

Listening Guide

Mozart: *The Marriage of Figaro* (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Overture and Act I, Scenes 6 and 7

DATE OF WORK: 1786

GENRE: Opera buffa (Italian comic opera)

LIBRETTIST: Lorenzo da Ponte

BASIS: Play by Beaumarchais

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS: Figaro, servant to Count Almaviva (bass)
Susanna, maid to Countess Almaviva (soprano)
Cherubino, page (trouser role, sung by mezzo-soprano)
Count Almaviva (baritone)
Countess Almaviva (soprano)
Basilio, music master (tenor)
Doctor Bartolo (bass)
Marcellina, his housekeeper (soprano)
(Shorter recordings omit Overture.)

Overture

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Dramatic, contrasting themes set in shortened sonata-allegro form
(no development).
Opening string theme sets bustling mood for upcoming wedding,
answered by winds.

Form: Abridged sonata-allegro (lacking development)

EXPOSITION

Theme 1a—agitated theme, played *pianissimo* in strings, in D major:

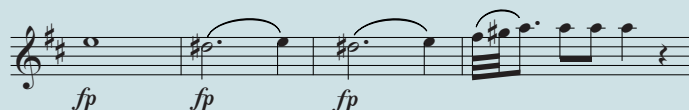


Theme 1b—a broad wind melody; oboes and flutes build to climax:



Transitional passage, modulating.

Theme 2—static melody with accented, uneven rhythms; in key of dominant (A major):



Closing theme (first part)—a rising motive that turns downward:



Closing theme (second part)—lyrical melody in A major:



RECAPITULATION

Theme 1a—returns, in D major.

Theme 1b—answers, in D major.

Theme 2—in D major.

Closing themes.

Coda—descending scale passages and forceful chords lead to end.

Act I, Scenes 6 and 7

Scene 6: Aria, Cherubino.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Breathless and quick opening of love song, reflecting the character's emotional state.

Return of opening (A) unifies the 4-part structure (A-B-A-C).

Form: A-B-A-C, followed by recitative

A—quick rhythms (in E flat):



B—more lyrical (in B flat):



A—return (in E flat).

C—begins quietly, then builds in E flat, modulates:



CHERUBINO

A Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio,
or di foco, ora sono di ghiaccio,
ogni donna cangiar di colore,
ogni donna mi fa palpitar.

B Solo ai nomi d'amor, di diletto,
mi si turba, mi s'altera il petto,
e a parlare mi sforza d'amore
un desio ch'io non posso spiegar.

A Non so più cosa son, . . .

C Parlo d'amor vegliando,
parlo d'amor sognando,
all'acqua, all'ombra, ai monti,
ai fiori, all'erbe, ai fonti,

I don't know what I am, what I'm doing;
first I seem to be burning, then freezing;
every woman makes me change color,
every woman I see makes me shake.
Just the words "love" and "pleasure"
bring confusion; my breast swells in terror,
yet I am compelled to speak of love
by a force which I cannot explain.

I speak of love while waking,
I speak of love while dreaming,
to the water, to shadows, to mountains,
to the flowers, the grass, and the fountains,

all'eco, all'aria, ai venti,
che il suon de'vani accenti,
portano via con se.

C Parlo d'amor . . .
E se non ho chi m'oda,
parlo d'amor con me!

(Seeing the Count in the distance, Cherubino hides behind the chair.)

to the echo, to the air, to the winds
which carry the idle words
away with them.

And if there is no one to listen,
I'll speak of love to myself!

Recitative: Susanna, Count, Basilio

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Rapid, conversational style that moves action ahead.
Fortepiano playing accompaniment, with cello.

CHERUBINO

Ah! Son perduto!

I'm done for!

SUSANNA

Che timor . . . il Conte! Misera me!

I'm afraid . . . the Count! Poor me!

(tries to conceal Cherubino)

COUNT ALMAVIVA *(entering)*

Susanna, tu mi sembri agitata e confusa.

Susanna, you seem to be agitated and confused.

SUSANNA

Signor, io chiedo scusa,
ma, se mai, qui sorpresa,
par carità, partite.

My lord, I beg your pardon,
but . . . indeed . . . the surprise . . .
I implore you, please go.

COUNT

(sits down on the chair and takes Susanna's hand; she draws it forcibly away)

Un momento, e ti lascio. Odi.

One moment, then I'll leave. Listen.

SUSANNA

Non odo nulla.

I don't want to hear anything.

COUNT

Due parole: tu sai che ambasciatore
a Londra il Re mi dichiarò;
di condur meco Figaro destinai.

Just a word; you know that the king
has named me ambassador to London;
I had intended to take Figaro with me.

SUSANNA

Signor, se osassi—

My lord, if I dare—

COUNT *(rising)*

Parla, parla, mia cara,
e con quel dritto ch'oggi prendi su me,
finchè tu vivi chiedi, imponi, prescrivi.

Speak, speak, my dear,
and with that right you have of me today,
as long as you live, you may ask, demand,
prescribe.

SUSANNA

Lasciatemi, signor,
dritti non prendo,
non ne vò, non ne intendo.
Oh me infelice!

