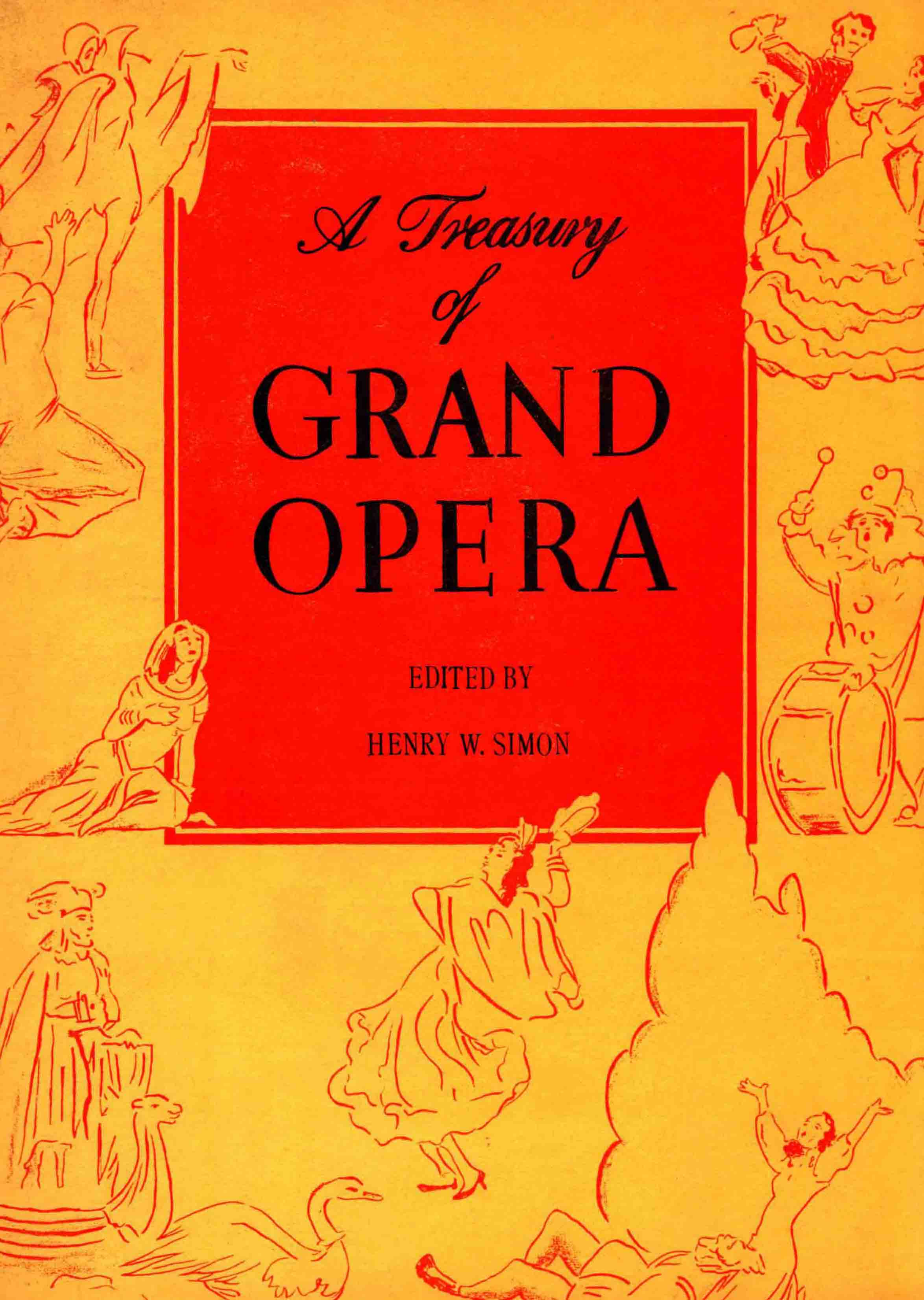
A Treasury of GRAND OPERA

EDITED BY

HENRY W. SIMON



A Treasury of

GRAND OPERA

Don Giovanni, Lohengrin,
La Traviata, Faust, Aida,
Carmen, Pagliacci

EDITED,
WITH THE STORIES, HISTORY, AND MUSIC
DESCRIBED IN DETAIL BY

HENRY W. SIMON

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SIMON AND SCHUSTER NEW YORK

PUBLISHED BY SIMON AND SCHUSTER, INC.

ROCKEFELLER CENTER, 1230 SIXTH AVENUE, NEW YORK 20, N. Y.

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Preface

MAINLY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

A Christmas present received over thirty years ago is indirectly responsible for this book. It was a small, badly bound collection of dreadfully simplified piano arrangements of the principal arias from several grand operas. Between the treble and bass appeared translations of the texts in the standard, unsingable "librettoese," and before each aria there were printed a few words of explanation about the plot.

Despite its palpable inadequacies, that little book inspired in my adolescent breast a love for grand opera that is today strong as ever—and as simple. I played and read it through to pieces; I saved my allowance for operatic recordings; I visited low-price opera performances as often as they were available and my resources allowed. It never occurred to me that opera might be approached either as a boring social event or as a form of musical entertainment to be regarded with suspicion because it is not "pure." Rather, through their melodic expressiveness, the tribulations of opera's several Leonoras struck me as matters for genuine concern, while Donizetti's Lucy was to me far more real than her original as chronicled by Scott. It is not, I think, surprising that words and music can be more moving than words alone, provided that the combination is approached without prejudice.

