to her fiancé and her composed character.

In *Una cosa rara*, the aria *Consola le pene* is about Lilla feeling wronged when her fiancé is jealous after she is pursued by others and rejects them. Despite her grievances, she still expresses her heartfelt loyalty to her fiancé. Martín y Soler maintains a gentle and soft melody to convey her feelings. The main melody's repetition effectively portrays her inner turmoil and the sense of having no outlet for her distress.

Both arias depict the heroines' state of mind when faced with suitors: Fiordiligi remains more steadfast, while Lilla is also firm but with a hint of grievance.

[Table 8]

<p>Come scoglio immoto resta, Contro i venti e la tempesta, Così ognor quest' alma è forte, Nella fede e nell' amor.</p>	<p>As a rock remains unmoved, Against the winds and the storm, So always is this soul strong, In faith and in love.</p>
<p>Con noi nacque quella face , Che ci piace, e ci consola, E potrà la morte sola , Far che cangi affetto il cor.</p>	<p>With us was born that flame, That pleases and consoles us, And only death can, Make the heart change its affection.</p>
<p>Rispettate, anIme ingrante, Quest' esempio di costanza, E una barbara speranza, Non virenda audaci ancor!</p>	<p>Respect, ungrateful souls, This example of constancy, And a cruel hope, Will not be rewarded by boldness again!</p>

{Table 9}

Consola le pene Mia vita, mio bene, Quell'ira, quel pianto, Morire mi fa.	Console my pains, My life, my love, That anger, those tears, Make me want to die.
Gli affanni sofferti O cara, rammenta, E allora paventa Di mia fedeltà.	Remember the sufferings I have endured, my dear, And then fear For my fidelity.

The number of syllables is the primary element determining the metrical personality in opera.¹³⁸⁾ The second element is the placement of the stressed syllables at the end. The table 8 is the lyrics of *Come scoglio immoto resta*, where the aria's lyrics are quite complex, with each line consisting of 7-9 syllables. Combined with the music, the structure is not only compact but also reflects Da Ponte's harmonious collaboration with Mozart during creation. The table 9 is the lyrics of *Consola le pene*, and it's evident that each line in *Consola le pene* has fewer vowel sounds, around six. However, when paired with Martin y Soler's gentle music, it tenderly reveals Lilla's inner grievances and determination. Da Ponte's combination of lyrics and music is aptly done; he adapts his writing to complement the composer's style, which is a hallmark of Da Ponte's creative brilliance and his astuteness.

138) 沈雕龍. 《歌劇里，詩必須是音樂的乖順女兒》 5

Shen Diao Long. "In Opera, the Poetry Must be the Obedient Daughter of Music," 5

5. After leaving Vienna

At the end of June 1791, Da Ponte finally decided to leave the city where he had once achieved career success.¹³⁹⁾ Accompanying him was a female friend, who was certainly not the well-known lover Frarrese, as by this time, Frarrese had already left Vienna for Venice. ¹⁴⁰⁾

Da Ponte's preferred destination after leaving Vienna was Venice, but at that time, the restrictions against him in Venice were still in effect, and multiple attempts by his family and friends to have these restrictions lifted were unsuccessful. Consequently, he had no choice but to head to other cities.

Da Ponte, along with his female friend, went to Trieste, a common destination for exiles. Although Trieste was part of the Austrian Empire, it was close to Venice. Presumably, Da Ponte still harbored hopes of returning to Venice. In Trieste, Da Ponte met Count Pompeo Brigido, who was already familiar with his story and offered assistance for his stay in Trieste.

Having lost his job in Italian opera in Vienna, Da Ponte urgently needed a source of income to support himself, his father, and his siblings. Therefore, he sought work wherever possible, hoping to gain the favor of monarchs. Despite his efforts and the help from Count Pompeo Brigido, Da Ponte managed to secure a meeting with a monarch, but things did not progress as hoped, and he was forced to stay in Trieste temporarily.

139) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 117.

140) *Ibid.*

As Da Ponte contemplated what to do next, his friends suggested he complete a tragedy, *Il Mezenzio*, an opera that his brother had started but left unfinished. This tragedy was performed for five nights in December 1791, attracting around three thousand spectators.¹⁴¹⁾ In January 1792, a theater company arrived in Trieste and created a new version of *L'ape musicale*, a work previously written by Da Ponte. This made Da Ponte's name well known among the people of Trieste, but this success only provided a temporary relief from his financial difficulties. He still needed to consider where he could go to earn a living.