Let go of me, my lord,
I have no rights,
I do not want them, nor claim them.
Oh, what misery!

COUNT

Ah no, Susanna, io ti vò far felice!
 Tu ben sai quanto io t'amo;
 a te Basilio tutto già disse.
 Or senti, se per pochi momenti meco
 in giardin, sull'imbrunir del giorno,
 ah, per questo favore io pagherei . . .

Ah no, Susanna, I want to make you happy!
 You well know how much I love you;
 Basilio has told you that already.
 Now listen, if you would meet me
 briefly in the garden at dusk,
 ah, for this favor I would pay . . .

BASILIO (*outside the door*)

E uscito poco fa.

He went out just now.

COUNT

Chi parla?

Whose voice is that?

SUSANNA

O Dei!

Oh, heavens!

COUNT

Esci, ed alcun non entri.

Go, and let no one come in.

SUSANNA

Ch'io vi lasci qui solo?

And leave you here alone?

BASILIO (*outside*)

Da madama sarà, vado a cercarlo.

He'll be with my lady, I'll go and find him.

COUNT

Qui dietro mi porrò.

I'll get behind here.

(*points to the chair*)

SUSANNA

Non vi celate.

No, don't hide.

COUNT

Taci, e cerca ch'ei parta.

Hush, and try to make him go.

SUSANNA

Ohimè! che fate?

Oh dear! What are you doing?

(*The Count is about to hide behind the chair; Susanna steps between him and the page. The count pushes her gently away. She draws back; meanwhile the page slips round to the front of the chair and hops in with his feet drawn up. Susanna rearranges the dress to cover him.*)

BASILIO

Susanna, il ciel vi salvi!
 Avreste a caso veduto il Conte?

Heaven bless you, Susanna!
 Have you seen his lordship by any chance?

SUSANNA

E cosa deve far meco il Conte?
 Animo, uscite.

And what should his lordship be doing here
 with me? Come now, be gone!

BASILIO

Aspettate, sentite, Figaro di lui cerca.

But listen, Figaro is looking for him.

SUSANNA (*aside*)

Oh cielo!
 Ei cerca chi, dopo voi, più l'odia.

Oh dear! Then he's looking for the one
 man who, after you, hates him most!

COUNT (*aside*)

Vediam come mi serve.

Now we'll see how he serves me.

BASILIO

Io non ho mai nella moral sentito
ch'uno ch'ama la moglie odi il marito,
per dir che il Conte v'ama.

I have never heard it preached that
one who loves the wife should hate the husband;
that's a way of saying the Count loves you.

SUSANNA

Sortite, vil ministro dell'altrui sfrenatezza:
io non ho d'uopo della vostra morale,
del Conte, del suo amor!

Get out, vile minister of others' lechery!
I have no need of your preaching
nor of the Count or his lovemaking!

BASILIO

Non c'è alcun male.
Ha ciascun i suoi gusti.
Io mi credea che preferir
doveste per amante,
come fan tutte quante,
un signor liberal, prudente, e saggio,
a un giovinastro, a un paggio.

No offense meant.
Everyone to their own taste.
I thought you would have preferred
as your lover,
as all other women would,
a lord who's liberal, prudent, and wise,
to a raw youth, a mere page.

SUSANNA

A Cherubino?

To Cherubino?

BASILIO

A Cherubino! Cherubin d'amore,
ch'oggi sul far del giorno
passeggiava qui intorno per entrar.

To Cherubino! Love's little cherub
who early today
was hanging about here waiting to come in.

SUSANNA

Uom maligno, un'impostura è questa.

You insinuating wretch, that's a lie.

BASILIO

E un maligno con voi
chi ha gli occhi in testa?
E quella canzonetta,
ditemi in confidenza,
io sono amico,
ed altrui nulla dico,
è per voi, per madama?

Do you call it an insinuation
to have eyes in one's head?
And that little ditty,
tell me confidentially
as a friend,
and I will tell no one else,
was it written for you or my lady?

SUSANNA (*aside*)

Chi diavol gliel'ha detto?

Who the devil told him about that?

BASILIO

A proposito, figlia, istruitelo meglio.
Egli la guarda a tavola sí spesso,
e con tale immodestia,
che s'il Conte s'accorge—
e sul tal punto sapete, egli è una bestia—

By the way, my child, you must teach him
better. At table he gazes at her so often
and so wantonly,
that if the Count noticed it—
on that subject, as you know, he's quite wild—

SUSANNA

Scellerato! e perchè andate voi
tai menzogne spargendo?

You wretch! Why do you go around
spreading such lies?

BASILIO

Io! che ingiustizia!
Quel che compro io vendo,
a quel che tutti dicono,
io non ci aggiungo un pelo.

!! How unfair!
That which I buy I sell,
and to what is common knowledge
I add not a tittle.

COUNT (*emerging from his hiding place*)

Come! che dicono tutti?

Indeed! And what is common knowledge?

BASILIO (*aside*)

Oh bella!

How wonderful!

SUSANNA

Oh cielo!

Oh heavens!