It was only after twenty years of the study and teaching of literature that I entered the musical world professionally, as a critic, and then the assignments to cover the opera were the ones I cherished most. The pathos of Violetta in the last act of La Traviata, *the grim figure of Ortrud interrupting the bridal procession from* Lohengrin, *the three-directional pull of the final trio from* Faust *were as gripping as when I first encountered them. To take these music-clothed stories seriously was regarded by some of my colleagues as something quaint. Yet I believe that I had more fun than most of them at the performances; and as I have studied the aesthetics of the question, I believe that I am right—along with the millions of others who enjoy opera in a direct and simple way.*

ABOUT OPERA

For it seems to me no exaggeration to say that grand opera, as developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has given us the most enduring, the most popular, and, in their own way, the most emotionally realistic of all stage works.

Certain plays, like Lightnin', Abie's Irish Rose, Tobacco Road, *and* Life with Father *have had much longer continuous runs than any one grand opera has had, while many movies are seen by a larger number of people in one or two seasons. But who would want to sit through a performance of* Lightnin' *twenty years after its hey-day, and who can thrill to a movie "epic" like* Ben Hur *once its techniques look old-fashioned?*

A half dozen plays of Shakespeare's (but only of Shakespeare's) have endured with sufficient vigor to be often revived. But where is the dramatic stock company that, for over thirty years, can travel up and down the land giving the same dozen shows over and over again week after week to huge audiences? That is the record of the San Carlo Opera Company in the United States, while the Carl Rosa Opera Company has been doing it twice as long in England. The sixty-year history of the Metropolitan Opera has been made possible by the undiminished appeal of the same dozen or fifteen operas, and so has the history of the Covent Garden seasons in England and of dozens of opera houses on the European continent. The Fausts *and the* Aïdas *have had thousands of performances each and millions of listeners. They have been loved by all sorts and conditions of men and women, sung by all sorts and conditions of casts. To survive so many years and such fre-*

quent mishandling, there must be some basic appeal, something very real that these works have to offer.

This something real lies, I believe, in the very nature of grand opera itself, and is a form of realism practically impossible to achieve in spoken drama. Spoken drama, because it deals in dialogue and action only, must focus on those comparatively few moments in our lives when something important is happening, usually in the presence of others. Such moments, however dramatic they may be, are likely to be less intimately real—even less intense—than the much larger share of our emotional lives—the times when we feel strongly about sometthing or other but can do nothing active about it. It is the projection of emotion at such times, through words and music both, that makes certain passages of opera so real as to be almost unbearable.

Take, for example, the popular "Ridi, Pagliaccio" *aria. Suppose that in a spoken play a simple and violently emotional Italian actor discovers that his adored and butterflyish wife is planning to elope with an unknown young man. In a little while, the player knows, he must go on the stage to act out a very similar situation with his own wife as leading lady. The play-within-the-play situation is common enough on the stage. But what could a modern realistic playwright do with such a situation? He could either rely on the actor to get across the conflict within himself through a gesture or two, or he could have him discuss it with a friend. Either device would give a distorted picture of what might be expected to happen in real life. For the most important, most moving, part of this man's experience would be the time he has to spend by himself before the evening's performance. Grand opera can, and does, paint this part of his experience as no other art can. It builds up to such scenes, just as spoken drama is likely to build up to scenes of action. Opera also has scenes of action quite as dramatic as these plays, but they fade into comparative insignificance beside the intense reality of the scenes of emotional climax. Few opera-goers remember the music played when Canio finally stabs Nedda in* Pagliacci, *when Radames surrenders his sword in* Aïda, *when Lohengrin slays Telramund in* Lohengrin. *In terms of spoken drama, these are important climaxes; but the great moments of grand opera come rather in the more realistic, less stagey parts—when Radames lyrically longs to become a victorious general so that he may elevate his beloved to a throne* ("Celeste Aïda"), *when Violetta attempts to persuade herself that it is too late to hang on to hopes of seeing Alfredo again* ("Addio del passato"), *or when Faust, standing alone in Marguerite's garden, first senses the natural beauty that frames her innocence* ("Salut! demeure").

But the aria is only one element of grand opera in which emotional realism is more striking than it is in the spoken drama. When there are two or more characters on the stage, each with his own emotions to project, the superiority of opera over the spoken drama is even greater. In a play, one character expresses his emotions and then another. In life, these emotions are felt simultaneously, and so they are expressed in opera. It is possible in duets, trios, and such great concerted numbers as appear in Aïda, La Traviata, Don Giovanni *and* Lohengrin, *to picture many conflicting emotions at the same time, and to make their combined impact produce an overwhelming experience for the listener utterly impossible to produce through any other art.*

These, I think, are the real reasons why many thousands go to hear La Traviata *every year while the Dumas play from which it stems is seldom revived; why even more thousands hear Bizet's* Carmen *while Mérimée's novelette remains an occasional exercise in college French; why practically only Germans ever see a performance of Goethe's* Faust *and all the world keeps buying seats to hear Gounod's. The semi-educated snob is likely to regard grand opera as more or less good music haphazardly married to stories (sometimes preposterous) and stage action (often ridiculous). But the snob is wrong about this, as he always is about everything, while the ordinary people who buy tickets at the box-office are right, as Verdi insisted they must be. Gluck and Wagner both said it in written words, and every lover of opera knows it instinctively: an operatic story is not a vehicle for good music; rather, music is a help in the poignant expression of real feelings in a story that the composer takes with utter seriousness.*

For Americans this is a difficult idea to accept. It is our custom to give operas in the original language instead of in the language of the audience, as is done in every continental European country. Our audiences are likely to understand only the general drift of a story

and to be further put off from sympathizing with the emotions expressed by the middle European or Italian traditions of mounting and directing the works. Yet, unless one knows the intimate details of the stories and has some sympathy with them, grand opera becomes a series of tunes punctuated by boredom.

