The University of North Carolina at Asheville
Mozart's Le Nozze di Figaro: The Perfect Opera
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Le Nozze di Figaro, written by Mozart with a libretto by Da Ponte, is an immaculate opera that has seen tremendous success since its premiere in 1786. The opera contains social commentary on the historical affairs of the late 18th century, and it caused much controversy in and around Europe at the time of its premiere. Mozart's interesting choice of subject and his use of classical harmony in Le Nozze di Figaro, paired with Da Ponte's character development and flow of dialogue and action combine to produce the most perfect, least problematic opera of Mozart's career.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who is the composer of more than 600 musical works, was born in Salzburg on January 27, 1756. He was the son of Leopold Mozart, who was his greatest musical teacher. Young Mozart showed musical gifts at an early age, composing when he was five and playing before the Bavarian elector and the Austrian empress. Leopold Mozart felt inclined to exhibit his children's musical genius, so the family took tours to Paris, London, Italy, Holland, various cities of Germany, and Vienna, exposing young Mozart to numerous styles of music. Mozart was a virtuoso on the keyboard and violin, and he composed his first minuets at the age of five, his first symphony at nine, his first oratorio at eleven, and his first opera at twelve. His early works were influenced by Johann Christian Bach, whom Mozart met in London, and his early operas were strongly influenced by the opera buffa he was exposed to in Vienna and in Italy during his 1770-1773 tours. His first opera buffa was La Finta semplice (The Pretend Simpleton), and he produced two opera serie in the early 1770s, Mitridate and Ascanio in Alba. In addition, Mozart composed his first string quartets and his first symphonies between 1770 and 1773. While living unhappily in Salzburg in 1777, Mozart produced a very famous opera seria, Idomeneo, and in the early 1780s, he produced thirteen piano sonatas and several violin sonatas, in addition to over fifty symphonies.

In 1781, Mozart moved to Vienna against his father's will and became extremely successful. He produced the Haydn Quartets, which were six string quartets dedicated to Joseph Haydn, in 1785. Mozart wrote only six symphonies in the last ten years of his life, known as the Vienna Symphonies. Among the most famous are the Haffner Symphony (K. 385), the Prague Symphony in D major (K. 504), and the Jupiter Symphony in C major (K. 551). In addition to his symphonies, Mozart produced seventeen concertos for piano and his last opera seria, La celmenza di Tito (The Mercy of Titus). Mozart's most successful Italian operas were those with librettos written by Da Ponte. Three Italian operas, Le Nozze di Figaro (The Marriage of Figaro, 1786), Don Giovanni (1787), and Cosi fan tutte (Thus Do All Women, 1790), and one German opera, Die Zauberflote (The Magic Flute, 1791) enjoyed enormous success in Vienna. Mozart died while working on The Requiem (K. 626), in 1791, which was later finished by his pupil. He was buried in a Vienna suburb in an unmarked grave.

Lorenzo Da Ponte, who was Mozart's librettist for his most successful Italian operas, was born in Venice in 1749. Forced to leave Venice in 1782 because of scandal, he went to Vienna, where he became poet to the Italian theater for nine years. There he wrote three of Mozart's operas--The Marriage of Figaro (1786), Don Giovanni (1787), and Cosi fan tutte (1790). Banished again because of scandal, he settled in London in 1791. There he worked as a tutor of Italian, a bookseller, and a librettist to the Drury Lane Theatre, until he went bankrupt in 1804. Da Ponte set out for America in 1805, but failed as a grocer in New Jersey. The rest of his life was spent as a celebrated teacher of Italian language and culture in the United States. He taught nearly 2,000 private pupils and was appointed professor of Italian language and literature at Columbia in 1830. His library became the nucleus of the university literature department. In 1833, he helped to establish the Italian Opera House in New York City, where 28 performances of Italian opera were given before the theater was transferred to other management. The venture represented the first attempt to establish Italian opera permanently in the United States. Da Ponte's last years were marred by poverty, and he died in New England in 1838.

