

# “THE ETERNAL IN US”: AN ANALYSIS OF LOVE IN MOZART’S *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO*

Nicholas Bartulovic

## CHAPTER ONE The Poet and His Art

Mozart and his music are considered pinnacles of Western Civilization cast among other great men and their works, such as Aristotle’s metaphysics, Shakespeare’s plays, and Jefferson’s politics. His greatness stems not only from the fact that he wrote 41 symphonies, 12 operas, 5 violin concertos, and hundreds of other works but also, from his ability to capture the human condition in music. While there has been much fruitful investigation into Mozart’s musicianship and style, not nearly enough inquiry has been devoted to his understanding of human nature. One can find answers to the latter within his operas.

Mozart’s greatest desire in life was to write opera.<sup>1</sup> The operas composed by Mozart, however, looked and sounded nothing like the operas popular in his day. Before Mozart, operas were written in a style known as *opera seria* (serious opera), which was an artistic movement attempting to “revive the imagined splendours of classical Greek drama. The subjects were [historical and] mythological, [and] the poetic verse declaimed in music close to the inflex-

ions of heightened speech.”<sup>2</sup> This type of opera was meant to be “a theatre of morals,” where the actions and virtues of great men and myths were highlighted.<sup>3</sup> Because of this, characters represented idealized forms of human beings; not human beings as they actually were. “Natural behavior [and] diction” were not promoted on stage; rather, “it was considered appropriate that the singer strike one pose for the first section [of an aria], and hold it unchanged until the middle section when another was adopted, the first being resumed for the *da capo* [(repeat)].”<sup>4</sup> Even the music and spoken word of opera seria were as cold as the staging. Recitatives were simply verse accompanied by a harpsichord, “during which some trait of character or dramatic incident was revealed.”<sup>5</sup> Arias favored a singer’s individual vocal talents while the meaning of the words was secondary. Much like the masks donned by Greek actors, composers, when writing arias, tended to stay centered in one or two keys to highlight the central emotion felt by the character at that particular moment in the opera. Arias were constructed in an A-B-A format, with the first section expressing “the principally relevant mood, the second one offered an alternative or contrast; [and] then the first verse was repeated with its original music embellished by the singer...”<sup>6</sup> Mozart himself was not

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*Nicholas Bartulovic, of Twinsburg, Ohio, is a 2017 graduate of the Ashbrook Scholar Program having majored in Political Science and History.*

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, 4.2.1778

<sup>2</sup> Mann, *The Operas of Mozart*, 67-68

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 68

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 69-70

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 68

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 69

averse to opera seria, having written two (*Idomeneo* and *La Clamenza di Tito*) in his lifetime and owning Metastasio's complete works; yet, for Mozart, opera seria did not capture the essence of what it meant to be a human being. Its characters lacked life and resembled statues. Mozart instead wished to present human beings as they actually were: confusing, changing, and complex.

Along with rigid staging and music, the libretti for opera seria were excessively constrictive. The prominent librettist Metastasio wrote frame libretti for composers, describing them as "finished works," which could be taken and set to music by any composer. Because of this, it was crucial that Mozart choose a suitable libretto for each of his operas. The language of the libretto mattered not to Mozart; for at different points in his life and with varying degrees of intensity, he seemed to prefer French<sup>7</sup>, German<sup>8</sup>, and Italian.<sup>9</sup> What seemed to matter instead was the libretto itself. On more than one occasion Mozart is seen desiring a libretto that will properly reflect his creative standards. While visiting Paris early in his career, Mozart lamented to his father that "as for the opera, matters are as follows. It is very difficult to find a good libretto. The old ones, which are the best, are not adapted to the modern style and the new ones are all quite useless."<sup>10</sup> Even after having been in Vienna for almost two years, Mozart frustratingly wrote that he had "looked through at least a hundred libretti and more, but I have hardly found a single one with which I am satisfied."<sup>11</sup> Along with this, Mozart was not above altering the libretti as he saw fit; this being most notable in Mozart and Da Ponte's treatment of *The Marriage of Figaro*, revising entire sections of the original play. Even in his two Metastasian

operas, Mozart himself made or requested alterations. When composing *La Clamenza Di Tito*, Mozart demanded that a wholly new court poet be brought in to, in Mozart's words, turn the libretto into a real opera.<sup>12</sup> It seems that in his search for the perfect libretto, Mozart was seeking one which served to examine human nature, but, at the same time, also resemble human nature.

Alternatively, Mozart wished to achieve a unity between music and verse in a way which had never been done before. Writing to his father in 1781, Mozart questioned, "Why do Italian comic operas please everywhere—in spite of their miserable libretti—even in Paris, where I myself witnessed their success? Just because there the music reigns supreme and when one listens to it all else is forgotten."<sup>13</sup> It is not simply the music for Mozart which should be the center of the opera; but instead, it must be a total dramatic effort on the part of both the librettist and the composer. In other parts of the letter, however, Mozart seems to suggest that "poetry must be altogether the obedient daughter of the music," and that "rhymes—solely for the sake of rhyming—are the most detrimental [to music]."<sup>14</sup> Mozart here was reacting to poetry for the sake of poetry. He knew that verses were indispensable for music, but what he wanted to avoid in his operas were poetic lines which seemed cold and distant. In Mozart's operas, one gets the sense that the words could be spoken by real human beings in real situations. This is due to Mozart's mastery of combining words and music. In this sense, Mozart was a poet. What opera seria composers attempted to do was resurrect Greek drama, where men were raised to the level of gods, representing unrealistic ideals for others to strive for. What Mozart attempted to do was meld

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<sup>7</sup> *Letters*, 7.2.1778

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 2.10.1777

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 7.2.1778

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 3.7.1778

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 7.5.1783

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<sup>12</sup> Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment*, 259

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 13.10.1781

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*.

music and words together to tell stories about how human beings actually interact with one another. If one were to strip the music away from opera seria, one could read and question its libretto with ample pleasure. On the contrary, if one were to take away either the words or music from a Mozartian opera, each would be entirely meaningless by itself. The music connects the words to itself in a way that one cannot be understood without the other. The pinnacle of this new art form is enshrined in Mozart's opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Mozart instantly saw that *Figaro* would be worthy of his operatic goals. It was noted by Mozart's chief librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte in his memoirs that "Mozart suggested the Beaumarchais comedy as operatic material."<sup>15</sup> Mozart's *Figaro* is a representation of human love, asking the fundamental questions of "what is true love, and is it possible to recover it once lost?" Each set of characters represents an answer to these questions. Figaro and Susanna represent true love wanting to be consummated; the Count and Countess represent lost love trying to be regained; Bartolo and Marcelina represent re-discovered love; and Cherubino represents young love.

## CHAPTER TWO The Question Posed

**Overture:** *Figaro* begins like all other operas, with an overture. Many opera composers use the overture as a means to present musical ideas that will recur throughout the opera. Mozart does this for instance with the d-minor chords at the beginning of *Don Giovanni*, which he repeats in the second act finale when the Commendatore returns. The overture to *Figaro*, however, sets the general mood of the opera for the listener's ears. The beginning phrase is hushed with the strings and bassoon playing the exact same chromatic notes, representing both the conflict throughout the opera but also the harmony that the characters are to achieve at the opera's conclusion. The character of the overture then suddenly changes with a burst of energy from the entire orchestra. It is these three elements that highlight the subtitle of the opera, "*The Day of Madness*." Both the chromaticism and the constant fluctuations from forte to piano create an incredible amount of tension for the listener, revealing the conflict which is about to arise, all while providing resolution at the end of the overture with resounding D-major chords.

Mozart and Da Ponte also use the setting to frame the entire opera. The Count's estate is set out in the country; but, is close enough to the city of Seville to where one could travel back and forth within the same day. This distance allows for human beings to be examined for what they really are, independent of a particular time and place. Certain conventions such as the *droit du seigneur*<sup>16</sup> and division of classes remain but are stripped of their support from the regime because the action takes place outside the

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<sup>15</sup> Mann, *The Operas of Mozart*, 367

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<sup>16</sup> A supposed legal right allowing feudal lords to have sexual relations with subordinate women on their wedding night.

regime's direct influence. For example, if the opera were to take place in a metropolitan villa, the Count would be able to call upon either his other aristocratic friends or royal magistrates to assist him in exercising his right; instead, it is the Count against Figaro, making it necessary to defend such rights on a human ground. All the viewer has to determine what love is for Mozart is each character's portrayal, and not the influence of the regime that the characters find themselves in.

**Act I:** For Mozart, true love is embodied in the main characters of Figaro and Susanna. The first two duets of the opera are entirely devoted to revealing this. These duets contain little drama however. They are of Figaro measuring a wedding bed, Susanna looking at her wedding veil, and the two arguing about the room that will be theirs. It is the music which surrounds the action however that reveals they are truly in love. The music of the first duet is simple but content. Its sound is meant to show that Figaro and Susanna are living in bliss and excited to be wed. Throughout the first duet, Figaro and Susanna are given equal time in their exchange between one another. Each is given six full measures of singing until measure 35 where they begin to alternate back and forth, as if having a conversation, one responding after another, showing a mutual equity existing between them. This equity is also represented in the fact that for the entire second half of the duet, there is never a spare moment of music where the two are not in rhythmic unison with one another. This reveals to the listener that their relationship is not built on Figaro needing to advance his station or Susanna wishing to become rich. Rather, both have a mutual bond of affection between one another that is entirely independent of material concerns, and instead revolves around spiritual fulfillment and happiness.