For this reason, I have included in this book only operas with stage-worthy stories. I have summarized the literary and stage history of each work and tried to indicate the reasons for its great success. Then I have described in detail exactly what happens on the stage both dramatically and musically, keeping in mind the fact that for millions radio still affords the only means for hearing complete operas. I hope that it may be possible to sit by the radio during an opera broadcast and follow the action and music in detail with a copy of this book in your lap. I also hope that individuals, as well as groups in the good old custom of standing around the piano and singing, will enjoy going over the most memorable pages of music.

ABOUT MY COLLABORATORS' WORK

There are forty to fifty pages from the score of each opera given here in arrangements that can be played with voices or without, as the melody is always kept in the piano part. Dr. Albert Sirmay, one of the most widely experienced music editors in America today, and I had endless discussions about these arrangements. We had to plan on what numbers to include in the space available, when to transpose so that the untrained voice might be able to cope with the music, how to get as much musical value as possible into the arrangements without making them unplayable. Then, after all the arrangements had been worked out initially, I also consulted with William Steinberg, one of the most distinguished operatic conductors in the world and a brilliant concert pianist. Some of the arrangements we barely touched, a few Mr. Steinberg completely rewrote.

It became my task, as editor of the book, to decide which of these experts to use in the few cases where there was sharp disagreement. For example, Dr. Sirmay had made a very simple arrangement of Don Giovanni's Serenade, *sacrificing the mandolin obbligato in the interests of ease of playing. Mr. Steinberg (just for the fun of it, he said) made a brilliant piano transcription much too difficult for most amateurs but ingeniously retaining the several rhythmical patterns Mozart employed simultaneously. I solved this particular dilemma by retaining the brilliant transcription but using it only for the second stanza of the* Serenade. *The only other really difficult pages in the book occur in the middle section of* "Salut! demeure" *from* Faust, *where Mr. Steinberg managed to weave in the beautiful violin obbligato almost exactly as Gounod wrote it. Mr. Steinberg's intimate and exact knowledge of the orchestral scores, as a matter of fact, was of service on practically every page in a little touch here and a little touch there, but it is Dr. Sirmay's wide experience as a piano arranger that has formed the basis of a majority of the arrangements. These two gifted gentlemen worked on the arrangements in different towns and never met. I had to make all the final decisions when they were to be made; and the reader therefore must hold me responsible for any errors of judgment he may discern.*

Lack of space has made necessary some arbitrary cuts. To give, for example, the entire "Ritorna vincitor" *from* Aïda *would have meant omitting at least one other number from that opera. We have, therefore, given only the major portion of the second and more melodious part of that aria and used a title taken from the first line of that part* (There Is No Other). *But most of the numbers are complete, and all of them make perfectly good musical sense as they stand.**

Excepting in the brief musical quotations in my descriptions of the operas, the English translations have been specially made for this book by George Mead. These translations strike me as a triumph of ingenuity and good taste. Mr. Mead, who is both a singer and a linguist, has written lyrics that one can sing or read aloud without feeling sorry for the King's English: every line is clear, simple, idiomatic, singable. Even the originals do not always exhibit these merits in their own languages. Anyone who doubts the great artfulness shown here need only examine the average standard opera libretto to see how this job is usually done.

Rafaello Busoni's illustrations, decorative as they are, represent no mere effort to make the book prettier. Mr. Busoni has had extensive experience as a stage

* Familiar tempo markings, such as *adagio*, *andante*, and *allegro*, have been retained. Less familiar Italian directions about expression, such as *affretando*, *perendosi*, etc., I have translated or paraphrased. Most of the ties in the vocal musical lines have been eliminated in the interests of clarity and consistency.

designer, and his illustrations are based on a re-study of the operas and a sound conception of what the characters, costumes and sets might look like in a finely imaginative production. They capture the romantic spirit of these operas and make vivid, as no words could, what you might be seeing on the stage if only productions were as good as they ought to be.

One more paragraph of appreciation must be devoted to Andor Braun, artist and musician, who designed this book, and to Miss Kay Margolis, whose efficiency and good nature were not jarred even fractionally by the tortuous process of seeing it through the press.

To my collaborators, then, my deepest respect and sincerest thanks—especially for the patience, taste and high intelligence with which they have worked in solving the many problems this project has presented.

