CHAPTER THREE

Act I

The Subjects of the Opera

One of the subjects of Mozart's *Le nozze de Figaro*—and of Beaumarchais's play *Le mariage de Figaro* from which Lorenzo da Ponte drew his libretto for the opera—is class distinctions and just what they amount to. Both the play and opera seem at first to concern characters cut from the familiar stuff of comedy—a noble couple and their two resourceful servant-confidants. One expects the usual comic imbroglio and happy resolution, that neat untangling of a delightful snarl which provides so much of comedy's pleasure. The plot of the opera is all imbroglio, as anyone trying to sort out the intricacies of the fourth-act finale will testify. But in both play and opera something more significant emerges from the melee of *la folle journée*.[1] The central theme of the play could be summed up by a passage from Figaro's famous diatribe against social inequities, a speech in which Napoleon is said to have found contained "all the revolution":

> Non, Monsieur le Comte, vous ne l'aurez pas . . . vous ne l'aurez pas. Parce que vous êtes un grand Seigneur, vous vous croyez un grand génie! . . . noblesse, fortune, un rang, des places; tout cela rend si fier! Qu'avez-vous fait pour tant de biens? vous vous êtes donné la peine de naître, et rien de plus. Du reste, homme assez ordinaire![2]

The sardonic and clever servant Figaro assumes the center in a political satire considered subversive enough to have been forbidden production for seven years after its composition.

These words of Figaro's are not, however, to be found in the libretto

for Mozart's opera. Lorenzo da Ponte did follow the sequence of events in Beaumarchais's play studiously, and he borrowed much of its language. Yet the nature of his cuts and changes, the matter added by Mozart's music, and the sheer difference in nature between an opera and a stage play made the tale of Figaro's marriage into a new vehicle entirely—a radiant romantic comedy. Susanna and the Countess are the characters at the opera's center; they step out from behind the masks of comic convention, and in doing so enable some of the other characters, touched by the humanity of the two women, to undergo a similar metamorphosis. The opera concerns the two women's friendship, one based on mutual trust and affection, which has begun before the opera opens. The warmth radiating from this friendship generates in us a real concern for the various couples in their couplings and uncouplings, and raises the plot above the level of mere farce. It moves us to be genuinely happy for Marcellina's transformation, in act IV, from bluestocking harridan to beaming mother, when ordinarily we would have felt mere relief at the fortuitous resolution of a serious complication. And it makes us momentarily disappointed in Figaro, late in the day, when he fails to put his trust in the two women's grace. The opera is about this grace.

There is no good reason to expect adaptors to use the material they have appropriated for the same purpose as did its originator, nor is it reasonable to judge that they have failed in proper attention to their model when differences appear. Yet it is a commonplace today to discover that Beaumarchais's sharp social criticism is present in Mozart's opera, but closely veiled because of the authors' political timidity. (Less popular, and far less defensible, is the counterview that the adaptors removed all of Beaumarchais's satire, producing a lamer, blander version of his spirited original.) An adaptor may well view his chosen subject in a very different light from that of the originator; if in the opera more general ethical concerns supplanted Beaumarchais's political satire, it may have been because da Ponte and Mozart did not consider a friendship across the classes as a subject for easy treatment, nor conceive of class barriers as readily giving way to an access of strong sentiment. Each man's habitual world must to a great extent define him, limiting his freedom to act, and decency is not sufficient qualification for overriding those limits; even the affectionate Countess at times "remembers her place."[3] The opera takes as its task not to attack the existing orders, but to expand and irradiate them. It must first establish both women in their proper worlds, and demonstrate that each of them merits the respect of her companion. It has then to find a place for their friendship to inhabit without violating either character's delicate sense of propriety. This meeting ground must be beyond class, and with its

own sense of time; it may not be permanent, or even of more than one mad day's duration.