Le Nozze di Figaro ('The Marriage of Figaro') is generally agreed to be the most perfect and least problematic of Mozart's great operas. It is an opera buffa in four acts, originally written in Italian and numbered K492. The opera is modeled after Pierre-Augustin Beaumarchais' play, La folle journee, ou Le mariage de Figaro, which premiered in Paris in 1784. Incidentally, the characters of Figaro are very similar to the characters of Barber of Seville by Paisiello, which is also based on a Beaumarchais play. The cast of Figaro includes Count Almaviva, a baritone, Countess Almaviva, a soprano, Susanna, her maid who is betrothed to Figaro and sings soprano, and Figaro, who is Count Almaviva's valet and sings bass. Cherubino, a mezzo-soprano, acts as the Count's page, and Marcellina, a soprano, is the housekeeper to Bartolo, who is a doctor from Seville and sings bass. Don Basilio, tenor, is the music master, Don Curzio, tenor, is the magistrate, and Barbarina, soprano, is the daughter of Antonio, a bass, who is a gardener and Susanna's uncle. Villagers, peasants, and servants also appear in the opera. The setting of the opera is in Aguasfrescas near Seville at the Almavivas' country house. The action is contemporary both in the play and in the opera (Rushton 631).

Figaro premiered in its original Italian language in Vienna at the Burgtheater on May 1, 1786. Composition began in late 1785 and may have been drafted in only six weeks (Rushton 631). Although only nine performances were given in 1786, the opera enjoyed enormous success throughout Europe. The 1787 performance of the opera in Prague led to the commission for Don Giovanni, Mozart's next great Italian opera, and the successful revival in Vienna of 26 performances of Figaro in 1789 preceded the commission for Cosi fan tutte. Figaro was also performed in Italy, Germany, France, Amsterdam, Budapest, London, and New York from 1790 through 1824 (Rushton 632) . The opera has since remained successful, being performed throughout the world in various languages.

Figaro was written during a time of historical revolution. Europe in the late 18th century was in a state of flux. After centuries of aristocratic rule in which Kings and Emperors reigned by divine right, the currents of social change were dramatic. In France, Louis XVI and his wife, Marie Antoinette, were facing mounting pressure for social and constitutional reform. It was the mishandling of this that ultimately led to the French Revolution of 1789 and the guillotining of both Louis and Marie Antoinette in 1793. In Vienna, Joseph II faced similar social pressures, and he tried to institute many reforms for the benefit of his subjects, notably in education and in public health. He also abolished serfdom, granted the freedom of press, and passed an Act establishing religious equality before the law.

Figaro was considered quite controversial due to its subject matter during the revolutions of the late 1700s. Several parts of the opera are built around the relationships between master and servant, and between upper class and lower class. In addition, the opera involves servants scheming and undermining their masters and demanding fair treatment. Napoleon believed that Beaumarchais's Le Mariage de Figaro a revolution in action, and King Louis XVI of France personally forbade the public performance of the play in 1781. Even Joseph II of Vienna, despite his liberal reforms, was sensitive to the potentially subversive messages in the play and in the opera, and Figaro was eventually banned from the Viennese stage (Noske 124).

Two factors influenced Mozart's choice of subject for Le Nozze di Figaro. One was the success of Beaumarchais's play, which was certainly due to the controversy which surrounded it, and the brilliantly written comedic script, fast pace of action, engaging characters, and witty dialogue. The other factor in Mozart's calculations was the immense popularity of Paisiello's opera, The Barber of Seville. Mozart greatly respected Giovanni Paisiello and his style of Italian opera. Mozart's first priority in choosing an operatic subject was to attract an audience, not to make political statements. Mozart
craved the social and financial rewards that a successful opera could bring, and he knew that he could please his audience without compromising his musical integrity (Simon 295).