H. W. S.

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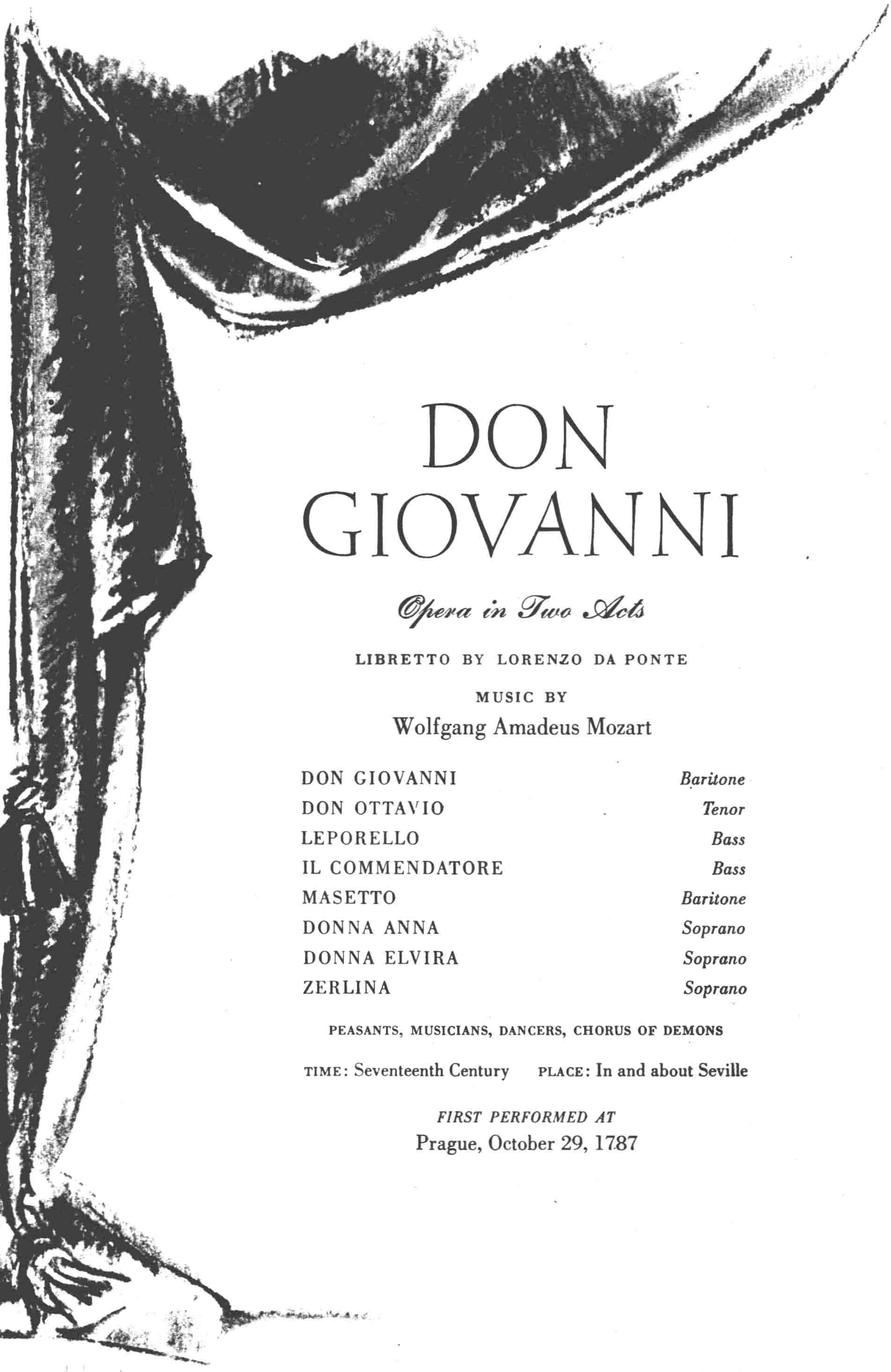


DON GIOVANNI

Opera in Two Acts

LIBRETTO BY LORENZO DA PONTE

MUSIC BY

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

DON GIOVANNI	*Baritone*
DON OTTAVIO	*Tenor*
LEPORELLO	*Bass*
IL COMMENDATORE	*Bass*
MASETTO	*Baritone*
DONNA ANNA	*Soprano*
DONNA ELVIRA	*Soprano*
ZERLINA	*Soprano*

PEASANTS, MUSICIANS, DANCERS, CHORUS OF DEMONS

TIME: Seventeenth Century PLACE: In and about Seville

FIRST PERFORMED AT

Prague, October 29, 1787

Don Giovanni

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

A FEW years ago when, in the course of a review, I referred to *Don Giovanni* as a comedy, a musical friend wrote to ask whether I did not realize it was really a tragedy.

That is a question which has bothered critics for well over a hundred years—ever since, in fact, E. T. A. Hoffmann (the man about whom *The Tales of Hoffmann* was written) started to find in the work sad and solemn truths which neither composer nor librettist had, apparently, ever thought of. Even today many people—like my friend—feel uncomfortable when this divine work is referred to the way its creators referred to it. Da Ponte, the author, called it a *dramma giocoso* (a jolly play) on the title page of the first libretto; Mozart, the composer, listed it as an *opera buffa* (light opera) in a catalogue of his works.

What has bothered these critics is, first of all, that there is one scene—the one in which the statue of the Commandant accepts Don Giovanni's dinner invitation—that is too terrifying to find a legitimate place in a light opera. In addition, there are some arias and concerted numbers—even some passages of recitative—that are so sublime, so inspiredly beautiful, that it seems an insult to the work to classify it as Da Ponte and Mozart did. The emotions of the beginning of the Overture, of the aria "*Non mi dir,*" of the trio "*Protegga il giusto cielo*" are serious emotions, and no tragic opera has ever set them forth more seriously than has *Don Giovanni.*

Yet it is true that many light operas have passages that deal seriously with love, fear, and prayer; and I dare say that if Sir Arthur Sullivan or Victor Herbert or Jerome Kern had had the genius, each would have been glad to compose music as great as Mozart's, and in the same vein. The fact is that the predominant mood of *Don Giovanni* is light, that its creators thought of it as predominantly light, and that music is no less beautiful because it is composed for a light opera instead of a tragic one. I think it is safe to say that, with the possible exception of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro,* his *Don Giovanni* is the greatest light opera ever written.