Throughout the following recitative and duet, Susanna learns that the Count has

gifted her and Figaro a new room to live in after they are married. In the duet Susanna reveals that she has concerns about this generous offer by the Count; however, Figaro sees no problem initially. Beginning the duet, Figaro presents the argument: if the Count or Countess needed either of them, they would only be "two bounds from [them]." Immediately following this, Susanna is presented by Mozart with equal musical time, singing the exact same melody and rhythm as Figaro. This again reflects the sense of equity between Susanna and Figaro, each hearing out the other as they quarrel. Figaro suspects the Count of flirting with Susanna, and has a choice of whether to trust her or not. At this point Figaro's reason fails him. Any reasonable person in love would suddenly become overwhelmed with suspicion and anger if they were to hear what Susanna was saying, but what distinguishes true love from possessive love is one not letting those suspicions overcome them. Mozart highlights this crisis by having the music increase in volume and fluctuating violently. Figaro's anger towards the Count is completely justified. One should not forget that *Figaro* is a sequel to Beaumarchais' earlier play, *The Barber of Seville*, in which, a younger Figaro assists the Count in his pursuits of Rosina (now the Countess). Figaro's anger is a response to the Count's direct actions not his fiancée's possible actions, and in a way is saying "this is how you repay me for my assistance and continued service to you?" Figaro tries to calm down when the music is halted by a *fermata* (long pause) and Susanna asks Figaro: "if you want me to go on, discard your nasty suspicions! They only wrong me." While Figaro wants to, his anger still overwhelms him. It is curious that the duet should end quietly. Mozart in doing so is indicating that Figaro's reason has come back to him and he is willing to listen to Susanna absent of suspicion.

When Figaro discovers that the Count wishes to reinstate the *droit du seigneur* and use the gifted room to be closer to Susanna, he never blames Susanna, only the Count. Susanna then departs, and Figaro is left to rage against the Count. Instead of a grand aria with flashy scales and powerful chords, Mozart sets the music as a *minuet*, a dance of the aristocracy. With the strings hushed and plucking their strings, the music has a great amount of irony to it. The music is that of an aristocratic dance being sung by a servant. It is now the servant calling the tunes for the master, as Figaro says in the aria. It should be noted that Figaro simply wants prevent the Count from interfering with his and Susanna's love. Figaro is not saying that he is now the Count; but rather, he will be able to, by the power of his intellect, foil the Count.

After Figaro leaves the stage, Dr. Bartolo, a lawyer and the Countess' father, along with Marcellina, his housekeeper and the Countess' former governess, appear. Marcellina is seeking legal counsel for a contract that she and Figaro had drawn up previously, binding him to marry her if he were to default on one of his loans. Bartolo agrees to assist her due to a vendetta against Figaro since it was Figaro who facilitated the marriage between the Count and Countess, making it impossible for him to marry Rosina. Up to this point, all of the arias and duets Mozart has written have begun with very hushed and reserved themes, as opposed to "*La Vendetta*," which exhibits an air of pomposity. The grand and sweeping opening suggests that Bartolo thinks very highly of himself. Bartolo declares that "revenge is the satisfaction reserved for the wise," and that "to forget insults and outrages is always low and base." This sentiment provides a counter to a main theme throughout the opera: reconciliation. In the final scene of the opera, the Countess forgives the Count for his actions. Bartolo

however sees no point in such forgiveness, only revenge. Continuing his aria Bartolo assures Marcellina that "[even] if I have to overturn all the codes of law, if I must read all the statutes, I'll find some loophole, some contradiction that will confuse them." Bartolo is willing to invest so much effort in getting revenge against Figaro, because of his past with Figaro. What the audience sees from this aria is the caricature of Bartolo. While the title and text are about revenge, the music is set happily in D-major, suggesting either sarcasm or irony at the fact that Bartolo desires revenge.

After Bartolo's exit, Susanna rushes back into the room where she and Marcellina are left to confront one another. In the duet which ensues, the blows normally exchanged by the sword are instead exchanged by words. The melody goes back and forth between characters as if in a musical duel with one another. Though the problem is simple enough (who should exit the room first) the outcome will determine who is superior. Throughout the duet, each offer noble pleasantries to one another in hopes that the other will leave first, yet neither budes. The music exhibits a great deal of levity with an underlying character of acerbity. The main theme for this duet is direct and elegantly forceful. The *dotted-quarter sixteenth* followed by a rising *sixteenth note* figure portrays the feeling of a sparring match between two fencers. The rising note figure is phrased in such a way that it is as if the musical notes are jabs. Ultimately, Susanna pushes Marcellina too far and forces her to leave the room. As she is leaving, Susanna angrily remarks "yes, go, you old pedant, arrogant old schoolma'mm. Just because you've read a couple of books and bored my lady to death when she was young..." This remark in relation to the aria reveals that Susanna, like Figaro, can be witty and cunning when dispensing

with Marcellina, and is not just a dumb servant girl.

One of the most apparent vices presented in the opera is immature love, which is portrayed through the character of Cherubino. Cherubino is a page employed by the Count and has just come of age. Mozart casts the role as a female soprano dressed as a boy, and in doing so highlights Cherubino's immaturity not only in age, but also in the romantic arts. From the outset, Cherubino can think of nothing but physical love. Being a boy of 13 or 14, he is drawn to the beauty of both Susanna and the Countess. While he cannot be blamed for his puerile instincts, this is clearly not what love should be. In his first scene, Cherubino is explaining that he will soon be out of employment unless the Countess intercedes on his behalf, due to the fact that he was found alone with his girlfriend, Barbarina, by the Count. While he was already caught alone with this peasant girl, he nonetheless cannot control himself around Susanna, noting that she is the one he will miss if he is dismissed from service. Susanna then asks why the Countess is not the current object of his affection, and he curiously says: "she inspires me with too much respect." Though he seems to think highly of the Countess, he cannot but help his sexual desires, telling Susanna: "[how] lucky you [are], who can see her when you want to, [you] who dress her each morning, and undress her each evening, who fasten her pins and laces—oh, if only I were in your place." At this moment in the recitative, the key shifts from major to minor, highlighting the fact that Cherubino inordinately desires sexual pleasure from the Countess. When coupled together, along with the fact that he wishes to have his song read to any woman in the castle, it shows that he is seeking after not only immature sexual desire but also an immature idea of love itself. It matters not who the woman is for Cherubino, just the fact that he is in love with someone. This inordinate desire is highlighted in Cher-

ubino's first aria, "*Non so piu cosa son.*" In it, he describes how he "knows no longer what I am, or what I am doing. First I'm like fire, then I am like ice. Every woman makes me blush and tremble. At the very mention of love, I'm troubled and excited, and when I hear of the power of love, I feel a desire I can't explain." From the first half of this aria, it seems as if Cherubino is almost put into a coma from the mere sight of a woman. Cherubino can only conceive of a world where love is a feeling rather than an action. The music mimics these amorous pangs opening with a steady bass rhythm. The violins fill in the chords on the off beats, symbolizing heart palpitations. This is heightened after four beats of the steady bass rhythm. A sudden *forte* occurs and then instantly down to *piano* again for only three beats this time. Then another *forte* comes, jarring the listener's ear. This same figure appears again a few bars later after the word "*palpitar*," which translates to throb or palpitate. This leads one to conclude that Mozart is describing the palpitations of a young boy who knows not what love is, but can clearly feel what love is. This confusion between lust and love Cherubino exhibits is also shown in the ascending chromatic lines that occur throughout the aria. Finally, another element of this aria is the sudden change to C-minor on the word "*desio*." This is frequently employed by Mozart throughout the opera to highlight the fact that the desire felt by the characters is somehow out of order. Cherubino's desire is out of order because it prioritizes physical pleasure and beauty over the transcendent. Mozart here is showing very clearly that the pursuit of sexual pleasure as an end in itself is not true love, and in fact will not lead to true love at all.

Once Cherubino's aria is over, both he and Susanna hear the Count coming and Cherubino ducks behind the chair to hide. This is the first time in the opera that the Count makes an appearance. It is not with

some grand aria; but rather, he sneaks into the drama just as he is sneaking around to meet with Susanna privately. While Susanna rebuffs the Count incessantly and tells him that she has no intention of claiming any rights offered to her, Mozart shifts the accompaniment of the recitative to the foreign key of G-minor while the Count attempts to assure Susanna that he just wishes to make her happy and that he loves her. This is not the love previously heard though. Love, even confused love, has always been portrayed in the major by Mozart. In this moment however, the Count sounds more like Cherubino when he is describing how lucky Susanna is to be able to dress the Countess, lusting after another woman. By tying the emotion of lust to the minor key, Mozart is showing the listener that sexual desire is not the sole basis of love. There is a higher plane of love than the purely physical.

Suddenly, there comes a knock at the door; and another character, Don Basilio, enters. Basilio, cast as a tenor, is always played in an effeminate and flamboyant manner. He is prowling the estate in search of gossip when he stumbles in on Susanna, Cherubino and the Count, who are both hidden at this point. After pressing Susanna for information on Cherubino and the Count, Basilio reveals that it is common knowledge among the estate that Cherubino has feelings for the Countess and that he “gazes at her wantonly” at the dinner table.

At this moment, the Count reveals himself in anger which is characterized by the violent string opening at the beginning of the trio. His anger rises with the quiet pulse of the ascending strings. The Count is angry at the fact that a boy is infatuated with his wife because, in his mind, his wife’s honor (and by extension his honor) is being tarnished. Therefore, he must defend both. For the Count, this boy does not know his place. Basilio’s reaction comes as a drastic change in the music. Mozart has both the

violins and violas in unison with Basilio playing a simple and quiet melody. Hearing this in contrast with the Count’s ferocious opening shows how Basilio is in fact a small man who would rather give the Count a non-committal answer such as “what I said about [Cherubino] was only my suspicion.” During the trio, Susanna feigns fainting to protect Cherubino from being discovered and is dragged over to a chair in the room which Cherubino is hiding under. Before Cherubino is revealed, however, she comes too; and, again, the music changes drastically. It is revealed at this particular moment in the trio that Susanna has a confidence and assertiveness which matches that of the other men in the room. As exhibited in her duet with Marcellina, Susanna is able to hold her own. Here her confidence is exhibited by rising eighth notes and chords in the upper strings, climaxing with forceful major chords, each one demanding the exit of the scoundrel Basilio. The trio ends with the Count revealing Cherubino and believing that Susanna is having an affair with him. The following recitative has the Count threatening to retrieve Figaro, yet Susanna dares him to with her voice rising, exhibiting the confidence to handle herself with others.