Figaro is a biting social satire with beautiful music, and Da Ponte's words engage the audience by keeping the flow of the plot moving quickly, by fully developing characters, and by entertaining through humor and wit. The opera begins with a lovely overture, and Act One opens with a duet between Figaro and Susanna. These are the two who are going to be married. Both servants in the household of the Count Almaviva, they are preparing the room they are to occupy after the wedding. Figaro, it seems, is delighted with the room, but Susanna points out to him that the Count has shown her some interesting attentions, and that their room

is very close to his. The witty Figaro sings his aria, “Se vuol ballare, Signor Contino,” “if you wish to go dancing, my little Count, go right to it/ but I’ll play the tune.” A new pair of characters enter. Dr. Bartolo and his housekeeper, Marcellina. The doctor does not like Figaro on account of some past disfavors received. Marcellina, however, wants to marry the young man even though she is old enough to be his mother. In fact, she has lent him money and received in exchange a guarantee that he will marry her if it is not repaid. The dialogue between them ends with an aria by Dr. Bartolo, “La vendetta,” in which the old fellow swears to get even with Figaro. Before Marcellina leaves, she meets her rival, Susanna, and gets roundly trounced in a polite exchange of unpleasantries. When the defeated Marcellina returns, the young page, Cherubino, is introduced. He is perpetually in love with one girl or another, and it has gotten him into quite a mess, the Count having threatened him with dismissal for overzealous flirtation. He confides in Susanna and then sings his quick little aria, “Non so piu cosa son.” This expresses perfectly the breathless delights and bewilderments of his half-baked crushes, his latest being on the Countess herself. The Count comes in, and Cherubino must hide himself. The Count’s advances to Susanna are interrupted by Don Basilio, the music master, and the Count also hides. Basilio is a common gossip, and what the Count overhears makes him step forward from his hiding place, for Basilio has been saying that Cherubino is too attentive to the Countess. As the Count relates Cherubino’s recent adventures with Barbarina, the gardener’s daughter, he discovers the young flirt himself, and a fine concerted number follows. Figaro re-enters with a group of peasants, singing a song in praise of the Count. The Count, of course, must receive them graciously, and peace is at least temporarily restored. When the peasants have left, the Count gives Cherubino a commission in his regiment, hoping to get rid of the young flirt. The act closes as Figaro, in the mock military aria, “Non piu andrai,” ironically congratulates Cherubino on his impending military career (Rushton 632).

Act Two opens in the room of Countess Almaviva who is singing unhappily of the lost love of her husband in the beautiful aria, “Porgi amor.” This is followed by a conference between the Countess, Susanna, and Figaro, all of whom wish to make the Count behave better and to leave Susanna in peace and to pay more attention to his wife. Susanna, they decide, is to write a note to the Count inviting him to meet her alone at night in the garden. However, Cherubino, disguised as a woman, is to keep the appointment. Then the Countess is to surprise them, and thus they hope to embarrass the Count into behaving more to their liking. Cherubino himself comes in and sings an utterly charming song he himself has written called “Voi che sapete.” Susanna starts to dress Cherubino as a woman, but she has difficulties because the young page continually tries to make love to the Countess. Suddenly they hear the Count approaching, and Cherubino is hidden in the next room and the door locked. Unfortunately, he stumbles over something and the Count hears the noise and demands to know who is in there. When the Countess refuses to open the door, he goes for some tools to break it down, but Susanna saves the day by taking the place of Cherubino, who has jumped out of the window. Thus, when the Count returns, he is dumbfounded to find the servant girl behind the door. A moment later Figaro enters to invite the Count to the wedding festivities, but is temporarily nonplused by the Count’s asking him who wrote the anonymous letter. Things grow more complicated when Antonio, the gardener, arrives to complain about someone who jumped into his garden from the window of the Countess. Figaro manages to explain everything with complicated fibs, but the Count is suspicious. Finally, Dr. Bartolo, Don Basilio, and Marcellina arrive. The old woman insists that Figaro must marry her, not Susanna, and the Count announces that he himself will decide this matter later. The act closes with a remarkable ensemble in which everyone comments at the same time on this very complicated situation (Rushton 632-633).