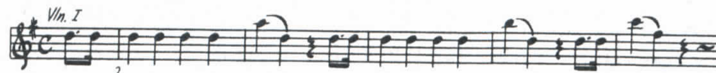
It is my intent in the following pages to show how da Ponte's alterations in the text of *Le mariage de Figaro*, and the web of musical metaphors which Mozart painstakingly constructed around da Ponte's text, collaborated to produce a new original—*Le nozze di Figaro*—a work which sheds its own singular light on the way we live. Since the events and revelations of the opera are plotted in a carefully periodic fashion, unlike, for example, the episodic improvisations of *Don Giovanni*, the analysis will proceed step by step through the most significant of the opera's arias and ensembles.

Susanna and Figaro: The Opening Duets

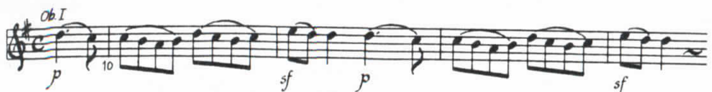
After the overture—a skillful mélange in D major of bustling but neutral string figurations answered by courtly horn fanfares—a drop to the subdominant (G major) introduces a more relaxed and leisurely scene. Figaro is pacing off the bridal chamber, measuring its spaces to a bourrée rhythm marked by a dotted upbeat and the characteristic ♩ ♩ 𝄽 ♩ bourrée pattern (ex. 3–1).[4] The bourrée cadences on the dominant both in its condensed orchestral introduction and in the slightly expanded repetition of the first period which accompanies Figaro's first words. A curious internal organization gives the bourrée phrase a flat-footed quality: its antecedent member is six measures long, its consequent only two (when four-plus-four would be the norm). The long antecedent builds up tension in the arch to the dominant, but necessitates extra repetitions of the tag end of the opening figure to fill it out. The comic lack of invention in the arch becomes even more marked in the repetition of the first period, where the antecedent phrase lasts eight measures and the entire opening figure is repeated four times. An off-beat counterpoint over the barline in the basses and bassoons enlivens the dance in both its occurrences, tugging against the beat for a "stumble-foot" effect.

In its indeterminacy Figaro's bourrée phrase is good opening music and good counting music, but it cannot bring the period to a close. Instead it dovetails with a neat gavotte, Susanna's music in the repetition, which provides the rhythmic and harmonic definition necessary for a

Example 3-1



Example 3-2



cadence on the tonic (mm. 9–18, 30–36; ex. 3–2). The gavotte is typical in both rhythm and accompaniment; it has the habitual dotted upbeat figure, and is supported by an Alberti bass in the bassoons to accentuate the "beating" quality of the dance. Its line is decorated with appoggiaturas on almost every beat, an ornamentation which emphasizes the yielding, feminine aspect of the gavotte. Full orchestra accompanies the bourrée, but only winds and horns the gavotte, with an occasional string flourish at cadences.

This opening duet satisfies our expectations of the comic Susanna and Figaro: the swaggering, cocksure bridegroom and his pert bride-to-be celebrate their coming marriage right in character, the one surveying for the nuptial bed, the other in innocent vanity admiring her new hat. They seem a perfect pair. The very leisureliness of the opening—eight measures of bourrée answered by eight of gavotte, the whole repeated with the lovers singing the melodies of their respective dance phrases—confirms the conventionality of the comedy, and nothing in the rest of the duet alters this impression. Susanna breaks into *buffa* patter as she urges Figaro to look at her new hat, and a change in harmony moves the piece to the second key area (mm. 42–49).[5] Susanna prevails in their game of "talking past each other," and Figaro obligingly disengages himself from his counting to join her in her gavotte for the rest of the duet. The neat gavotte phrase also provides the critical profile for the second key area and the consolidation necessary at the return to the tonic. Taken next by Figaro solo, with the Alberti figure in the cellos and basses, it becomes the "second theme" on the dominant (mm. 49–55), and it is the sole substantive material for the return (m. 67). There it occurs in full orchestra, expanded by two measures to a full four-measure period, and harmonized by the pair in parallel thirds—the customary expression of connubial bliss. The gay triplet fanfares at the three important cadences (mm. 34–35, 53–54, 73–80) seem intended to confirm this assessment.