Everything about the history of its composition confirms the idea that Mozart intended it as a light opera. In Prague, the hit of the season of 1786-87 had been *Figaro.* Mozart, who was there in January of that season, wrote to a friend: "Nothing is talked of here but *Figaro;* no opera is cared for but *Figaro;* always *Figaro* ——" Everyone was whistling the tunes, everyone danced to them. "*Non più andrai*" was on the hit parade. So delighted was the manager of the Italian Opera, whose season had been saved from financial disaster by the success of this one opera, that he immediately accepted Mozart's suggestion for another work especially written for Prague. The fee was the customary hundred ducats,* and Mozart chose the same librettist he had used for *Figaro,* Lorenzo da Ponte.

I wish there were space here for a fuller biography of this Da Ponte. Born a Venetian Jew, he had been trained for the priesthood, had taught literature in the seminary at Treviso, had been forced to flee various towns and jobs on account of his unorthodox opinions and ways with women, and was now official "Poet to the Italian Theaters" at Vienna. Later on he was to become a bookseller and fugitive from justice in London, a greengrocer in New Jersey, a wine merchant and real-estate man in Pennsylvania, a pamphleteer and impresario in New York, and Columbia University's first official professor of Italian. At all times, to judge from his spicy and self-adulatory *Memoirs,* he was in love with life, literature, laughter, and love. He was an adventurer of the type of Cellini and Casanova, and he was acquainted with the latter. There is even

*A hundred ducats would have been the equivalent of about $225 in the American silver dollars of Mozart's day. It sounds like little enough for what many musicians have considered the greatest opera ever composed. In terms of what the money could buy in Austria, however, Bondini, the manager, can scarcely be considered niggardly. For the best house he ever lived in, complete with billiard room, Mozart paid a rental of only ninety-two ducats a year; the yearly salary he earned as official composer to Emperor Joseph II was 164 ducats; the yearly salary earned by his housemaid was two ducats a year and keep. The fourth performance of the opera was a benefit for the composer, in addition to the hundred ducats—and Bondini, after all, could not be sure, before he had seen a note of it, that *Don Giovanni* would be a success. For *Figaro,* Mozart had received considerably less.

pretty good circumstantial evidence that Casanova made some specific suggestions about the libretto for *Don Giovanni.*

It would be hard to imagine a man better suited spiritually to be the author of *Don Giovanni* than the Abbé da Ponte, as he styled himself. At the same time that he was writing it, he was working on two other librettos; and when the Emperor Joseph II objected that perhaps he was doing too much, he replied that it was quite simple. He would work on *Tarare* for Salieri in the morning, for Martini on *L'Arbore di Diana* in the afternoon, and for Mozart on *Don Giovanni* at night. And, he adds in his *Memoirs,* he finished all but *Tarare* in sixty-three days with the help of a box of snuff, a good supply of wine, and the amatory dalliance of his landlady's pretty daughter.

Perhaps *Don Giovanni* was the easiest of the three to complete, for a good deal of it was closely fashioned after the libretto of *Il Convitato di Pietra (The Stone Guest),* a popular opera of the time by Giuseppe Gazzaniga and Giovanni Bertati. Some passages of Mozart's music also appear to be based on this opera; and if anyone still doubts that the inspiration for *Don Giovanni* was light, he would do well to consult Bertati's libretto and note its low-comedy tone.

There were other models of greater or less seriousness to which Mozart and Da Ponte might have turned, for the tale is an old one. No one knows just how old, for the similar tales said to have been current in monasteries of the Middle Ages are no longer extant, and no one knows whether Don Juan Tenorio of Seville was a real man or a legend. Pre-Da Ponte dramatic treatments include the Spanish play by Tirso de Molina (or Gabriel Tellez), which dates from 1630, Molière's comedy *Don Juan, ou le Festin de Pierre* (1665), and Thomas Shadwell's serious treatment, *The Libertine Destroyed.* There was also an anonymous and very popular low-comedy version acted by strolling players in Italy which Da Ponte might well have known. As for musical ideas, Mozart might have turned to Gluck, who had composed a ballet on the subject, to Le Tellier, who had composed a light French opera, and also, of course, to Gazzaniga.

The conditions under which the composing was completed would certainly lead one to suspect that Mozart had no world-shaking philosophical thoughts on his mind. Much of the score was probably composed in Vienna between June 24 and August 10, 1787, when, according to Mozart's own catalogue, no other composition was completed. In September he went back to Prague with his wife Constanze and settled down to finish the work in the Villa Bertramka.