Act Three, Scene One, begins with the Count badly confused by everything that has happened. Susanna soon enters and in a duet, “Crudel, perdhe finora,” assures him that she will do exactly as he wishes. Don Curzio, a local man of the law, has decided that Figaro must marry Marcellina on account of the promise he made in writing at the time he borrowed money from her. Figaro, of course, protests, saying that he needs the consent of his unknown parents. In the course of the argument he mentions a birthmark on his right arm, and the trial ends in a triumph of comedy, for that birthmark proves that his real parents are Marellina and Dr. Bartolo. In the midst o the family reunion, Susanna enters to find her fiancee in the arms of her supposed rival. At first she is furious, but when she is told that Marcellina is no longer a rival, but her own future mother-in-law, there is a delightful sextet to end the first scene. The second scene begins with a brief and jolly discussion, in which it is decided that Marcellina and Dr. Bartolo shall be wedded the same

day as Figaro and Susanna. The whole tone of the music changes as the Countess sings her second sad soliloquy, the beautiful "Dove sono." When her maid, Susanna, enters, she brightens up and dictates a letter for Susanna to write. This confirms the maid's assignation in the park with the Count which the disguised Cherubino is to keep instead of Susanna. "The Letter Duet," with the two feminine voices first echoing each other, and then joining together, is very sweet. Now everyone comes on the stage, including the chorus, to prepare for the marriage festivities of the evening. A group of peasant girls offer flowers to the Countess, and in the group is the page boy Cherubino, disguised as a girl. The irate gardener, Antonio, spots him and pulls off his wig. He is about to be punished when the peasant girl Barbarina steps forward. She reminds the Count that he promised her anything she wished, and she now wishes to be married to Cherubino. Dancing follows, and the Count receives and opens Susanna's letter. Figaro, who does not know about this part of the plot, notices this and becomes suspicious. The scene ends with a rejoicing by everyone, expect Figaro, as the happy couples are about to be married (Rushton 633).

Act Four takes place at night in the garden of the Count's estate, and the first music heard is Barbarina's worried little aria about losing a pin that Susanna is sending to the Count. Figaro discovers her secret, and his suspicions about his bride and his master are confirmed. Don Basilio makes some ironical comments to Dr. Bartolo on the subject, and these are followed by Figaro's great aria, "Aprite un po quegl occhi," in which he warns all men against the machinations of women. Finally there is a another great aria, "Deh vieni, non tardar," in which Susanna ecstatically sings about her approaching love. Figaro overhears this and it makes him still more jealous. Susanna and the Countess exchange continues, and the action speeds up swiftly and furiously. Cherubino starts to make love to the Countess, thinking her at first to be Susanna. The Count, coming to his own rendezvous with Susanna, sends the boy packing, and starts to make love to his own wife who he thinks is Susanna. Figaro starts to make love to Susanna, who is disguised as the Countess, but he has really penetrated the disguise, and after he has enjoyed her anger,
they have a fine time making up. At the end of the opera, the Count is shown up as having made a fool of himself. In a noble melody he begs pardon of his wronged and neglected lady, and the opera ends on a wholesome note of rejoicing by everyone (Rushton 633-634).

Da Ponte's character development throughout Figaro greatly contributes to the success of the opera. Figaro is a very complex character. He is extremely witty and intelligent, but he also shows signs of innocence. At the beginning of the opera, Figaro is blissfully ignorant of the Count's intentions with Susanna. In the anticipation of his marriage to Susanna, Figaro's otherwise streetwise self is absent. Instead, Figaro comes across as a very innocent character who has to be persuaded to believe that the Count would like to make Susanna his "secret ambassadress." Later in the opera, Figaro gives up his innocence and returns to his scheming and intrigue to undermine the Count. He seems to have a sense that he is better than his worldly circumstances show. Because of his low birth, Figaro relies on his wits, which he has in abundance. When Figaro discovers the note that Susanna sent to the Count, his vulnerability is uncovered. He is unable to handle the situation, and he storms out, showing that he is not in control of himself or the situation. When Figaro sings his aria damning all women and their schemes, he shows his selfishness and his vulnerability. However, he also reveals how deeply in love he is with Susanna, and the power she has over him in terms of emotional pain (Simon 296).