Figaro soon interrupts the trio, bringing along with him the peasants of the estate. He has told the peasants to come with him to see his wedding, knowing very well the Count would have to marry Figaro and Susanna to maintain his good image with the peasants. Mozart sets the peasant chorus in a *6/8 time signature* with a bass drone, which is common of *pastorale* music.<sup>17</sup> Setting the chorus in such a dance like meter suggests that these are a simple people more concerned with the daily tasks of the land than the intricate social complexities of the manor house. Having such a distinction also shows that Susanna and Figaro are removed

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<sup>17</sup> *Pastorale*, meaning music of the country, shepherds, and in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, peasants.

from the peasant class but at the same time are not noble.<sup>18</sup> Along with the music, the peasants' actual speech shows a level of ignorance about the Count's behavior. Both Figaro and the Count know this. The peasants see the Count as a "noble master... whose great heart preserves the purity of the Countess." Figaro is attempting to force the Count's hand by making him perform the wedding ceremony in front of the whole village, whereas the Count must not only appease the crowd who has gathered for this occasion but also maintain the appearance that he is in fact a noble master. Figaro is unfortunately outwitted since the Count just chooses to delay the process until later that evening.

Figaro's plan is dealt another blow when it is revealed that the Count will send Cherubino to be a captain of his regiment stationed in Seville. Figaro does not want Cherubino to be sent off because he wants to use him to trap the Count later on, but also wishes to keep his plans a secret. He prudently decides in his aria at the close of Act I, to side with the Count's decision to enlist Cherubino. The aria however is not simply meant to display Figaro's prudence, but also to shock Cherubino out of his puerile sensibilities. This aria is almost always staged with the Count watching on as Figaro tells Cherubino about military life. One can always see the shock and awe on Cherubino's face as the music thunders along in a *militaire* style. His world has come crashing down around him, and, in the next act, he will return much more humbled and confused.

**Act II:** At the beginning of Act II, the audience is introduced to the Countess. In choosing to introduce her now, Mozart is saying to the audience "pay attention." He

sets her aria in E-flat major, the furthest key from the *tonic* so far in the opera. The piece is labeled a *cavatina*, or a short and simple song. By writing in this form, Mozart is highlighting the honesty and simplicity of her sentiments. The lyrics are sparse with the Countess only asking the "God of Love, if there is any consolation in return for my sorrows and sighs;" and that her only desire is that her "dearest one's affections [return] to me," or if not, to find peace in death. She simply wants her husband to love her as he used to. Mozart heightens this nostalgic sentiment by setting the *cavatina* at such a slow tempo and, as stated before, in a key so foreign to the listener's ear, evoking the sense that the Countess desires to recover something that existed in another time. This desire also leaves a hint of sorrow behind the tender melodies Mozart has written; the Countess says that if there is no consolation to her tears, she would rather find peace in death. However, one should note that at the point when death is mentioned in the *cavatina* it is at the end of an ascending line. At the mention of death, however, Mozart does not shift the music into minor as one would expect. Instead, he ends the phrase in a major cadence. In this moment, it is not the Countess expressing that she would be happy to die. Instead, she is conveying that she would rather die than cease to love her husband. Having this sentiment set at the end of an ascending line, Mozart reveals to the listener that this love the Countess has for her husband has a transcendent quality that even death could not conquer. It is easy for the listener to conceive that any wife would be enraged at their husband if they found themselves in such a scenario; however, all the Countess desires is that her husband love her again. Mozart could have easily begun the second act with the Countess singing a fiery tirade against her husband. Instead, he chose to shock the listener by suspending the action to focus on the

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<sup>18</sup> This is even more explicit in a 2006 Royal Opera House production of *Figaro*, where during the *Overture*, Erwin Schrott, who plays Figaro, directs lower servants on what and where to clean in the estate.



Countess' desire for mercy and reconciliation.

While the following recitative is meant for musical expression, it highlights key themes of the opera as a whole. After lamenting to Susanna that her husband does not love her anymore, Susanna's questions if the Count does not love her, then why is he so jealous of her, to which the Countess replies that it is "he's like all modern husbands, compulsively unfaithful, naturally headstrong and jealous as a matter of pride." In recognizing this trait in her husband, the Countess describes a key difference between Figaro's love for Susanna and her husband's love for her. Both Figaro and the Count are jealous, but for different reasons. The jealousy Figaro harbors stems from the fact that the Count would possess something he alone should have. He is jealous of the fact that the Count would possess, even if only for a moment, the physical manifestation of Susanna's love. The Count's jealousy however, stems from him and him alone. It is not so much that someone else would have his wife's physical love, but rather that someone below his station would participate in an honor that only he possesses.

Soon after the Countess makes this observation, Figaro enters the scene singing a quotation from "*Se vuol ballare.*" After making light of the situation he and Susanna have found themselves in, he lays out his plan to keep the Count occupied with suspicion and rumors until he will have no choice but to marry Figaro and Susanna since he had promised to do so that evening. Figaro exits the scene with an extended orchestral interlude quoting again from "*Se vuol ballare.*" This reveals Figaro's intelligence. Compared to how characters of lower stations had previously been portrayed in literature, Figaro is far more intelligent. He is able to concoct complex plans, manage the household, and compete on an equal footing with the Count. Both Figaro and the Count

are creating plans designed to prevent the other from getting what they want; yet at this point in the opera, both seem equally matched against each other. Figaro is able to think on his feet when the Count surprises him with Marcellina's lawsuit and he is able to force the Count's hand by fixing the wedding to occur that evening.

After Figaro exits, Cherubino appears ready to be dressed up as a woman to trick the Count. Susanna and the Countess conspire to have Cherubino sing the song he entrusted to Susanna earlier in the opera. Cherubino is initially resistant to the lady's demands, but soon is forced to sing. Similar to his earlier aria, his Act II aria, "*Voi che sapete*" is an attempt by Cherubino to express what love is. In "*Non so piu*," Cherubino sings of his newly found feelings with a sense of confused excitement. However, in "*Voi che sapete*," the excitement has worn off and his emotions are laid bare for the audience to see. While it is easy to dismiss his puerile desires as lust, his sentiments in "*Voi che sapete*" reveal a deep complexity about a youthful understanding of love. Much like the Countess' aria which began the act, "*Voi che sapete*" is simple yet honest. Cherubino is seeking an answer to the question: "am I truly in love?" This question is made manifest in his asking the ladies to "search for love in my heart." He is also continuing where he left off in "*Non so piu*" by describing the same phenomena: pleasure and pain, fire and ice, shaking and trembling. However, this aria expresses a new desire in Cherubino that his previous aria left out. In it, he describes how "I am drawn by something beyond myself—I do not know how to grasp it; I do not know what it may be." Though Cherubino does not know it, what he is drawn to is true love. This is a love which possesses a transcendent quality, since it exists beyond himself.

Mozart heightens the tension present in Cherubino through his scoring of the aria.

Both the melodies and harmonies express a child-like shyness and naïveté, representing Cherubino's understanding of love. In measure 13, Mozart writes an ascending chromatic line symbolic of Cherubino's confusion about his feeling's meaning. Although Mozart had consistently scored the word and emotion "desire" in the minor previously, in measure 32 of the aria, it is set in the major, suggesting that the desire being spoken of here is qualitatively different than the desire of the Count. The desire Cherubino feels in this moment is a desire to love, not a desire to possess. The Count wishes to possess Susanna's body whereas Cherubino simply wants to be in love. Since the aria begins in B-flat major, Mozart's modulation to the remote key of A-flat major at measures 36 and 37 represents a shift in emotion. Here Cherubino describes how he at one moment is aflame and another is freezing. The key of A-flat major is distant enough from B-flat to cause the listener to feel both cold (being so far away from B-flat) and hot (the orchestration and construction of the melody give the listener a warm feeling) simultaneously. Then immediately after Cherubino sings "I turn cold again," the music shifts into G-minor; and, although it is the relative minor of B-flat major, the contrast between it and A-flat major confuses the listener's ear in the same manner that Cherubino is confused about his emotions. Finally, at measure 45, Mozart modulates to the minor key on the words "I am drawn by something beyond myself." In doing so he is showing the desperation Cherubino must feel in lacking an answer to his question.

After Cherubino's aria, the Countess says "Bravo! What a beautiful voice! I did not know you sang so well." The Countess then begins to playfully flirt with Cherubino until the Count comes. This does not indicate that the Countess had suddenly stopped loving her husband and was now attracted to Cherubino. Rather, it shows that she was attracted to what Cherubino momentarily

represented. When the Countess was just simply Rosina, the Count would stand outside her window and sing arias professing his love to her. Cherubino in this moment, reminded her of the way the Count used to love her, what she so desired in her Act II aria. She was not flirting with Cherubino because of some newfound desire for him. Rather she had found in him what he was truly looking for: true love. She sees within him the ability to love a woman the way the Count used to.

After Susanna and the Countess finish dressing Cherubino as a woman, it is discovered that Cherubino was using the Countess' ribbon he stole from Susanna earlier as a bandage for his wound. As the Countess is re-bandaging Cherubino, she teases him by recounting an old-wives tale that a bandage which has come from a stranger has magical powers to heal wounds quicker. Cherubino breaks down and accuses her of making fun of him even though he is going away forever and that he would rather die than be ridiculed such. As she is attempting to console him, he attempts to kiss her. Cherubino in this moment returns to his lustful ways, like the Count, desiring something he cannot have. This shows that an understanding of love needs time to develop and is not simply answered by desiring its true form.

Suddenly, the Count viciously knocks on the door, and the Countess snaps out of her momentary fantasy. She has Cherubino hide in the closet, fearing that the Count would harm him. It is here and in the following trio where we can begin to see the manifestation of the Count's jealousy toward rumors about his wife begins. During their first recitative together, he is acting suspicious of her. When there is a noise heard in the closet and she claims not to have heard it, he accuses her by saying, "if that's the case you must be distracted by something else," in this case a lover. Characteristic of Mozart, once the Count appears

in the following trio, the music modulates to the minor key with the Count saying that “I know her lover is in there.” This highlights the anger and jealousy he feels toward his wife, which is rooted in concern for his honor rather than genuine love for her. There is another curious moment occurring near the end of the trio, where the music suddenly shifts into a completely foreign A-flat major directly when the Count says, “for pity’s sake, we both must avoid a scandal.” This is reminiscent of earlier when the Count was forced to acquiesce to Figaro’s requests since he was in front of all the peasants. In this moment, he seems to be pleading with his wife to avoid scandal for the sake of maintaining their public image.