Scene 7: Terzetto (Trio), Count, Basilio, Susanna

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Lively exchanges between 3 characters, each with different emotional reaction to the situation.

Structure reminiscent of a 3-part sonata-allegro form (with development and recapitulation).

Form: Sonata-type structure, with development and recapitulation

Style: Quick exchange between voices; much text repetition; each character with own emotional commentary

The Count—angry:



Basilio and the Count—comforting
Susanna, who has fainted:



COUNT

Cosa sento! Tosto andate,
e scacciate il seduttore!

I heard it all! Go at once,
throw the seducer out!

BASILIO

In mal punto son qui giunto;
perdonate, o mio signor.

I have come at an unfortunate moment;
forgive me, o my lord.

SUSANNA

Che ruina! me meschina!
Son' oppressa dal dolor!

What a catastrophe! I am ruined!
Terror grips my heart!

COUNT

Tosta andate, andate . . .

Go at once, go . . .

BASILIO

In mal punto . . .

I have come . . .

SUSANNA

Che ruina!

What a catastrophe!

BASILIO

... son qui giunto;

... at an unfortunate moment;

COUNT

... e scacciate il seduttore.

... and throw the seducer out.

BASILIO

... perdonate, o mio signor.

... forgive me, o my lord.

SUSANNA

Me meschina!

I am ruined!

Me meschina!

I am ruined!

Son' oppressa dal dolor.

Terror grips my heart.

BASILIO, COUNT (*supporting Susanna*)

Ah! già svien la poverina!

Ah! The poor girl's fainted!

Come, oh Dio! le batte il cor.

O God, how her heart is beating.

BASILIO

Pian, pianin, su questo seggio—

Gently, gently on to the chair—

(*taking her to the chair*)

SUSANNA (*coming to*)

Dove sono? Cosa veggio?

Where am I? What's this I see?

Che insolenza! andate fuor.

What insolence! Leave this room.

BASILIO, COUNT

Siamo qui per aiutarvi, ...

We're here to help you, ...

BASILIO

... è sicuro il vostro onor.

... your virtue is safe.

COUNT

... non turbarti, o mio tesoro.

... do not worry, sweetheart.

BASILIO

Ah, del paggio, quel che ho detto,
era solo un mio sospetto.

What I was saying about the page
was only my own suspicion.

SUSANNA

E un'insidia, una perfidia,
non credete all'impostor.

It was a nasty insinuation,
do not believe the liar.

COUNT

Parta, parta il damerino, ...

The young fop must go, ...

SUSANNA, BASILIO

Poverino!

Poor boy!

COUNT

... parta, parta il damerino.

... the young fop must go.

SUSANNA, BASILIO

Poverino!

Poor boy!

COUNT

Poverino! poverino!
ma da me sorpreso ancor!

Poor boy! Poor boy!
But I caught him yet again!

SUSANNA

Come?

How?

BASILIO

Che?

What?

SUSANNA

Che?

What?

BASILIO

Come?

How?

SUSANNA, BASILIO

Come? che?

How? What?

COUNT

Da tua cugina,
l'uscio jer trovai rinchiuso,
picchio, m'apre Barbarina
paurosa fuor dell'uso.
Io, dal muso insospettito,
guardo, cerco in ogni sito,
ed alzando pian, pianino,
il tappeto al tavolino,
vedo il paggio.

At your cousin's house
I found the door shut yesterday.
I knocked and Barbarina opened it
much more timidly than usual.
My suspicions aroused by her expression,
I had a good look around,
and very gently lifting
the cloth upon the table,
I found the page.

(imitating his own action with the dress over the chair; he reveals the page)

Ah, cosa veggio?

Ah, what do I see?

SUSANNA

Ah! crude stelle!

Ah! wicked fate!

BASILIO

Ah! meglio ancora!

Ah! better still!

COUNT

Onestissima signora, . . .

Most virtuous lady, . . .

SUSANNA

Accader non può di peggio.

Nothing worse could happen!

COUNT

. . . or capisco come va!

. . . now I see what's happening!

SUSANNA

Giusti Dei, che mai sarà!

Merciful heaven, whatever will happen?

BASILIO

Così fan tutte . . .

They're all the same . . .

SUSANNA

Giusti Dei! che mai sarà
Accader non può di peggio,
ah no! ah no!

Merciful heaven! Whatever will happen?
Nothing worse could happen!
ah no! ah no!

BASILIO

. . . le belle,
non c'è alcuna novità,
così fan tutte.

. . . the fair sex,
there's nothing new about it,
they're all the same.

COUNT

Or capisco come va,
onestissima signora!
or capisco, ecc.

Now I see what's happening,
most virtuous lady!
Now I see, *etc.*

BASILIO

Ah, del paggio, quel che ho detto,
era solo un mio sospetto.

What I was saying about the page
was only my own suspicion.

SUSANNA

Accader non può di peggio, ecc.

Nothing worse could happen, *etc.*

COUNT

Onestissima signora, ecc.

Most virtuous lady, *etc.*

BASILIO

Così fan tutte, ecc.

They're all the same, *etc.*