Both the bourrée and the gavotte, as dances of *mezzo carattere*, are meant to accompany "an action from ordinary life, in the character of the comic[6] stage, a love affair, or any intrigue in which people from a not completely ordinary kind of life are involved"; they require "elegance, pleasant manners, and fine taste."[7] Thus the dance gestures which animate the first appearances of Susanna and Figaro on the stage

are fully in keeping with the social status of the couple: as servants of a Spanish count they would naturally, when alone, aspire to imitate the manners of their betters. The triplets at cadences round out the picture, supplying in the background a rustic lilt and exuberance, an echo of the rhythms conventionally appropriate for comic servants. But the *mezzo carattere* nature of these dance gestures also leaves open the possibility that the pair possesses a real, and not adopted, distinction, that they are by no means "ordinary people."

The duet also makes references forward to significant events later in the opera. Susanna's gavotte style, for example, becomes an important element in the second-act finale.[8] And the critical role which the gavotte rhythm plays in shaping this movement makes Susanna stand out a little from her mate. Although Figaro's obliging assumption of her music after her sharp "Guarda un po'" ("Look here a moment"—mm. 36–49) appears to be a bridegroom's tactful attention to his demanding fiancée, the next duet suggests that Figaro is only right to follow her lead; her native wit sometimes enables her to see things more clearly than he does, and he knows it.

Figaro starts the second duet with a typical contredanse figure, its four-measure phrases repeated three times with no variation. He is describing an event for which the couple's new bed-chamber is felicitously placed—the summons of the Countess's bell:

> Se a caso Madama
> La notte ti chiama:
> Din din, in due passi
> Da quella puoi gir.[9]

When Figaro mimes Susanna's response to the bell (m. 17), Mozart transforms the lilting contredanse with its strong downbeat into a march. He inflects the new gesture (´ ᴗ must become - ᴗ́) by adding a marked and steady bass line and quickening the harmonic rhythm (ex. 3–3). The quickened pace of the harmony and the truncation of normal phrase length—the march contracts to an abrupt three measures after the steady fours of the contredanse—comically suggest the convenience of the proximity: Susanna can get to her mistress in *due passi*, the "two-step" of the march. The march phrase also accomplishes the move to the second key area (F major; the duet is in B-flat). Once the dominant is attained, Figaro with painful literalness praises the advantages which the room's situation holds for him. Three times again the contredanse phrase is repeated (in inversion), again the bell rings, and Figaro mimes *his* march into the *Count's* chamber (back to the tonic, mm. 21–39).

Susanna takes up the contredanse strain and mimics Figaro, but with heavy irony. What if the Count should send you away, with the purpose

Example 3-3

Contredanse FIGARO

Se a ca - so Ma - da - ma la not — te ti chia-ma,

Vc, Cb

6

March

in due pas - si da quel - la puoi gir.

f

17

Example 3-4

a) SUSANNA

Co - sì se il mat - ti - no il ca - ro Con - ti - no:

Vc, Cb

44

b) SUSANNA

e ti man- da Tre mi - glia lon - tan;

Vc, Cb

56

of securing me alone, she asks. Like Figaro she repeats the contredanse phrase three times, but with a radical change of color — a turn to G minor, which lends the requisite air of menacing import to her question (ex. 3–4a). Then, avoiding the clowning march cadence, she substitutes a recitativelike phrase back in B-flat, which moves from vi to the dominant (mm. 55–58) over the bass's sustained G (ex. 3–4b). Her omission of the march gesture underlines the seriousness of Susanna's point. And her spirit further manifests itself in the first phrase of the return,[10] with her angry octave leap on "Ed ecco in tre salti. . . ."[11] She brings Figaro to his senses.

The first duet typed the pair of comic servants, differentiating them only as male and female. This second duet distinguishes them in a more penetrating fashion. Figaro loves to playact; he is a natural mime who can summon up vividly any imaginary situation. He will resort to mimicry frequently during the opera, often to save both their skins. Here, however, his clowning only points up Susanna's deeper sensibilities. In his repetitive contredanse he slips from the elegant *mezzo carattere* bourrée of the opening into a more vulgar idiom, and adds in the tactlessly graphic march of his cadences a further thoughtless touch; his playacting verges on irresponsible buffoonery. The march betrays his sense of importance at being the Count's favored servant, betrothed to the Countess's favorite; he delivers himself and Susanna to their service with a pompously ceremonial flourish.