Susanna is also a highly developed character in the opera. She is playful, contented, and happy in the opening scenes. She appears strong and sure of herself, but when she learns about the Count's advances, she becomes disturbed and fearful like a little girl. Although she is bright and capable, she also reveals her weakness and vulnerability. In addition, when Susanna becomes jealous of Marcellina's advances towards Figaro, she reveals her lack of surety and confidence as a woman and as Figaro's fiancee, yet she also shows her quick thinking and her wit when insulting Marcellina. Susanna is very loyal to
the Countess, which is shown when she openly speaks with her mistress about the Count, and when she plots to teach the master a lesson. When Susanna discovers Marcellina and Figaro embracing, she becomes passionate and fiery, revealing her love for Figaro and her fear of betrayal (Simon 296).

The Count is an extremely complex character. Although he is seemingly unfaithful to his wife, he reveals his true love for her when he thinks she is hiding Cherubino in her room. He grows passionate, fearful, and vulnerable. Later, the Count realizes how wrong he has been to make advances on other women, and he

reveals his deep feelings for his wife. He is ashamed of neglecting his beautiful wife, and his outlook on his marriage is forever changed (Simon 297).

The Countess is desperately unhappy throughout the opera, but she never loses sight of her intelligence, wit, and hope. Although she is humiliated over her husband's infidelity, she holds herself with confidence and conducts herself with elegance. She reveals her wit and intelligence while scheming to undermine her husband, and she comes out on top, proving her husband wrong. The Countess gets an overdue apology from her husband, and she teaches him that she is really very strong, smart, and worthy of his affection (Simon 297).

Mozart's musical language is quite effective in Le Nozze di Figaro. Although the opera includes four acts, it is in basic binary structure, in which the first two acts form a unit against the last two. Both sections of the opera end with large finales. The first finale recapitulates the dramatic confusion and tension, and the curtain falls on an unresolved situation. The second finale brings the ultimate solution. The beginning of the opera is in D major, which is tonic, and the first finale ends on the Neapolitan supertonic, or E-flat major. The beginning of the third act is in A major, which is the dominant of the tonic D, and the finale of the opera returns to the tonic, D major. Mozart seems to follow a form of stating a musical task in the opening measures of each number, which each subsequent movement sets out to solve. Cavatinas, in which a character is introduced, arias, duettinos, terzettos, coros, and finales follow pure and perfect musical structure throughout the composition(Levarie 233-245) .

Characters of persons and moods of situations are thoroughly absorbed and reflected by the music alone, and the music is always a direct reaction of the plot. The music travels into minor modes to represent fear and suspense, and loud dynamic markings and various rhythms express anger and threat. The chorus is used sparingly in the opera, and their music is quite simple, representing the simple role of the peasants. Tonal forces are immaculate throughout the opera, and Mozart's classical harmonic language is both simple, indicating humor, and complex, indicating drama. In addition, Mozart uses the appoggiatura, a non-chord-tone which is approached by leap and left by step, in his music to express emotion. Appoggiaturas resemble "sighs" in music, and they are very aesthetically pleasing to the listener, as is the entire opera (Levarie 247-257).

Among the most notable pieces from Figaro is the opening duet of the first act between Susanna and Figaro as they are preparing the room in which they are to occupy after their wedding. The duet begins in D major, tonic, and travels to A, the dominant, and back to tonic for the coda. The duet is in rondo form, and the ritornello occurs four times. The recitative, the introduction to the duet, gives the first indication of Mozart's plan. It is clearly divided into two sections, the second of which is slightly longer than the first. The first section indicates music that represents Figaro, and the second section represents Susanna. The "Figaro melody" includes stately dotted rhythms, indicating confidence, wit, and argument (ex.1a), and the "Susanna melody" includes flowing step-wise pitches, which signify her warmest personal feelings (ex.1b). The two melodies together represent the characters' love for one another and their partnership in the opera (Levarie 15-21).

Ex. 1a. Le Nozze di Figaro, #1, mm 20-22

Ex. 1b. Le Nozze di Figaro, #1, m 30-33

The sixth number of Act One is also a notable piece of music. It is an aria sung by Cherubino, “Non so piu cosa son, cosa faccio,” which translates as “I am lost, and scarce know what I’m doing.” The title words could serve as an appropriate motto describing Cherubino’s attitude. The melody of the opening stanza makes the first impression of Cherubino. The progressions are entirely diatonic to E-flat major, and the harmonies uncomplicated (ex. 2). Each phrase is symmetrically repeated. The cadence is authentic and perfect. As the aria unfolds, however, Cherubino’s adolescent fantasies and flighty personality are expressed through free irregularities, willful dynamic fluctuations, and dissolution of the formal structure (Levarie 49-56).