After the trio, the Count asks the Countess to leave with him. He locks all the doors so as to avoid any suspicious activity while they go retrieve a key to unlock the closet. Unknown to them, Susanna had snuck into the room before the Count locked the doors. Once they leave, Susanna tells Cherubino to come out from hiding; and they both immediately realize that they are stuck. Cherubino displays courage by choosing to jump out of the window. Near the end of his duet he has with Susanna, Mozart shifts to the minor when Cherubino says that unless he escapes the Count will harm the Countess. Susanna implores him to not jump because it is too dangerous, but he jumps anyway. One could infer that Susanna was attempting to coax Cherubino into jumping out of the window in order to teach him how to love, since true love demands sacrifice. Cherubino in that moment is willing to risk his own life to protect the Countess from further harm. Rather than tell him that he will be okay if he leaps out the window, Susanna’s warning serves to give Cherubino a healthy taste of danger, therefore cementing that what he feels as love demands sacrifice to truly be meaningful. Immediately after Susanna says “Oh, look at that

little demon—how he’s running! He’s already a mile away!” leading the audience to believe that the fall was not in fact that dangerous for Cherubino.

Once the Count and Countess return to the bedroom, the Countess has gotten the courage to tell her husband the truth as to who is in the closet. This scene mirrors the second scene in the opera where Susanna reveals to Figaro the schemes of the Count yet diverges from it. Instead of trusting and hearing out his wife, the Count scolds and ignores her explanations. The Countess attempts to reassure her husband that he should suspect nothing from Cherubino (who she believes is hiding still), yet he instantly declares that he will kill whoever is in the closet and that “this is the reason for my doubts! This is the intrigue, the plot the note warned me about.” Instead of calming himself, the Count lashes out in anger against both his wife (for allowing this situation to arise) and Cherubino (who in the Count’s mind is trying to steal his wife from him).

Nothing less than miraculous follows the Count’s last line. Mozart thrusts the listener into twenty minutes of continuous music with the number of characters on stage increasing constantly until there are finally seven singers all singing in perfect harmony in the Act’s conclusion. By eliminating the recitatives from the finale, Mozart is able to perfectly capture what it is that the characters feel in relation to the situation, all in real time. Tension, shock, and confusion permeate this finale; yet all are given the freedom to develop naturally by Mozart, as they would in any human situation. Mozart in this finale is expressing what the characters are feeling and giving an honest portrayal of what could not be communicated by the words alone. If the Count were to get up on stage absent all music and say “I am going to kill the man who is hiding in the closet,” it would not get the rise out of us.

With the music aiding the text, the words take on a higher meaning. The music becomes a state of being with which the words can be based off of. Anger is the state with which the Count can say that he will kill Cherubino. Thought of in this way, the music is prior to the words themselves. Without such emotional states they could not be uttered properly. What Mozart is truly expressing with this music is "this is what \_\_\_\_\_ sounds like;" any emotion, situation, or state of being can be expressed in this way and can be better understood as a result of it.

The finale begins with the Count demanding that Cherubino come out of the closet so he can face justice. Mozart here gives the Count a very forceful melody of repeated dotted-quarter eighth note figures with the violins playing a harsh accompaniment, vacillating between forte and piano every half-measure. Contrasted with this is the Countess' figure which drops down to piano with the violins playing octaves on the off-beats of the measures. Both the volume and character of the music capture her attempts to reassure the Count and to quell his rage. Her attempts are in vain however as she reveals to her husband that Cherubino is hiding in the closet dressed as a female with his chest exposed. This infuriates the Count even more, as shown by the crescendo-ing sixteenth notes which accompany his confused repetition of the Countess' words. The Countess again attempts to calm her husband; yet he scorns her, calling her an "unworthy wife," and declaring that he will avenge himself at once.

The Count does not even wish to hear out his wife's plea. At this point both he and the Countess are singing in unison with different words, as if they are talking past one another. The surging sixteenth notes return, and the Count demands that the Countess give him the key to the closet. She insists that the boy is innocent; but the

Count insists that he "knows nothing of the sort." At this point the music comes to a dramatic pause and shifts into F-minor. Musically this is the darkest the opera has been. Having the music set so far from the home key, Mozart highlights the Count's scornful words to his wife. He tells her to leave his sight and that she is "unfaithful and evil," and that she "conspired to disgrace [him]." The conclusion of this phrase ends with a cataclysmic cadence in F-minor to which Mozart wrenches us back to the Countess' point of view. Her heart has been ripped from her; she cannot believe that her husband would say such things to her. This is embodied with her dizzying off-beat melody returning as she attempts to defend her innocence. The Count again meets her pleas with insult, saying that he can read the guilt in her face. In many productions the directors choose sometime in this confrontation between the Count and Countess to have the Count actually abuse his wife. Whether it be throwing her to the ground or hitting her, this pivotal moment where the music cuts out is used to emphasize the Count's complete disregard for his wife as his rage completely consumes him.

This first scene from the finale mirrors the first scene between Figaro and Susanna. Before revealing to Figaro that the Count wishes to sleep with her, Susanna asks Figaro to discard his suspicions. Figaro is left with the choice to listen to his wife or to accuse her of whatever she is about to say: he chooses the former. The Count, on the other hand, chooses the latter in this scene. Instead of accepting her pleas, he simply accuses her of being with Cherubino and that she give him the key so he can go avenge himself. It is interesting as well that the Countess in these moments never gives up on her husband entirely. Her honor has been slighted, yet she says that she will still leave when he tells her to go. Even after he strikes her and is planning to dispose of Cherubino, the Countess says that "it is his

jealousy that blinds him and makes him go too far,” or that “this is not who he really is, somewhere deep down he still loves me.” It should also be noted that in this scene the Count’s love is directed at himself. It is always his honor that has been slighted. He calls his wife unfaithful, yet he does not account for his many liaisons. He even goes so far as to say that ending Cherubino’s life would end *his* (the Count’s) suffering. All of these instances reveal the tyrannical love the Count has for his wife.

Once the Count reaches the door, it swings open; and Susanna steps out, surprising everyone on stage. This shock is exhibited in the sparse orchestration which begins the next section of the finale. The music quiets down and the strings play the same rhythmic pattern repeatedly over Susanna’s melody in a hushed manner. She appears from the closet with confidence, having successfully humiliated the Count in front of his wife. She sarcastically says to him “my lord why do you look so amazed? You’ve drawn your sword to kill the page, well here you see that imp of Satan,” as if to say, “you look foolish right now.” However, the Count cannot give up his pride; he asks if she was truly alone in there. Susanna, knowing that Cherubino had jumped out the window, happily complies. Returning from his futile search, the Count asks for forgiveness from the Countess, but in the same breath chastises her. He claims that such a trick was unwarranted. The women in response inform him that such “childish behavior” was unwarranted. The Countess adds furiously that he was the one who called her “unfaithful, deceitful, and unworthy,” to the sound of blaring winds and brass with the strings accompanying with short staccato rhythms and rapid sixteenth notes, similar to the Count’s anger earlier. The Count can only find help in Susanna, who turns him away saying “this is what your suspicions warrant.” The music which accompanies her

response can only be described as sarcastic; she is actually punishing the Count by not allowing him the easy path to forgiveness. At this point the Countess interjects asking “so this is my reward to being faithful to you all these years,” accompanied by large block chords played by the entire orchestra which Mozart uses to highlight the Countess’ anger at her husband. It should be noted that the Countess only expresses her anger when Susanna is with her. In the previous scene, the Countess begged her husband to recognize her innocence, yet here she exudes confidence similar to Susanna. While it may be because of the fact that her husband has just been humiliated and exposed in front of her, it could also be the fact that in the presence of Susanna she feels as if she is the equal of her husband. Susanna again rebuffs the Count’s desire for help, before trying to calm the Countess down, yet strangely the Count copies Susanna’s call to his wife note for note. Except instead of calling her *Singora*, he calls her Rosina, her real name. This reveals that the Count does not even know how to comfort his wife; he must resort to a female servant to be educated in such matters. In addition, the Countess tells him “I am not Rosina anymore, but the miserable abandoned object of your scorn.” Thus the Countess is informing her husband that she is not a girl anymore and that she does not wish to easily forgive as a younger and more immature lover would. Interestingly, after she says this Susanna suggests that maybe the Count has been punished enough and that it is time to forgive him. If Figaro and Susanna are supposed to be the embodiment of true love, this suggests that true love requires forgiveness. This is further evidenced by the fact that a few bars later after the Count sets out to get his revenge on Figaro and Basilio, the Countess and Susanna arrest his attention, saying “only those who forgive deserve forgiveness.” It is at this point that the Count gives

in and asks for reconciliation with his wife. The music which accompanies it, however, is not in the character of an apology; the violins having a sprightly melody makes it seem as if the Count is simply doing this to appease his wife instead of offering a sincere apology. The Countess on the other hand sincerely believes that he is offering an apology. She confides in Susanna that if she gives in, "who will ever believe in a woman's fury;" Susanna replies that "living with men is never straightforward," in the same musical character as the Count, implying that the Countess should forgive her husband if she really did love him. The music becomes more passionate as the Count sings in the upper register of his voice, begging his wife to look at him. It is met with harsh forte-pianos and his wife calling him an ungrateful man. This is the kind of sorrow that she was looking for in the first place. Concluding this section of the finale, the trio sings in unison:

Susanna: From this moment, perhaps  
he'll value *his wife* at her true worth.

Countess: From this moment, perhaps  
he'll value *me* at my true worth.

Count: From this moment, perhaps *I'll*  
value my wife at her true worth.

This is strange considering they are all singing essentially the same thing, but each has a slight variation pertaining only to them. This unison singing is Mozart's way of conveying a lesson to the audience: that true love is not only one which forgives, but also one which is unconditional, loving the other in spite of their faults.