This villa belonged to a coloratura soprano named Josefa Duschek, and Josefa must have been one of those original Bohemians whose temperament and way of life have made us give the word "Bohemian" to certain kinds of artist the world over. She was gay, gifted, open-hearted, and kept open house for the musicians, actors, and poets of Prague. The house itself she was able to buy out of the money she had saved as an opera singer and (to judge from the low salaries paid most opera singers in those days) as the mistress of the wealthy Count Cristian Clam. When Josefa had parted with both the Count and her stage career, she married her old music teacher, Franz Xavier Duschek, and the two lived a merry life in the suburbs of the Bohemian capital. In the grounds of their villa there still is (or at least was before the war) the garden house where Mozart finished composing *Don Giovanni.*

This villa, too, was the setting of one of the best-known Mozart legends. The day before the *première* of October 29, 1787—so the story runs—the Overture had not yet been written down. Mozart, perhaps, had been spending too much time between rehearsals playing games and carousing with his genial hosts. Late at night he started with a supply of punch on the table and his wife beside him to keep him awake by telling him stories. Part way through he fell asleep for several hours but awoke in time to have the music in the hands of the copyists by 7 A.M. Actually, the Overture bears the date October 28 in Mozart's own hand, and it may be that he really had it ready in time for the dress rehearsal. Whatever the truth, it remains a good story, and Mozart is said to have congratulated the little orchestra that night on doing a good job of sight reading.

Another story connected with the first performance concerns Caterina Bondini, the impresario's wife, who had the role of Zerlina. Mozart was dissatisfied at the rehearsals with the scream she gave when, in the last scene of the first act, the Don is supposed to be making improper advances to her. Mozart himself thereupon undertook to make the improper advances by slipping behind her and administering a sharp pinch which elicited a convincing shriek.

In Prague, the opera was a great success from the first. In Vienna, where it was mounted the following year with certain additions, it gained favor much more

slowly. London first heard it in April, 1817; New York on May 23, 1826. The American *première* was given at the instigation of Da Ponte, with Manuel García, a tenor and the impresario of the troupe, singing the baritone title role, García's wife Donna Elvira, his son Leporello, and his daughter Zerlina. This daughter, Maria, later developed into one of the most skillful and romantically beloved opera singers of the day under her married name of Malibran.

The opera was a fair success at the time, but it became a real hit only later, when it was given in English. In the 1830's and 40's no one (quite sensibly) thought of giving it in New York in any language other than the one the audience could understand, and Malibran often sang the part in English too. Since then our opera companies, through either laziness or misguided theories of aesthetics, have given it in Italian.

Today *Don Giovanni* is by no means the most popular opera in the general repertoire. Almost certainly it has received fewer American performances than any other opera discussed in this book. One reason is that it requires not only a pair of first-class singing actors for the roles of the Don and Leporello, but also three sopranos who can sing extraordinarily difficult music with both skill and taste. The last seems to be a rare commodity.

Nevertheless, outside of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, it is the oldest opera given regularly in practically every country of the Western world. For over a century and a half it has been part of the staple repertoire. Occasionally the Metropolitan and other great opera houses will mount an even older opera, like one of Gluck's or Pergolesi's, but Mozart's great works maintain enough popular appeal, year after year, to be considered as timeless as any opera ever composed.

As for the regard of great musicians, I shall close this prefatory note by quoting the words of a few other famous opera composers:

"He is the greatest—the master of them all—the only composer who had as much skill as he had genius and as much genius as he had skill." *(Rossini, upon inspecting the autograph of* Don Giovanni.)

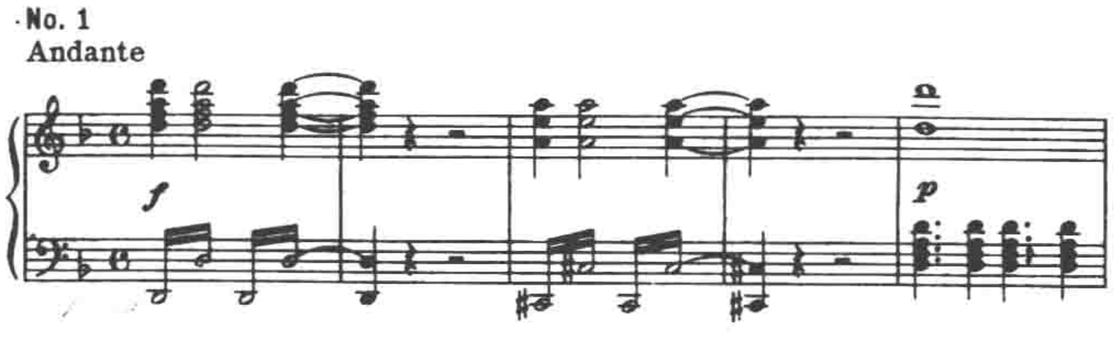
"The score of *Don Giovanni* has exercised the influence of a revelation upon the whole of my life; it has been and remains for me a kind of incarnation of dramatic and musical impeccability. I regard it as a work without blemish, of uninterrupted perfection." *(Gounod, in the preface to an analysis of the score published to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of its first performance.)*

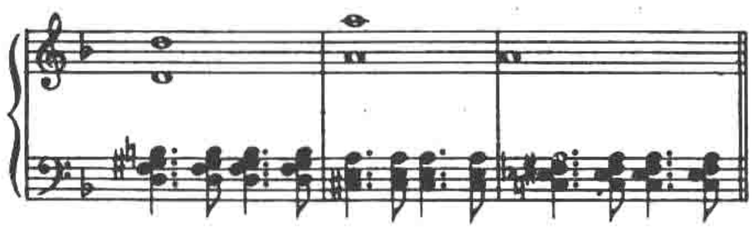
"Is it possible to find anything more perfect than every piece in *Don Giovanni?* . . . Where else has music won so infinitely rich an individuality, been able to characterize so surely, so definitely, and in such exuberant plenitude as here?" *(Wagner, in* Opera and Drama.)