Ex. 2. Le Nozze di Figaro, #6, mm. 1-7

The final aria in Act One, “Non piu andrai,” became the most popular song in the opera. It is sung by Figaro to Cherubino in C major, and the opening ritornello is the most catching tune of the opera, as no other harmonies are heard but tonic and dominant (ex. 3) (Levarie 69-72).

Ex. 3. Le Nozze di Figaro, #9, mm. 1-7

The grand finale of the first half of the opera in E-flat major is quite extravagant. Da Ponte wrote of the finale:

This finale, which must remain intimately connected with the opera as a whole, is nevertheless a sort of little comedy or operette all by itself, and requires a new plot and an unusually high pitch of interest. The finale must produce on the stage every singer of the cast, and they must have solos, duets, terzets, sextetes, thirteenets, sixyets, and the poet must find a way to make it permit good sense. (Levarie 107)

939 measures comprise the first finale of Figaro, and by the time the curtain falls, seven singers fill the stage. The finale is filled with much action, including the discovery of Susanna hiding in the closet by the Count and Countess, the entrance of Figaro requesting an immediate wedding, the entrance of Antonio who is angry about his crushed flowers, and the arrival of Dr. Bartolo, Marcellina, and Don Basilio, who further complicate matters. The music is divided into three sections, which appear to be built around sonata form. The opening section, or exposition, begins in E-flat major and travels to the dominant, B-flat major, during the discovery of Susanna in the closet. The middle section, or development, begins in G major and travels to the subdominant, C Major, during the entrance of Figaro. The closing section, or recapitulation, begins in F major, travels to the subdominant, B-flat major, and closes in E-flat major, the tonic of the finale (fig. 1). The action is left unresolved (Levarie 107-123).

The notable arias from Act Three are “Dove sono” and the “Letter Duet.” The first is an aria sung by the Countess in which she expresses her sorrow. For the opening lines of the aria, Da Ponte wrote:

Vanished are ye bright hours forever,

When love’s rapture and bliss I knew;

When he promised to leave me never,

When I thought his false lips true. (Mozart 190)

The aria is in de capo form in C Major, and the melodic line gains life from a gentle trembling on the tonic note on which the Countess draws her first breath after the recitative. The turn is not merely an ornament of music, but an _expression of the Countess' unstable emotional situation. As the A section develops, it starts an upward trend, intensifying the emotional state of the Countess. The voice, however, seems to lack the emotional strength needed to take the last upward step to g, scale degree five, and it resolves by sounding g an octave lower, as if the Countess has given up. The melody repeats itself, again with the Countess unable to succeed in resolving to the high g, and the aria enters the dominant minor mode of g minor for the B section. After a full cadence, the Countess achieves the high g for the first time in the aria, and the music reenters the major mode of G major, the dominant of the aria. Eventually, the first part of the aria is repeated in C major, ending with more hope than the beginning (Levarie 155-161).