All seems well until Figaro bursts in, attempting to rush the Count to marry him and Susanna again. The next few scenes reveal Figaro's ability to improvise in tough situations where he is either lacking certain information or subject to unfortunate circumstance. Immediately when he enters, he tells the Count that he does not know who wrote the note about the Countess when

both Susanna and the Countess have implicated him as being the author. The ladies even attempt to help him asking him, "really, you don't know who wrote the letter?" He dogmatically says no to the dismay of Susanna and the Countess. Even the Count says that Figaro is seeking an excuse in vain since "your face accuses you," to which Figaro cleverly replies "my face is the liar then, not I." Much like Susanna and Marcellina's verbal duel earlier in the opera, Figaro and the Count never give in to one another. Figaro, even when the ladies tell him "this comedy needs to come to an end," he simply changes the conversation to "then let it end happily according to the theatrical practice, let the marriage ceremony now follow." Figaro cannot be beaten by the Count because both his honor and love are at stake. Immediately following this, Figaro and Susanna sing in unison "oh my lord, do not refuse to grant our wishes." The music here moves in sublime harmony. The key does not change, but the music becomes more lyrical and expressive. This music captures true love. By writing such simple melodies (Figaro's is a C-major scale, and Susanna's a simple accompanimental figure) and lyrical phrases, Mozart is showing that Figaro and Susanna desire nothing more than to be married.

They are about to get their wish when a pesky old gardener enters the room, complaining that his flowers have been smashed by a boy escaping from the window. The tempo of the music goes from a brisk *andante* (walking tempo) to a lightning *allegro molto* (very quickly) with the first violins playing endless triplet-eighth notes, raising the tension of the music and the scene. The Count is furious; and Figaro, knowing instantly that it was Cherubino, decides to say that it was him who Antonio (the gardener) saw jump out the window. This white lie increases the Count's suspicions instead of clearing them up, since it does not adequately explain why Figaro was

fleeing or why he was in the room in the first place. Antonio asks Figaro, if this is the case, why he looked smaller when he landed on the ground. Figaro replies, “that is what jumping does,” referring to the contraction of one’s body as they land. When the Count presses Figaro on the issue, Figaro says that he was waiting in the room for Susanna. Then he heard the anger of the Count and jumped out of the window, pulling a muscle. At this point, the music drastically slows down and takes on the same character as when Susanna exited the closet, as if to mirror Figaro’s limping.

The final unfortunate circumstance Figaro must escape is dropping Cherubino’s commission on the ground. The Count picked it up, and asked Figaro what it was and what it is missing. Figaro, however, cannot solve this conundrum on his own, so the girls intuitively pace around the room relaying information back to Figaro. When he finally is able to tell the Count that the commission is missing the notary seal, the music steadily rises over the course of five measures. It concludes with a forceful cadence as if to say, “I have beaten you; you cannot stop my plans now.” These minor vignettes highlight Figaro’s quick wit and intelligence under pressure. Though he needs the lady’s help at the end, the battle is between him and the Count.

The last scene in the second act features Bartolo, Marcellina, and Basilio begging the Count to hear their case as to why Figaro must marry Marcellina. They all contend in some form or another that the contract Figaro signed was valid and entered into willingly. The music of this final scene is reminiscent of the overture: full of tension and confusion while remaining harmonious. One particular section toward the end has Bartolo, Marcellina, Basilio, and the Count all singing one continuous melody in harmony with one another. Simultaneously the trio of Figaro, Susanna, and the Countess

each enter individually with their own counter-melodies. To further add to the confusion, the strings mostly play constant ascending scales until the end of the act. It should be noted that in almost every performance of *Figaro*, the characters are blocked purposely as listed above. This is not just a musical technique to allow the singers to hear one another; but also, a technique used to highlight the state of the question posed at the beginning of the opera: can there be true love? At this point in the opera, it does not seem like true love will win out.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *The Question Answered*

*Act III:* The second half of the opera begins with the Count questioning what just transpired. Most of this self-reflection serves as summary for the audience, but what the Count says at the end of his soliloquy merits notice. Questioning who was behind the madness, he says, “it might have been one of my servants. People like that are too bold for their own good. But the Countess? No; to doubt her is to insult her. She has too much self-respect. But, my honor? What has human error done to my honor?” The Count here seems to have a change of heart toward his wife. Previously he had been shown in the second act finale accusing his wife at every first suspicion; but here, he seems to restrict his suspicions after being humiliated. This may be because he saw before him what his suspicions and misjudgments cause. While the Count has indeed changed slightly, one should not view this as a complete change of heart, for the Count’s main concern is not reconciling with his wife; but rather, what this situation has done to his honor.

Susanna and the Countess then appear behind the door, conspiring with one

another. The Countess formulated a plan to have Susanna tell the Count to meet her in the garden that night; however, since it is dark, he will not notice it is his wife dressed in Susanna's clothes. Susanna is hesitant of this plan because the Countess does not want her to tell Figaro; yet she goes forward with it because she ultimately cares about the happiness of the Countess.<sup>19</sup> What the Countess desires in changing the plan is to feel again the affections of her husband after so long a spell. They are currently being given to Susanna, but by pretending to be Susanna, the Countess will be able to become intimate with her husband again. After letting the Count know that she will be in the garden, the Count launches into a duet with Susanna. The first half of the duet is an emotional torrent. Beginning in a-minor, the Count asks Susanna "Cruel one! Why have you made me suffer for so long?" This is not the suffering of physical pain; but rather, of lustful desire. Susanna has only harmed the Count by refusing to become his mistress. Mozart captures this torment by setting the duet in the minor key and having off beat *sforzando-pianos* (loud to soft) in the Count's melodic line. This resembles lustful breaths since they occur on off beats with violins in the background arpeggiating chords into their upper register, giving the feeling of unresolved sexual tension. However, Susanna's melody is set in major. This dichotomy between major and minor should be understood as a disorder in the Count's understanding of love and his relationship with Susanna. Susanna is playing the Count, but the Count is so lost in his delusions that he cannot see that he is being set up. The

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<sup>19</sup> She is not only hesitant because the Countess does not want her telling Figaro; but also, because this is an alteration from Figaro's plan. Initially Figaro proposed that Cherubino be the one disguised in the garden that the Count would confuse for his wife. This presents Susanna with a dilemma of whether she should stick with her husband's plan, or alter it for the Countess.

second half of the duet suddenly shifts into the parallel major key of A-Major as the Count announces that his "heart is full of joy" since Susanna has agreed to have an amorous affair with him.

Immediately after this duet, Susanna catches Figaro in the hallway and tells him that they have won their case against Marcellina. The Count overhears this conversation and becomes instantly enraged. His next aria begins with a recitative, allowing his newfound anger to be more immediately manifest to the audience. The strings have marked a *sforzando-piano* representing a gasp when the Count realizes that he has fallen into a trap. A few measures later, the winds play dissonant harmonies which overlay the strings that have dark sixteenth notes, symbolizing the Count's rage and lust for revenge. The Count begins the main body of his aria believing that he has come up with a foolproof solution to prevent Figaro and Susanna's marriage (letting Susanna's uncle and guardian, Antonio, know that Figaro is an orphan). The aria itself is characterized by aristocratic pomp with its grand descending scales, sweeping crescendos, and excessive use of *trills* (an ornament of string playing). This aria is the Count's response to Figaro's Act I aria, *Se Voul Ballare*. Figaro says in his aria that he will turn all of the Count's plots against him, making the Count dance to his tune. The Count in his aria responds, saying, "Be assured that I won't suffer such misery. You were not born, bold fellow, to cause me torment and laugh at my unhappiness!" He even goes so far as to question "Must I see a servant of mine made happy whilst I am left to sigh? And shall he possess that which I desire? Shall I see her lovingly united to a mere peasant, who has awakened an affection she does not have for me?" The Count fully revealed himself as a tyrant with these words. All exist to serve him. Figaro does not have a right to be happy if the Count is upset. Susanna does not have a say because she is an obedient



servant to his lustful desires. By actively trying to destroy Figaro and Susanna's wedding, the Count is wishing to make the private, public. He wishes to take something as private as the love and matrimony which bind a couple and make it a slave to his passions, saying "that's mine; I will do what I want with it."

Much like the Count's reaction to Figaro's aria, the Countess enters the next scene responding to her own aria from the beginning of Act II. Her recitative begins the way one would have expected the beginning of Act II to sound: full of confusion and rage. She asks what harm her actions could have caused as strange harmonies permeate her words. Suddenly, she scorns herself, saying "Look what I've become! All for the sake of a cruel, unfaithful husband! He loved me at first, then he offended me, and finally betrayed me. Now he's driven me to seek my maid's assistance." Strong chords support her realization. He is not the man who once loved her tenderly. He has forced her to stoop to the lowest of lows, asking assistance from the servant whom he has fallen into lust with; yet, somehow, she still manages to love him and believes that he will come to love her again. The ending of the recitative leads one to believe that the following aria will be full of anger and torment. However, what follows is some of the most tender and sublime music of the entire opera. In simple C-major, the Countess asks "Where are those long forgotten moments of sweetness and pleasure? What happened to the vows he once swore?" This is some of the saddest music written in a major key; she wants nothing more than to return to the love she once had with her husband. The melody is so simple that even a child could sing it, showing the simplicity and honesty of her desires. The rising eighth notes accompanying the melody represent the hope that her husband might come to love her again still exists in her heart. The real tor-

ment in the aria comes after the first iteration of the theme where the Countess asks "Why, after all the pain, have the joyous memories not left my heart?" After this, the music suddenly shifts to minor with the strings having pulsating sixteenth notes, symbolizing the confused pangs of her heart. The Countess is not questioning whether or not she is capable of loving her husband; but rather, asking how it is possible after all the scorn, infidelity, and jealousy that she still manages to love him? It may seem crazy that she would remain faithful to him after all that he has done; however, it is the true love that exists in her heart which allows her to want to forgive all the Count's past transgressions. The Countess answers this herself; even after she questions her love, the beginning of the aria is repeated, showing that in fact these memories will not fade. The music then pauses for a moment and the Countess utters "If I can still love him, there must be hope!" The aria concludes with strings excitedly rising toward an explosive finale. It feels as though the music has changed keys throughout the ending of the aria, but Mozart in his genius switches the character of the music towards determination. Since she has confidently reasserted her love and devotion to him, the Countess will now stop at nothing to have the love of her husband again.