Overture

MOST Mozart opera overtures are simply pieces that set the mood for what is to follow. The first thirty bars of the Overture to *Don Giovanni* depart from this custom. Rhythmically and melodically, they are closely based on the opera's most dramatically impressive scene. This occurs at the end of the work, when the ghost of the Commandant of Seville interrupts the Don's dinner to accept the invitation given earlier. The Commandant enters on a thunderclap and addresses Don Giovanni in sepulchral tones to music that is almost identical with the Overture's opening eight bars:

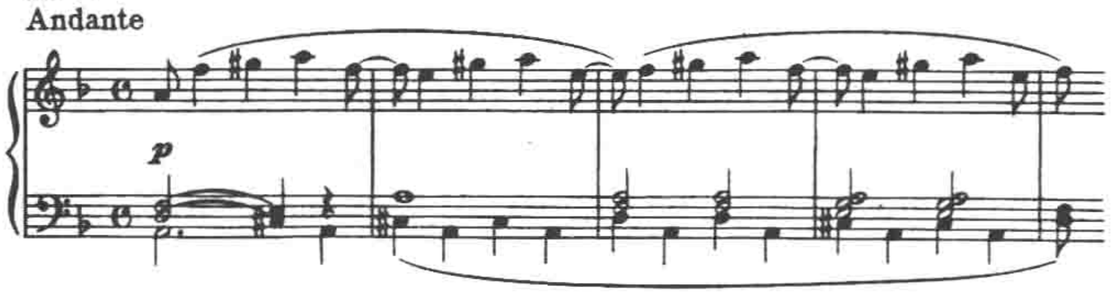
No. 1
Andante





The Don, frightened for the first time in the opera, tries to regain his *savoir-faire* to the slowly syncopated measures that follow:

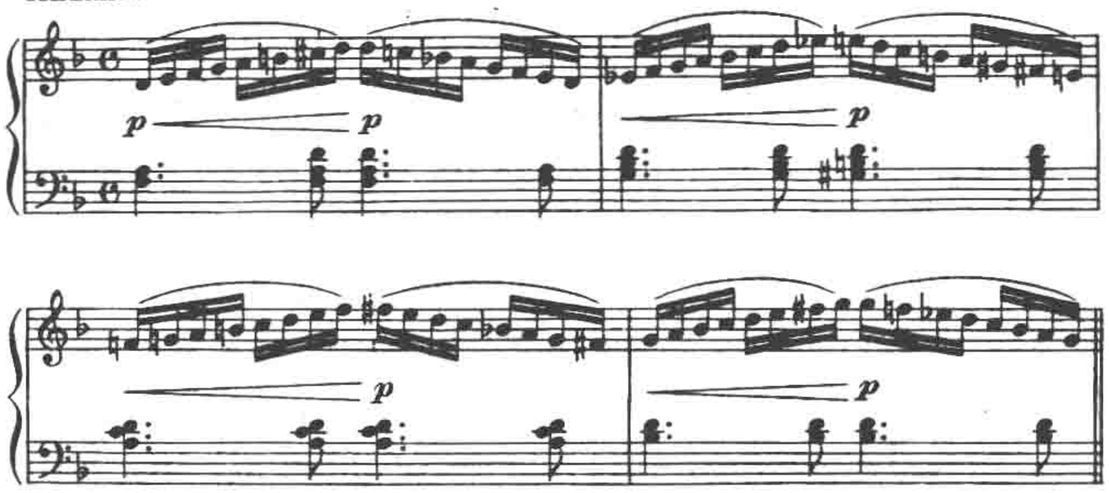
No. 2
Andante



But finally the Commandant summons Don Giovanni to hell to the accompaniment of a series of scales that look quite

simple in the score but can be really terrifying when performed with a large crescendo followed by a sudden piano:

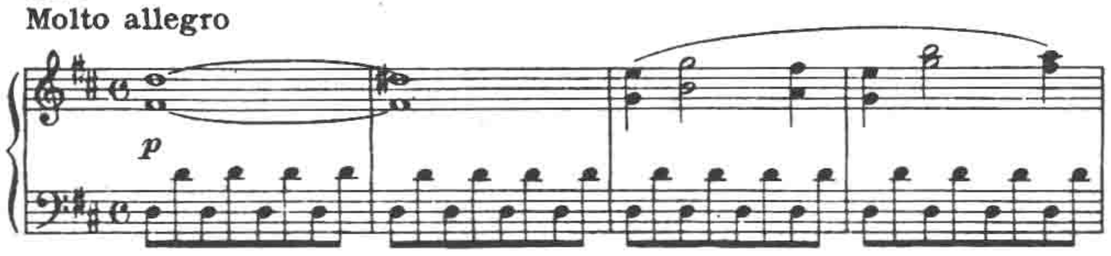
No. 3
Andante

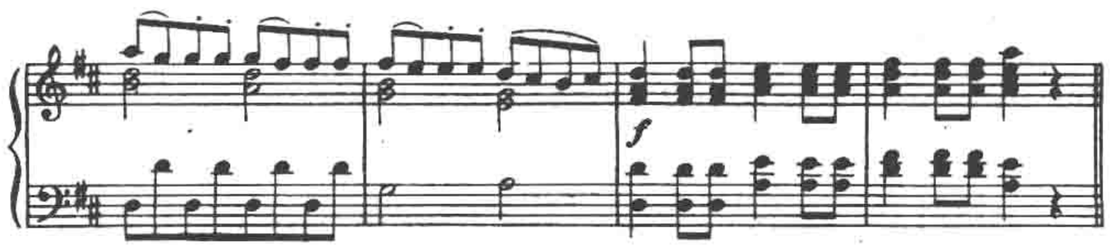


These scales, with their peculiarly dramatic effect, were an afterthought of Mozart's, according to his biographer Otto Jahn, for they appear in the autograph score in the last act squeezed in after the rest of the scene was completed. In the original of the Overture, however, they appear just as large as all the other passages. As the Overture was composed last of all, Jahn concludes that he must have thought of the effect when the opera was virtually completed.