He had a letter of recommendation from the late emperor, written to Da Ponte when the emperor decided to dissolve the Italian opera company, recommending him to go to Paris. Da Ponte thought it was worth a try, so he attempted to write to the monarch about his plans, but he received no reply. Da Ponte went to Vienna, and upon his arrival, he found that Leopold had died, and his eldest son Francis had succeeded him.¹⁴²⁾ With the help of Casti, Da Ponte met the new monarch and managed to have the charges against him dropped. However, this did not mean Da Ponte could work there as before.

Before or after Da Ponte returned to Vienna, he met a girl named Nancy, who captivated his heart and later became his companion.¹⁴³⁾ The female friend Da Ponte had taken from Vienna seems to have been left behind in Trieste.

141) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 125.

142) *Ibid*, 126.

143) *Ibid*, 127.

Da Ponte, together with Nancy and the letter of recommendation from Joseph II, began his journey to Paris. Along the way, they passed through Dresden, where Da Ponte met his friends. They suggested he go to London instead of Paris. Da Ponte was still unsure where he could earn a living, but he knew he definitely couldn't stay in Dresden, as that would bring danger to his friends. After staying in Dresden for three or four days, Da Ponte left with Nancy. Their initial destination was still Paris, but when they were close to Paris, Da Ponte changed his mind and decided to go to London instead, believing it would be hard to find good patrons in France.

Upon arriving in London, Da Ponte did not find a patron easily. Although he did not escape his financial difficulties, he took on some simple jobs, so he was not overly burdened by debt. However, these were not enough to meet Da Ponte's needs. After some thought, Da Ponte decided to use the earnings from adapting his drama *Il Mezenzio for Lady Mara*, planning to go to other countries in hopes of finding patrons who could support his dream of working in Italian opera. In early July 1793, Da Ponte left Nancy in London and traveled alone to Brussels and Rotterdam.¹⁴⁴⁾

The journey to find a patron was not going smoothly, and just when Da Ponte thought the outlook was bleak, a turn of events occurred. A letter suddenly arrived from Nancy's sister, Louisa, informing them that Badini had been dismissed, and the manager of the opera house, William Taylor, wished to appoint Da Ponte as his replacement as the librettist

144) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 134.

for the King's Theatre.¹⁴⁵⁾ This good news pulled Da Ponte back from the brink of despair. Da Ponte became the librettist for the King's Theatre in London.¹⁴⁶⁾

William Taylor was the manager and a part-owner of the King's Theatre, which had always been financially troubled. Moreover, the opera atmosphere there was vastly different from that of Vienna. Although a portion of the nobility attended Italian operas, it was more for socializing than pure appreciation. The performance and work environment were far beyond Da Ponte's expectations. The noisy audience, occasional brawls, conspiracies among colleagues, and arbitrary strikes by lead singers made Da Ponte disdainful of this work setting. Additionally, in Britain, Italian opera lyrics were generally unpopular with the audience; they were neither highly regarded nor easily understood, leading to librettists being overlooked. A librettist's name rarely appeared on printed scripts or theater announcements. Their main task was to adapt existing scripts rather than create new ones. At the King's Theatre, Da Ponte's job mainly involved adapting scripts, shortening the text, and adding comedic elements. Scripts were usually published in both Italian and English, and the poet was entitled to half of the sales revenue, although this meant his income was slightly higher than other low-level employees but not by much.

This work environment and role did not give Da Ponte the opportunity

145) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 134.

146) Da Ponte The exact time and year when he became the librettist for the King's Theatre in London are not mentioned in the book. However, according to information found through a web search, it was around 1794.
https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorenzo_Da_Ponte

to showcase his talent in Italian opera libretti. Although he participated in the creation of some operas, they were not well-received. Attempts to stage previously successful operas also failed to win audience approval. This was not because Da Ponte had lost his talent or his librettos were outdated, but rather the environment was not conducive to Da Ponte's creative output.

During his time working at the King's Theatre, Da Ponte signed many bank drafts for William Taylor, which led him into a financial crisis. In 1799, Da Ponte was dismissed¹⁴⁷⁾, and by February 1800, he declared bankruptcy.¹⁴⁸⁾ However, from 1801 to 1804, despite being replaced in his original position, he continued to write scripts for the theatre and was nominally reappointed, although he wrote few new operas, his older librettos were still frequently performed.¹⁴⁹⁾

Due to debt and work issues, Da Ponte's wife, along with their children, left London—and Da Ponte, seemingly heading to the United States. In 1805, driven by various reasons, Da Ponte left London to start a new journey to the United States to find his family.

On June 4, 1805, Da Ponte arrived in the United States by ship and, after inquiring, learned that his family was living in New York. ¹⁵⁰⁾After reuniting with his family in New York, he received warm reception and support from his wife Nancy, who gave him her savings to start his own business. Nancy's family was involved in land speculation and trade activities and had achieved success in the United States. Initially, Da

147) Hodges, *Lorenzo Da Ponte*, 164.