The scene ends, cutting to Figaro and Don Curzio (a lawyer presiding over the contract dispute) arguing about the case at hand. Figaro cleverly tries to avoid being married by arguing that he cannot wed Marcellina without his parents' consent. When asked how long it will take to find them, Figaro jokes that it will take about ten years. The party asks Figaro why it will take so long; he reveals that as a child he was found outside a castle with expensive clothes and jewelry adorning him and a birthmark. Marcellina, pale faced, asks whether the birthmark was on his right arm, to which Figaro

replies yes. She then realizes and reveals that Figaro is, in fact, her son and that Bartolo is the father, all to the disappointment of the Count and Don Curzio. The sextet begins with a mother and father embracing their son for the first time. Both Marcellina and Bartolo sing a joyous melody to the words "beloved son." Suddenly, Susanna marches confidently into the room, proudly telling the Count that she will use the money from her dowry to pay off Figaro's debt to Marcellina only to see Figaro and Marcellina already embracing as if they were married. The music changes to the minor key with the strings playing rising sixteenth notes with *forte-piano* marked at each one to show how incredibly angry Susanna is at the moment. Figaro tries to calm her down but is only met with scorn; his fiancée calls him a lecherous villain. The sweeping scales and repeated chromatic sixteenth notes that lie under the singing highlight the confusion and anger Susanna feels in the moment. The music changes to rising and falling eighth notes (like sweet caresses) to show Figaro's attempt to calm Susanna; however, Susanna's rage fills her so much that she hits Figaro. He replies that she is only doing it out of love. She cannot be consoled by Figaro because he is the object of her anger. It takes the calming presence of a newly discovered mother to reassure Susanna that there is no wedding taking place and that she and Bartolo are indeed Figaro's parents. The confusion returns with Susanna in disbelief the strings play a rising eighth note figure to increase the excitement felt by Figaro and his parents. Even the singers reassure Susanna, passing around musically the phrase "yes, she is the mother." Once Susanna is reassured, the room divides as it did in the Act II finale, with Figaro, his parents, and Susanna on one side, and the Count and Curzio on another. Figaro's side, the side representing true love, sings a soft, lyrical, and hymn-like melody, saying, "My soul can hardly endure the sweet happiness of

this moment." Contrarily, Mozart scores the Count and Curzio as in a way interrupting the happiness of the quartet, with an aside of their own: a harsh and stagnated melody set in the minor key saying, "My soul can hardly endure the bitter torments of this moment." The sextet ends with Figaro's side rejoicing in the love saved and the love found of both couples. After the music comes to an end, Marcellina still in shock says to Bartolo, "my love, here's the fruit of our long lost love affair," to which Bartolo falling to his knees replies, "Let's turn to the future...will you be my wife?" The instantaneous love of Marcellina and Bartolo sprung from this discovery should not come as a surprise to the viewer. For the new-found couple, Figaro represents a flower thought dead only to discover its blossoms many years in the future. What one should focus on is the fact that Bartolo and Marcellina did love each other before. Though one does not know the exact details, it is quite possible that after Figaro had gone missing, Bartolo and Marcellina's love could have been abandoned because of sorrow; but seeing Figaro again, re-ignited the flame of love that always remained.

Susanna then runs off to tell the Countess what has happened to Bartolo and Marcellina. Excited at the news the Countess sets out to dictate a note which Susanna will sign and give to the Count, sealed with a pin. One could view this aria as mere plot development, but that would be missing the point entirely. In this aria the Countess is speaking directly to her husband through the note. Though it will be played off as Susanna's, the Countess takes this opportunity to demonstrate her love and attraction to her husband. She cannot talk to him as they did when they were young lovers; because his love for her is distorted by the lust he feels for Susanna and other servants of the estate. Knowing that he will gain pleasure from her own words, though he believes them to be Susanna's, is enough for her. The mere

existence of the duet demonstrates this. It begins with rolling eighth notes mimicking the breeze in the Countess' description of where to meet "Susanna" in the garden. Both the melody and accompaniment, along with the choice of key, give the duet a sense of sensuality which the Countess is trying to give off in "her" note. After not finishing a phrase, she says, "he will understand where this is leading." The duet ends and the Countess seals the note with a pin from her dress.

Suddenly, some of the female peasants from the estate enter the room, presenting the Countess with some flowers while expressing their love and admiration. The music is similar to the chorus from Act I where Figaro brought in the village for his attempt at a wedding ceremony, implying that these women are equally unaware of happenings of the castle. Therefore, they will force the Count and Countess to act differently than Figaro and Susanna or any other member of the castle. Once the chorus comes to an end, Susanna and the Countess examine the ladies to find Cherubino disguised as a girl. When they do, Antonio and the Count burst in, exposing Cherubino, then Barbarina (Cherubino's girlfriend) intervenes saying, "My Lord! You've told me so often, when you embraced and kissed me: 'Barbarina, if you'll love me, I'll give you anything you wish!'...so I'd like Cherubino as a husband!" The Countess overhears this and becomes displeased; but instead of lamenting, teases the Count saying, "I see that the problem is yours now." She is able to act this way around her husband now because she is sure of her love for him and that it will be reconciled. Figaro then enters the room, trying to hurry the wedding party along so as to finally get married. The Count attempts to delay even though Figaro has done away with all of his obstacles. Now that the Count has found Cherubino, he attempts to contradict Figaro's earlier story.

However, Figaro counteracts his questions with his cunning. When asked about his ankle, he says it feels much better. When asked about Cherubino jumping out the window, he said that it was just as possible for both of them to jump out the window. With the wedding march heard in the background, the Count has to marry Figaro and Susanna. They exit; and the Count attempts to talk to his wife about what had just transpired with Barbarina. She responds, "We'll speak later, now we must welcome the wedding party. After all, you've shown a special interest in one of them." The Countess' attitude has changed toward her husband. No longer is she meek and downcast; rather she is confident and passive-aggressive. Earlier, she was questioning if she could ever regain the love her and her husband had between them. Now, knowing that she will not take no for an answer, she is confident in her quest to regain his love. The wedding party enters as the march comes to a close. Figaro and Susanna are married. After, the music suddenly shifts to a-minor, highlighting the Count's dismay at the situation. Susanna rushes over and hands him the note; and, suddenly, the music modulates back into C-major.<sup>20</sup> Figaro notices the Count struggling to open the note, yet Susanna still does not reveal the plan to him. The Act ends with the chorus singing the praise of the Count: "Constant lovers, here you may follow the path of honor. Sing the praise of such a wise lord. He yields an offensive right and now returns you chaste to your lovers." Much like the Greek choruses of old, Mozart here is using the chorus in such a way as to give a different perspec-

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<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that in a 2012 Glyndebourne production of *Figaro*, Sally Mathews, who plays the Countess, stages herself in such a way so as to follow the Count with her eyes while he opens the note. Throughout this process she remains brimming with excitement as if wanting to see his reaction to *her* writing.

tive from all of the other characters on stage. Each of the characters having their own motives and personalities, the chorus serves to insert the author into the play to comment on the action itself. Mozart is directly saying that constancy is a virtue of love and preventing it by an unjust practice of nobility is dishonorable.

**Act IV:** Act IV begins with Barbarina lamenting that she has lost the pin she was to give to Susanna. Figaro and Marcellina enter the garden as she is frantically trying to find it. He asks what Barbarina is doing, and she tells him that she was returning the pin to Susanna. Figaro remembers seeing the pinned letter at the wedding ceremony and becomes irate. Marcellina attempts to calm him saying that "the matter [at hand] is serious and needs careful thought," and to remember "that you don't know yet who it is that's being made a fool of." This does not assuage Figaro though, since in his mind he has already linked Susanna to the Count. He goes to find others to assist him in helping expose the Count and his wife. Marcellina on the other hand, is more level headed than her son. Figaro is clouded by his justified anger, while Marcellina is able to see that it is highly unlikely that Susanna ever do such a thing, saying, "I'll quickly warn Susanna. I believe she is innocent. She seems so sweet and modest—but still it's possible that she may be guilty."

After Figaro positions Basilio and Bartolo to catch his wife in the act, he reflects that he is "already taking on the role of a jealous husband." In that observation, Figaro recognizes that he is behaving just as the Count would under these circumstances; however, the notable difference between the two is that *the music* that accompanies Figaro never becomes angry. It is always set in major; and, though it has harsh moments, it is never devoid of consonance. The aria which follows is undoubtedly the most controversial of the opera. In the original Beaumarchais play Figaro had a soliloquy

denouncing the Count directly by saying "What have *you* done to deserve such advantages? Put yourself through the trouble of being born—nothing more."<sup>21</sup> Mozart replaced the direct criticisms of the aristocracy with criticisms of women and their nature. His intention as a poet is not to dismantle the aristocracy; but rather, to analyze the nature of love. Mozart recognizes that there would still be men who acted as the Count does even if there were no lords. Similarly, if there was no *droit du seigneur*, there would still be obstacles to love that couples would have to face just as Figaro and Susanna must. The actions of the Count may be heightened due to his aristocratic position, but his problem is fundamentally a human one. With this in mind, Figaro's aria can now be understood as a situation contiguous to the entire opera, not as something thrown in at the last minute to avoid censorship. The aria is rife with castigations against women such as "These creatures, deceiving your senses, seem to you like goddesses, and your weak reason burns incense to them in tribute," and "they're sirens singing to make us drown;" however, through all of this, the music never becomes irate. The melody and ornamentation seem mocking and ironic rather than solemn and grave. Being set in E-flat major, the aria recognizes that Figaro is taking his justified anger to the extreme and us being unreasonable. It should not be viewed as Figaro's love for Susanna changing. It is an unreasonable outward expression of his anger. Figaro is not saying that he will leave Susanna or that he cannot love her again. He is claiming that this is just how women are, even if it is not a fair accusation.

After the aria ends, Figaro hides behind a bush as Susanna enters the garden with Marcellina and the Countess. Susanna is informed by Marcellina that Figaro is

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<sup>21</sup> Beaumarchais, *The Marriage of Figaro*, p. 199, Penguin Classics, 1964

there spying on her, to which Susanna replies that she will fan the flames of Figaro's anger even more: "The rascal is playing sentinel. I'll have my joke on him as well. I'll reward him in kind for his cruel suspicions. (*aloud*) At last the moment has come when I may freely enjoy myself in the arms of my lover. Timid fears leave my breast. Forget conscience, concentrate on pleasure tonight." Just as Figaro is acting unreasonable in blaming all women for his supposed misfortune, Susanna is completely unreasonable for thinking there would be no consequences for treating her husband so. She has had multiple attempts to tell Figaro about the plan, yet she had chosen not to. Figaro's suspicions at least are reasonable as opposed to the Count's because he could see a clear connection between his wife's and the Count's actions, why should he not be angry that his wife is supposedly cheating on him?