Once this introduction to the Introduction is over, the music runs along in the most chattery, busy fashion, quite in keeping with the light comedy that is the main business of the evening. These are its two principal themes:

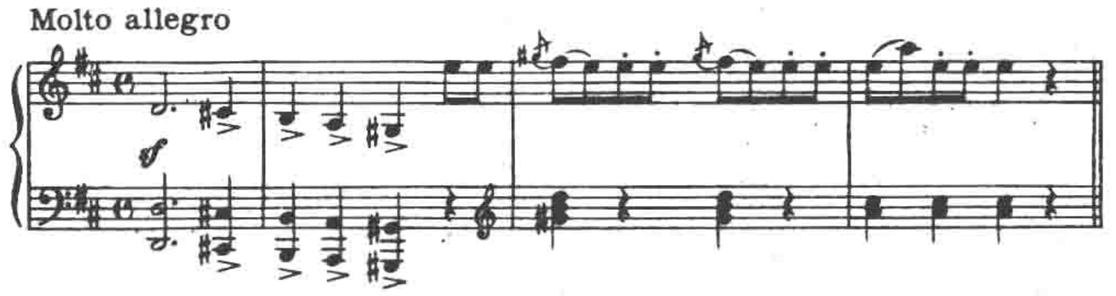
No. 4
Molto allegro





and

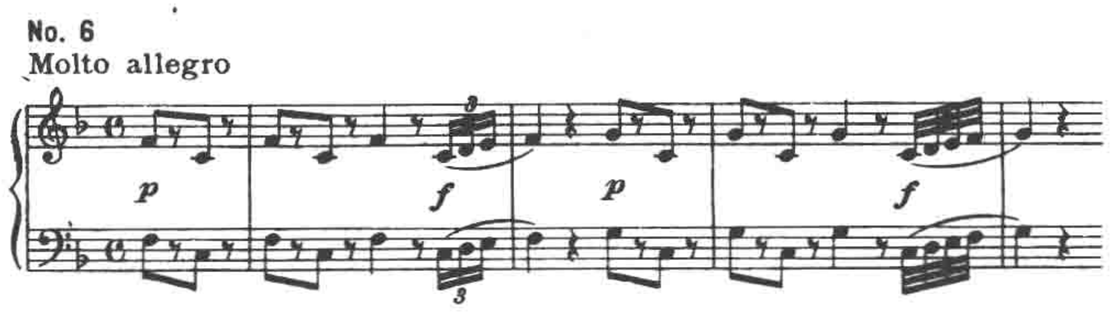
No. 5
Molto allegro



Various commentators have tried to find philosophical significance in these themes too, but it scarcely seems to be necessary. After that solemn, opening andante, this Overture remains as bubbly and full of irrepressible good humor as the Overture to *Nozze di Figaro* itself. Nothing could be happier than that.

The original version of the Overture (as opposed to the one usually heard in concert) has no formal ending but goes at once into the lumbering introduction to Leporello's opening words:

No. 6
Molto allegro



Act One, Scene 1

AT night, in a handsome garden before a handsome house, lurks Leporello, the humorously surly, heartless, weak-charactered servant and confidant of Don Giovanni. Inside, as he tells us, the Don is at his love-making, while he himself must stand guard. Nobody would like his job. The pay is poor, so is the food provided, and the duties keep you up day and night. Besides, Leporello himself would like to play the gentleman; and so he threatens to leave this bootless service. It is one of his favorite threats. But before he is through singing, he thinks he hears the Don coming out of the house and—quite characteristically— hides behind a bush so that he may at once be safe and also do a bit of eavesdropping.

It is the Don, all right, whom Leporello has heard, and he is engaged in equally characteristic business. He is trying to get away from Donna Anna, after a virtuoso attempt to seduce her without disclosing his identity. At the moment she is hanging on to him, trying to find out who he is while he is attempting three things at once—to hide his face in his cloak, to persuade Donna Anna to remain quiet, and to make his getaway. But in this particular escapade, the virtuoso seducer has misjudged his prey, for Donna Anna, though she fails to identify him, calls for help and swears to pursue him "with desperate fury." All of which, of course, gives Mozart an excellent opportunity for a trio in which the Don and the Donna express their conflicting emotions simultaneously while Leporello, on the other side of the stage, comments sardonically on his libertine master.

The Don manages to free himself from Donna Anna's furious grasp only when she hears her father, the Commandant of Seville, storming out of the house. Dressed in a night robe, he carries a drawn sword in one hand and a lamp in the other. While Donna Anna rushes into the house for help, the Commandant challenges the Don, who contemptuously warns him that he had better not try to fight. The old gentleman, however, persists, sarcastically suggesting that the Don is trying to run away. According to the Don's ideas about honor, there remains nothing to do but have it out. Efficiently, he first knocks the lamp out of the old gentleman's hand so that he will not be recognized, and then proceeds to kill him in a pathetically brief duel.