148) *Ibid*, 160.

149) *Ibid*, 165.

150) *Ibid*, 172.

Ponte had a friendly relationship with Nancy's family, but over time, his dissatisfaction and distrust towards them gradually increased.

While in the United States, Da Ponte ventured into a new field by investing in a grocery store, but due to a lack of experience and fraudulent market practices, this business attempt ended in failure. He then turned his efforts towards education and cultural activities. His teaching career rapidly expanded, with a steady increase in the number of students. He published "A Brief History of Lorenzo Da Ponte" and actively participated in cultural activities. Da Ponte and his wife also frequently hosted Italian reading, recitation, and drama performances at their home.

Additionally, Da Ponte expanded his teaching activities, attracting more students, allowing him to support his family through his teaching income. Later, after encountering difficulties in an investment, the family moved to the beautiful town of Sunbury. From 1811 to 1818, he engaged in trade between Sunbury and Philadelphia, dealing in various goods, including wheat, spirits, medical supplies, and spices. His carriage became a symbol of his frequent travels between the two towns. Moreover, he opened a ladies' hat shop in Philadelphia, in which Nancy and their daughter Fanny likely played significant roles.

In 1814, Da Ponte built his own house in Sunbury. Although Da Ponte's commercial ventures generated substantial tax revenue for the local area, making him a well-known figure, his family was embroiled in financial turmoil. Consequently, Da Ponte moved to Philadelphia with his son in 1818. Upon arriving in Philadelphia, Da Ponte struggled to find a

source of income and once again faced financial difficulties. After some time, Clement Moore invited Da Ponte to New York to teach Italian.

Da Ponte spent the rest of his life in New York until his death, dedicating himself to trading Italian books, writing essays, poetry, and letters, and most importantly, to teaching. His main reason for returning to New York was concern for his eldest son, Joseph, who seemed to be associating with dissolute young men in Philadelphia, causing Da Ponte worry. In education, Da Ponte paid particular attention to Joseph's study of Greek and Latin, crucial for a legal career, and successfully enrolled him in Columbia University, despite initial difficulties in paying tuition fees. Professionally, Da Ponte faced the challenge of a shortage of Italian books and tried to solve this problem by contacting Italian booksellers and publishers, but was hindered by financial issues. Nevertheless, his students donated a significant number of Italian classic works to the New York Public Library, somewhat mitigating the library's shortfall in this area.

As Italian culture continued to flow into the United States, Italian opera companies also came to perform. Da Ponte took his students to watch operas, including *Don Giovanni* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*. These performances were well-received, and Da Ponte, as the librettist for these operas, was delighted to see his works affirmed by the public. Simultaneously, Da Ponte's educational career flourished, and in 1825, he was appointed as a professor at Columbia University.

In 1833, Da Ponte collaborated with the nobleman Don Vincenzo Riva Finoli to establish an Italian Opera House, which was renamed the

National Grand Theatre three years later, in 1836. Da Ponte passed away on August 17, 1838, and was buried in a splendid manner, witnessed by many Italian and American friends. The fact that he had once been a priest was not widely known, so it was decided to keep this quiet.

Although Da Ponte did not create outstanding opera libretti after leaving Vienna, it was as if his talent was deeply hidden, placed somewhere not suited for its shine. However, he continuously spread Italian culture, not just in language and goods but as a cultural influence. It was under such influence that Italian operas were smoothly staged in the United States. From this perspective, while Da Ponte did not directly contribute new librettos to Italian opera, his actions indirectly contributed to its dissemination.

Da Ponte's life was like a rich and colorful epic, full of twists and diverse experiences. He was not only a versatile literary man but also a passionate educator and promoter of culture. From the revelry of Venice to the scholarly atmosphere of New York, from European theaters to American classrooms, his life's journey spanned different cultures and social strata. Throughout his life, Da Ponte faced numerous challenges, including difficulties in education and cultural dissemination and attacks on his personal reputation. However, he never succumbed to adversity, always overcoming obstacles with resilience and innovative thinking. Whether in teaching or writing, he demonstrated extraordinary talent and a profound understanding of knowledge. Da Ponte's life is not only a testament to personal struggle but also a vivid demonstration of the importance of cross-cultural exchange and lifelong learning. His

experiences and achievements have undoubtedly left a deep mark on future generations, becoming an immortal cultural legacy.