Susanna is replaced by the Countess dressed in her wedding dress when she exits the stage, and with this the Act IV finale begins. Like the second act finale, the music for Mozart is situational, representing not just the characters and their intentions, but the mood which accompanies them. Cherubino enters<sup>22</sup> and sees the woman who he

believes to be Susanna. He delays his rendezvous with Barbarina to try his luck with Susanna. Mozart begins the finale in D-major, providing symmetry by ending in the same key as he started. The melody is playful as Cherubino approaches the Countess. He cannot seem to make out why her face is covered. As he ponders this, a sensual melody appears in the violins, highlighting Cherubino's intentions to seduce "Susanna." The Countess not wanting to ruin the plan orders him away. Cherubino responds: "you naughty girl, I know why you're here! Stop being so wicked, give me a kiss and I'll leave! I want the same thing the Count does!" Cherubino here has reverted back into his puerile instinct of love, wanting nothing more than to make love to "Susanna" as opposed to wanting something transcendent and meaningful as he desired earlier. What this is highlighting is that love takes time to develop. Much like he tried to kiss the Countess, Cherubino does not yet have the power to convert his physical desire for women into the transcendent desire to love. Both the Count and Figaro go to grab a hold of Cherubino. Since it is dark, Cherubino ducks as the Count hits Figaro instead. At this point, the music increases in complexity. Each of the four soloists sing an entirely independent musical line over one another, representing the utter confusion of the situation the two pairs of lovers find themselves in.

Without recitative, the music shifts uninterrupted into the next section of the finale. The Count and Countess are left alone with Figaro and Susanna observing in the background. The Countess, acting as Susanna, draws near to the Count obligingly. With this, the Count bursts into a passionate melody the likes of which have not been heard from him throughout the entire opera. The second half of his melody is a chroma-

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<sup>22</sup> In a 1993 John Eliot Gardiner production of *Figaro*, the woman singing the role of Cherubino, upon entering in the Fourth Act hums triumphantly a melody from one of Mozart's later operas, *Don Giovanni*. While the score notes that the singer must sing something, it does not indicate what in particular. Mozart himself was, like many composers of his time, willing to reuse melodies for various pieces (note the end of *Don Giovanni*, where the Don is having dinner and the music from *Figaro* begins playing in the background), so this practice this singer engages in should not be viewed as out of the ordinary. Choosing the melody from, "*Fin ch'han del vino*," which describes Don Giovanni giving orders to his servant to host a large party where there will be many women whom he can add to his list of

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conquests, should give keen listeners an insight into Cherubino's current state of mind.

tically descending series of notes that highlights the Count's attempt at seducing "Susanna." The orchestral accompaniment here is both playful and sweet. It suggests that the Count is actually showing love toward someone; and, that the Countess both enjoys the tender words directed at her and understands that she is leading her husband to his own humiliation. Both her and Susanna's next words are "blind infatuation clouds his reason." Suddenly, the music becomes more tempestuous, shifting into e-minor, one of Mozart's rarest keys used in all of his works. The Count in this moment offers a diamond to "Susanna" as a token of his love. It is a shocking proposal to hear for the Countess because it is not just a token of affection like a kiss; but rather, something permanent, though she must accept it to seem convincing. The Count then goads her into going inside as Figaro makes a noise, pretending a large group is coming. The Count runs off inside so as to not cause suspicion.

The music transitions, modulating into E-flat major, the same key as Figaro's earlier aria in the Act; yet instead of rage, there is a sense of disbelief in this music. The violins have repeated triplet figures; the music is slow, quiet. Figaro's entire world is shattered. He is engulfed in his own anger wanting nothing but revenge, retelling the story of Venus and Mars, likening himself a modern Vulcan waiting to catch them in his net. As he is about to leave, his wife enters dressed as the Countess.<sup>23</sup> The melody and accompaniment are agitated pacing up and down as Figaro insists that "the Countess" stay to see her husband with Susanna. Eventually, Susanna breaks character; and Figaro realizes that it is her. The Count was so blinded by his desire that he was not able to recognize the voice of his wife, yet Figaro is somehow able to see beyond his passions

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<sup>23</sup> In many productions of *Figaro*, those who play the role of Susanna here deliberately alter their voices, lowering them to sound authoritative, reflecting the deceptive nature of Susanna's trick to the audience.

and pick out from the confusion the voice of his beloved. At this moment, Figaro exhibits only relief and laughter at the situation, saying "She's trying to trap me, I'll lead her on!" The music here changes to a more lighthearted melody with the violins playing ornamental notes and *sforzandos* on the off beats to show Figaro's trickery in "seducing the Countess." Figaro, knowing full well the torment he was just caused, decides to trick his wife back and make her think the same thing about him. He does this because he believes his wife to need a taste of her own medicine and to know the confusion and anger that he felt. This infuriates Susanna. She wants to hit her husband for this; in contrast, Figaro wants to laugh at the situation. The music here returns to the agitated melodies and accompaniments of the beginning of this section. Figaro continues to trick Susanna into thinking he really desires "the Countess;" yet, she will have no more of it, deciding to repeatedly strike Figaro for his transgressions. All Figaro can say to these blows is "this must be true love." This implies that there is a certain amount of anger that is respectable in love, that it shows how much one really desires that person. If Susanna were completely unfazed by Figaro's actions she would not truly be in love with him, for she would not see the problem with him flirting with the Countess. Similarly, if Figaro saw no problem in letting Susanna be with the Countess, he would be lacking a possessive quality that love needs in moderation.

Both the music and Susanna's emotions cool as the music modulates to B-flat major with a tempo marking of *Andante* (moderately slow). Figaro says "Peace, Peace, my sweet treasure, I recognized the voice which I adore and carry engraved in my heart." Susanna in disbelief asks "my voice," to which Figaro responds "yes, your voice." Then the two mimicking the very first duet of the opera sing in unison together. Though what Susanna (and to a les-

ser degree Figaro) did was wrong, the two have reconciled with one another, demonstrating that true lovers are able to end their quarrels with a reaffirmation of the love they have for each other. Suddenly, the Count appears looking for “Susanna,” and Figaro is finally made privy to the fact that it is the Countess, not Cherubino, who is playing the role of “Susanna.” Just as they trick one another, Figaro and Susanna decide to trick the Count into thinking “the Countess” is about to sleep with Figaro. Much like Figaro believed that Susanna needed to feel what he felt; Susanna and Figaro decided to trick the Count because they need to show the Count in person what his actions look and feel like.<sup>24</sup> The music shifts to minor to highlight the apparent seduction occurring between Figaro and “the Countess.” As the Count sees this, a stream of loud 32<sup>nd</sup> notes sweeps up from the strings reflecting the Count’s shock, awe, and anger at the situation.

He runs out to arrest Figaro before the encounter escalates. The music bursts out into a crazed frenzy with the entire ensemble emerging from the house with violent chords and whirling scales accompanying them. The Count screams out to “the Countess” that it is in vain to resist confessing what she has done. As he says this, Cherubino emerges from the gazebo, followed by Barbarina, Marcellina, and finally Susanna (still in disguise). “The Countess” asks for forgiveness; the Count refuses. Figaro begs forgiveness; the Count again refuses. The crowd erupts begging for forgiveness three times; the Count answers ten separate times, no. The Count here is completely incapable of forgiveness because he has let his anger at Figaro and his “wife” and lust for revenge consume him entirely. Suddenly, the real Countess reveals herself

asking the Count to forgive them, stunning the entire ensemble and sending them into confusion. The music mirrors this, becoming hushed and chromatic with violins scaling up and down in strange keys.

Then, the entire orchestra and ensemble fall silent. A *fermata* marks the climax of the opera. The Count kneeling, his voice descending with his knee, begs forgiveness saying, “Countess, please forgive me.” It is in this moment that the Count realizes that he wronged the Countess. When she reveals herself to him; he sees the devotion and loyalty she has for him and cannot help being moved by her. It is as if his love was re-awoken by seeing her. In that moment right before the Count asks for forgiveness it is as if the veil of pride had been lifted from his face and he could finally see the mistakes he had made. In calling her Countess instead of Rosina, he is relinquishing his pride before her, for in experiencing a beloved one cannot help but bow before them and think themselves unworthy to be in their very presence. The Count, remembering his love is able to ask for forgiveness; the Countess, always having her love is able to pardon his egregious offense. She says to her husband “I am more clement, and answer, yes.” Her melody rises, symbolizing the transcendent element of her love and forgiveness. It is a sweet melody that seems to require no strain on her part, as if she had the ability to forgive in her from the beginning of the opera, all it took was the Count’s sincere gesture grounded in love to be forgiven. It is with this act of mercy that the opera is allowed to conclude. The ensemble sings in the style of a hymn: “Ah! All shall be made happy thereby.” This reconciliation was the last thing needed for *Figaro* to end as all comedies do, with all’s well ending well. The hymn concludes with the strings descending back into D-major, the same key as the beginning. The orchestra increases in volume as the ensemble erupts in joyous

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<sup>24</sup> In a 2012 Glyndebourne production of *Figaro*, Auden Iversen, who plays the Count, acts this scene as if the Count is shocked and distressed to see this happening right before his eyes.

singing: "Only love can resolve this day of torments, caprice and folly, into joy and happiness. Spouses and Sweethearts, to dancing and fun, and let's have some fireworks! And to the sound of a gay march hurry off to celebrate!" The strings echo the overture with a rising eighth note pattern which ends triumphantly the opera, all making harmony with their former discontents.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *A Philosophy of Love*

On the face of it, *Figaro* deals with themes which are foreign to modern viewers: Counts, servants, feudal rights; yet, at its core it deals with something universal, love. This universality is what allows it to be one of the greatest and most frequently produced operas in the world.<sup>25</sup> The story and its music continue to connect with audiences because each reflects human nature. The plot and music are truly wild, full of disguise, intrigue, scandal, and confused identities, it is truly a "day of madness;" yet through the madness one sees the clarity and simplicity of true love more vividly than they would if it were presented as it occurs in one's everyday life. The opera shows us that Mozart believed that negatives reveal truth. Understanding what love is not reveals what love is. Mozart needs to demonstrate what love is not because true love is so common that it becomes almost invisible and inarticulate. How many poets, artists, and musicians have created works of art that say the exact same thing about love, yet never cease feeling fresh and new? When simple truths of love are uttered, they are received as if one knew them their entire life; however because of this, they are easily forgotten and need to be constantly re-presented to remind humanity's collective memory

of what it is always on the verge of forgetting. Mozart's *Figaro* is a re-presentation of human love, asking the fundamental questions of "what is true love, and is it possible to recover it once lost?"