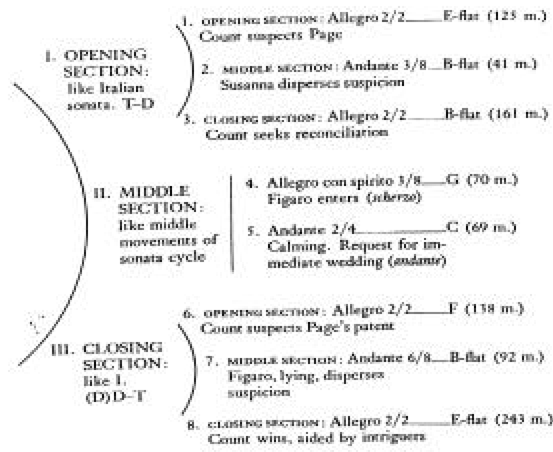

Fig. 1. Finale of First Half of Figaro

"Dove sono" is followed by the beautiful "Letter Duet" between two women, in which the Countess dictates a letter to Susanna, who reads the text back to her. The letter is three lines long, and the fourth line expresses a personal reflection of the women about the content of the letter. Mozart chooses to have Susanna repeat short phrases of the dictation as she is catching up with the Countess: some fragmentary, some complete, and one in the form of a question. The dictation completed, both women read the letter jointly before sealing it. Therefore, the strophe contains the first sentence of the letter, the antistrophe contains the second sentence of the letter, the epode contains the third, and the coda contains the fourth, which is the personal reflection. The organization of the music around the libretto is captivating (Levarie 163-168).

Among the most notable arias from the fourth act is Figaro's "Aprite un po que glocchi," in which he warns men against the scheming, cheating ways of women. The aria is somewhat of a joke in that the next to the last line of the text does not rhyme with the

previous four. It is an obvious insertion in which Figaro exclaims "Il resto nol dico," or "what further, then, shall I say?" This insertion indicates Figaro's anger and irritation with women (Levarie 203-207).

Another masterful aria from the fourth act is Susanna's first serious song, "De vieni, non tardar," in which she sings of her approaching love. Susanna's deepest feelings are conveyed in the aria, and although it is meant for Figaro, he overhears it and thinks she is singing about the Count. The aria is in F Major, and

although the dotted triplet figures are the inheritance of a quick dance rhythm, there is no marked tempo indication. The lyrical melody seems to contradict the underlying dance pulse, and the instrumentation projects consistent dualisms. The aria is divided into three sets of strophes, the first and last being in the tonic of F, and the middle set being in the dominant of B-flat. The strophes are set up in a antecedent-consequent situation, and the final solution is reached by an expressive, beautiful ascending scale of the voice to the tonic (Levarie 209-218).

The finale of the opera is much lighter and more playful than the conclusion to the second act. The finale is comprised of three sections, and the opening section beings in D major, the tonic of the opera. During the opening section, the music travels to G major, the subdominant, when the Count makes love to the Countess who is dressed as Susanna and Figaro becomes enraged. The middle section begins in E-flat major and travels to B-flat major when Figaro and Susanna reconcile. The closing section begins in G major and travels back to D major, the tonic, to close the opera when all characters have made up and there is gay confusion. The middle section mixes men's and women's voices, and it gives the Count his only, and last, chance to assert his individuality against the united group by a nonconforming vocal line. The last unison measures of the orchestra employ the very same notes that were heard at the first of the opera, and Figaro's state of mind on the morning of his wedding day is again expressed as it was in the beginning. The same repetitions and the return to D major, the tonic (fig. 2), indicate that all is well at the end of the day and at the end of the opera (Levarie 219-229).

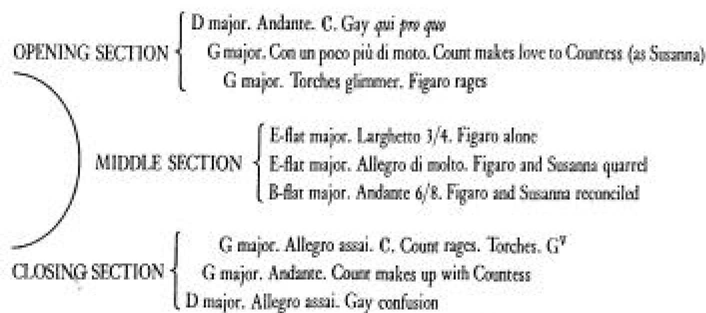

Fig. 2. Finale of Figaro

Le Nozze di Figaro continues to be a legacy. The opera has been performed on countless occasions since its premiere in 1786, and it continues to be performed around the world in various languages. Arias such as "Non so piu cosa son, cosa faccio," "Non piu andrai," "Porgi, amor," and "Dove sono," have become extremely well-known and appreciated. Mozart's choice of subject and his use of classical harmony in Le Nozze di Figaro, paired with Da Ponte's character development and flow of language and action combine to produce the most perfect, least problematic opera of Mozart's career. Le Nozze di Figaro will continue to resonate as the ultimate _expression of Mozart's genius.

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