6. Conclusion

Da Ponte's life can be described as a cross-cultural artistic journey. He not only left a profound mark in the opera world as a librettist but also made unique contributions to cultural exchange and artistic innovation. His life reflects the rich diversity of 18th-century European music and literature, as well as the story of how artists create and influence future generations across different cultural backgrounds.

Firstly, Da Ponte's personal life experiences had a profound impact on his artistic creation. His background, early literary pursuits, and the deep cultural knowledge displayed in his libretti provided a wealth of material and inspiration for his artistic work. Through analyzing his personal history, we can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural significance and artistic value contained in his librettos.

Secondly, Da Ponte's collaboration with composers like Mozart not only propelled the development of Italian opera buffa but also highlighted the importance of artistic collaboration. Analyzing their partnership reveals the mutual influence and integration between different artistic fields, and how such collaboration contributed to the innovation and development of the opera art form.

Furthermore, Da Ponte's work emphasized the central role of the librettist in opera creation. His libretti were not just accompaniments to music but an indispensable part of the opera art. His delicate portrayal of characters and clever plot design made the opera not just a musical performance but a complete artistic work rich in emotion and profound

themes.

Lastly, Da Ponte's life and librettos offer new perspectives and insights for modern musicology research. His creative practice and artistic philosophy provide important references for understanding 18th-century European culture and valuable methodologies and perspectives for future opera studies.

In summary, Da Ponte's life and his artistic librettos not only enrich our understanding of Italian opera buffa but also offer deep insights into the fusion of music and literature. Through studying his life and librettos, we can more comprehensively understand the complexity and beauty of opera as an art form, and the key role played by the libretto.

This study aims to delve into Lorenzo Da Ponte's career and creative achievements, emphasizing the crucial role of opera librettists in musicological research and public awareness. By thoroughly analyzing Da Ponte's librettos, this study seeks to re-evaluate and recognize the role of opera librettists, highlighting their indispensable contributions to music history and opera creation. It advocates for the importance of considering the librettist's role in opera studies, asserting that a proper understanding of opera involves the integration of libretto and music. Additionally, it hopes to enhance public recognition of these librettists who have silently contributed to the music world.

Ultimately, this study aims to open new perspectives and methodologies for future opera research, promoting a balanced analysis of the interaction between music and text, thereby fully appreciating the beauty of the literary and musical fusion in opera, and advancing the

recognition of opera libretto creation and its significant place in music history.

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개 요

로렌초 다 폰테와 그의 오페라 부파 연구

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오페라, 1600년에 처음 등장하여 400년 이상의 역사를 자랑하는 음악 장르로, 본질적으로 예술가들이 협력하여 완성하는 복잡한 예술 형식이다. 그러나 오랜 음악사 연구에서 극작가의 독특한 공헌은 종종 여러 음악학자들에 의해 간과되었다. 오페라의 예술적 가치와 문화적 의미를 심층 분석하려면 역사적 문화적 배경뿐만 아니라 대본 내용의 깊이 있는 해석과 대본 작가의 창작 기여도 중요한 요소가 된다.

이 논문은 뛰어난 대본가 Lorenzo Da Ponte를 연구 주제로 삼아, 그가 오페라 예술 발전에 기여한 중요한 공헌을 상세히 논의하고, 오페라 창작 과정에서 대본가의 무시할 수 없는 역할을 입증한다. 본 연구의 목표는 Lorenzo Da Ponte의 예술적 경력과 오페라 예술에 대한 그의 기여를 더 깊이 이해하는 것뿐만 아니라, 그의 작품에 대한 심층 분석을 통해 음악사와 오페라 예술 창작에서 극작가가 맡는 중요한 역할을 강조하는 데 있다.

특히 대본과 음악의 결합 과정에서 극작가의 역할은 단순한 텍스트 제공자를 훨씬 뛰어넘는다. 그들은 줄거리의 정교한 구상, 인물의 깊은 묘사, 주제의 정확한 파악을 통해 오페라 음악 창작에 풍부하고 강력한 텍스트

기반을 제공한다. 이 과정은 음악과 문학의 완벽한 결합을 나타내며, 오페라 예술 형식의 발전을 촉진한다.

결론적으로, 이 논문은 Lorenzo Da Ponte와 그의 대본 작품에 대한 세밀한 연구를 통해 오페라 창작에서 극작가의 독특한 지위와 무시할 수 없는 공헌을 보여준다. 오페라 연구 분야에 새로운 시각과 연구 방법론을 제공하며, 일반 대중과 음악계가 이러한 묵묵히 헌신하는 예술가들에게 더 많은 관심과 인정을 기울이고, 종합적인 예술 형식인 오페라에 대한 포괄적 이해와 심층 토론을 촉진하는 데 기여한다.