In wrestling with these questions, Mozart and DaPonte wanted to come as close as possible to love itself instead of its relation to other things; because of this, all references to religion, politics, and children needed to be done away with since all of these concerns both confuse and are secondary to the question of love. Though the Count and Countess are married (for a conceivable amount of time) there are no mentions of children. Similarly, even though Figaro and Susanna are engaged to be married there is no mention of a desire for children. The absence of religion is felt in the lack of any religious figure presiding over the wedding ceremony. The libretto, the opera, and the setting were all produced and presented in the heavily Catholic countries of France, Austria-Hungary, and Spain; yet, there is neither priest figure nor any religious connection to marriage at all in the opera. Finally, though aristocracy and *the regime* are elements of the play, they only serve to extenuate the Count's disordered nature. When it comes to human affairs, these concerns are secondary to love. People first try to figure out if their love is true and if it will last the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune before they consider marriage, children, and the complex question of how love fits into *the regime*. Figaro and Susanna are attempting to deflect the arrows, the Countess is discerning if her love can last, Bartolo and Marcellina are discovering their love for each other, and Cherubino is trying to figure out exactly what is love. These are primal questions of love that every human desires answers to.

The antithesis to true love for Mozart is the Count. Though he returns to his wife at the end of the opera, the Count's actions serve as a direct contrast to the love of

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<sup>25</sup> Operabase, "Opera Statistics 2015-2016," <http://operabase.com/top.cgi?lang=en>, 2017



Figaro and Susanna. The Count's idea of love is tyrannical, believing he has private dominion over everything public. He can exercise his right on Susanna because she is his; he can be jealous of his wife because she is his property and to hear of someone trying to pursue her is an affront to his honor. In this way the Count's idea of love is possessive. He is able to take from others because he has the right and the desire to do so, like Susanna. The relationship with his wife is possessive because to him, she is his to use at his leisure. The Count is only ever concerned with his wife when it seems there may be a scandal at hand; but, every other moment in the opera he is chasing after Susanna. He uses his wife to maintain appearances but derives real pleasure from the chase of women in the castle and Susanna especially. What Mozart is saying is not that love is entirely un-possessive; but rather, that the possessiveness of the Count is in excess. To be entirely un-possessive of one's lover would be akin to Figaro letting the Count have his way with Susanna and seeing no problem with it. Basilio mentions something similar to this right before the Act IV finale, when Bartolo asks him "What is Figaro to do, just grin and bear [the Count's advances]?" to which Basilio replies "Many do, why should he be the exception?" Figaro adopting this attitude would exhibit a lack of possessiveness healthy to a relationship. When people are in love they say things like "I am taken," "I am hers," and "She's my wife." This type of possession is entirely healthy because it shows that each person in the relationship wants only to be with that person.

Another excess in the Count's understanding of love is his pride. Much like the Count believing he has a claim to everything under his dominion, he believes himself to be the center of the universe. There are multiple times throughout the opera where the Count says in some variation "what

more could go wrong for me" or "could someone rid me of this scoundrel Figaro." Along with this, the Count believes his honor to be slighted at the mere mention of the possibility of a boy flirting with his wife. Pride has not only made the Count place his own desires over those of his wife; but also, has pulled a veil over his eyes, preventing him to see his wife as someone who was worthy of his love in the past. This is why it is necessary that the Count kneel at the end of the opera, since it is a physical humbling of himself before his beloved. Since the Count's love is aristocratic, it takes *his own conclusions* to ask for forgiveness. This is the distinction Mozart creates between the Act II and Act IV Finales. In Act II the Count only asks forgiveness from his wife because he did not want her to be mad at him anymore, whereas in Act IV he asks for forgiveness because *he realized* that he was in the wrong and that he actually loves his wife. It should also be noted that the Count's plea for forgiveness in Act II occurs in the middle of all the action and seems as if it is just one event in a stream of many, as opposed to in Act IV, where all music ceases and all attention is paid to the Count's lone voice.

The Count's change of heart is necessary for understanding another aspect of love which is not true for Mozart. Throughout the opera, both Cherubino and the Count are wrestling with the distinction between transcendent and temporal love. Cherubino's first aria paints him to be a boy who is in love with the idea of being in love; his second is one of the most profound in the opera, with him desiring a love which transcends; and his third appearance in the opera leaves much to be desired, namely the fulfillment of that transcendent love. His final appearance is him trying to coax "Susanna" into sleeping with him simply because he knows that she is there to do the same with the Count. The idea of the transcendent

seems to be forgotten and base instincts given reign. Cherubino still has something to learn in his quest for true love, something that by the end of the opera the Count has realized. For the entire opera the audience has seen the Count chasing after transient pleasure. He has had no luck with the country girls, Barbarina, and now Susanna. In Act IV he not only has the veil of pride lifted from his eyes, but also the veil of worldly desires. The entire opera he has been chasing sexual pleasure; but in the finale, he realizes that there is more to love than physical beauty, that there is instead a beauty in the devotion and mercy of his wife which pales in comparison to the physical beauty of Susanna. The Count *needs* to lower his pride before this woman because of her beauty; he is not worthy to be in her presence and therefore needs to kneel before her.

The other two characteristics the Count exhibits contrary to love in excess are suspicion and anger. The Count never ceases being suspicious of his wife and his anger escalates to the point where he strikes her. These characteristics exist also in Figaro; yet, are entirely natural and different from the Count. Figaro is entirely able to control his anger towards his wife as exhibited in "*Se a Cosa Madame*," and even when Figaro is suspicious it is because Susanna had changed the plan without telling him. The main difference though between the Count and Figaro in this circumstance is that there is always a restoration of trust and reconciliation between Figaro and Susanna versus the Count and his wife. After the recitative following "*Se a Caso Madame*," departs with a kiss from Figaro saying "courage, my dear." Similarly after Figaro gets Susanna back for tricking him, he holds no grudge but rather says "peace, peace, my sweet treasure, I recognized the voice I adore." The Count on the other hand is never truly reconciled with his wife until the end of the opera, and either patches up his outbursts or

lets his suspicions slide under the rug. Interestingly enough, Figaro recognizes that anger is even a part of true love. When he is being hit by his wife for tricking her he says "Ah! This must be true love." If two people are in love there will be times where the other person upsets them, but the key is to always reconcile as Figaro and Susanna do time after time.

What is true love for Mozart then? True love is profound yet undramatic. One needs to look no further than the first number of the opera. There is almost no action; Figaro is measuring a space for a wedding bed, and Susanna is looking at her wedding veil. Yet the music which surrounds the couple, in not just this number but throughout the entire opera, is what true love sounds like. True love for Mozart need not be more than two people living their lives happily. This is why it is necessary (in the dramatic sense) that the Count act as he does. If the opera were as the title suggested, just about the marriage of Figaro, it would be a very boring opera. By having the Count attempt to sabotage their bliss, Mozart is showing us that true love not only has external problems and tensions; but if the love is true, they are eventually resolved. The external tension brought on by the Count serves as the ultimate test of Figaro and Susanna's love. The portrayal of Figaro and Susanna's love in the first three Acts of the opera is of a couple about to be married and deeply in love with one another. Throughout Act IV Figaro questions Susanna's love for him. He does not go so far as to renounce her, but it takes this seeming deception for both to solidify their love for one another. It is not just Figaro who is deceived, but also, Susanna. Figaro tricks his wife back for causing him this torment. So when they reconcile with one another in *Pace, Pace, mio dolce tesoro*, it is not just each forgiving one another but also recognizing that each was wrong in their judgments about the other's actions.

Mozart also demonstrates through the characters of Figaro and Susanna that true love attracts similar personalities not opposites. Both Figaro and Susanna are schemers, not only with others but with each other, both are confident, and both are witty. Cherubino and Barbarina are two young flirtatious lovers who see in each other a similar desire to pursue physical love. Bartolo and Marcellina's love for one another derives from their love of Figaro. Figaro is the sameness that draws them together in love. With the Count and Countess the sameness shared between them is hidden from the audience. We have no knowledge of how the Count and Countess came to love one another only that have already fallen in love with one another in *The Barber of Seville*. In *Figaro*, their love has already been strained so one is unable to see what their love looked like in practice. Nonetheless, the Count and Countess love each other, and because of this a profound similarity in desire must exist between them. Mozart is showing that true opposites never attract and instead there must be some sameness in personality and desire for a couple to truly love one another.

Another facet of true love for Mozart is forgiveness. Though the drama is centered around Figaro's wedding, the resolution of the opera hinges on the Countess forgiving her husband. If the opera were simply about Figaro's marriage, it would have ended after Act III. The Countess' two questions to herself throughout the opera have been "why do I still love my husband," and "can I still love him after what he has done to me?" Her answer to the first was "because I know who he really is," and the second "yes." True love for Mozart causes forgiveness. The Countess is willing to forgive this seemingly unforgiveable act because she loves her husband and cannot imagine a life without him. To many the Countess seems crazy that she would be willing to forgive the Count

not only for what he did but also in such a quick manner. Similarly, many see the Count as insincere in his apology and that his behavior will never change. What both positions fail to see is that forgiveness is not as simple as "forgive and forget." Though the Countess forgives the Count in the end of the opera, it is not inconceivable that their love will be the same. Their love is true but it can never be what it was before. This fact should not cause one to think that their love is not true. The opera is not about the fact that the Count cheated, but that the Countess forgave him. They can return to being in love with one another but it will be in a different key.

Finally, Mozart shows that true love in the end can win out. *Figaro* is a comedy, not a tragedy, and therefore must end in happiness. The Count is forgiven, Figaro and Susanna are married, Bartolo and Marcellina are married, and Cherubino gets to stay. True love for Figaro and Susanna is able to be consummated and the obstacles are overcome, true love is regained between the Count and Countess, and love is discovered by Marcellina and Bartolo.