Susanna's imitation of the contredanse in minor exhibits the grace of thoughtfulness. She displays her dismay with a gentle irony, leaving the impression that she is open to a wider range of feelings than is Figaro. Although she may be proud to serve the Countess, she is disturbed to find Figaro, blinded by his pride in service, blithely serving her up to the Count as a ceremonial victim; no pride would make her serve Figaro-style. When, clearly finding the low comic march distasteful, she substitutes her pointed recitativelike phrase, all sympathies cannot help but be with her. Now the situation demands from Figaro a response which will measure up to her intelligence and wit.

"Se vuol ballare": Figaro's Dancing School

Figaro does not disappoint. His conversation with Susanna after the second duet has deflated his self-esteem, and has left him very angry with the Count. When he solicitously says to Susanna, "Corragio, mio tesoro," she leaves him with a pointed "E tu, cervello,"[12] pricking him with a further reminder of his fatuity. He pulls himself together to launch a venomous blast at the Count, treating the Count's proper music with an irony well matched to Susanna's dark parody of Figaro's musical invention in the second duet. He is indeed finally using his head.

The cavatina opens as a minuet — not the stately theatrical type, but the muscular and spare, slightly faster quarter-note pattern more likely to have been danced on social occasions. Figaro invites the Count to dance, with himself as accompanist:

> Se vuol ballare,
> Signor Contino,
> Il chitarrino
> Le suonerò.[13]

Pizzicato strings simulate the guitar accompaniment while horn doublings underline the noble, ceremonial nature of the dance. It is a tribute to Figaro's wit and control that after his bitter recitative he sings not in unbridled anger, but ironically, cloaking his insolence in the noble *politesse* of the minuet. His manner of address is highly insulting — "Signor Contino," or "my pretty little Count" — but to the unsuspecting it might appear at first to be the unctuous invitation of a sycophant.[14]

As the piece moves toward the dominant,[15] Figaro becomes the dancing master, the situation his dancing school: with the prey lured into the trap, the trapper can turn teacher. His anger finds expression in the orchestra now, in the menacing string tremolos and repeated notes in the horns, but Figaro himself still preserves all decorum and goes on with the dance. He offers to teach the Count the *capriola*, a theatrical leaping-step:

> Se vuol venire
> Nella mia scuola,
> La capriola
> Le insegnerò.[16]

There may indeed be an actual choreographical cue for the *capriola* in the music of "Se vuol ballare," in the dramatic weak-beat melodic leaps[17] of a third and a sixth occurring in the four-measure extension of the cadence of the first period (mm. 16, 18), and again, to accompany Figaro's second rendering of the *capriola* stanza, at the first cadences on the dominant (mm. 38, 40; ex. 3–5). In any event, the implication of Figaro's words is obvious: "If you intend to come poaching on my ground, I'll make you jump." His threat is reinforced by both a musical and a verbal pun: the insistent horn calls become a leer at the hopeful cuckolder,[18] and the nature of the capers Figaro promises to put the Count through insultingly suggests his adversary's undignified ruttishness (*capriola*, "goat-leap," is derived from the Italian *capra*, "goat").

Figaro has fashioned his caress-turned-insult entirely within the rhythmic framework of the minuet. Although the dance has grown beyond the eight-plus-eight-measure phrases of the usual dance tune, still the two-measure rhythmic units of the *pas de menuet* have been retained; all the extensions are danceable. Now for a brief moment — the X-section — Figaro steps outside the dance in order to meditate his re-

Example 3-5

Example 3-6

venge. Pausing for a moment on V of vi, the point of furthest remove from the tonic, he snaps back to the tonic with a *Presto* 2/4 contredanse, in which he lists the Count's various devious talents and his own plans to overturn them (ex. 3–6). The contredanse is a bold and clever invention here, working in both its affect and its conventional social usage to complete the picture of Figaro's revenge. The scene Figaro has been enacting — that of the dancing master dragging his recalcitrant pupil through the paces of social dance — would naturally end with a contredanse, the dance which regularly followed the minuet in the middle-class society of the dance halls. In the salons of the Count's *ancien régime*, however, the minuet stood alone, a dignified couple-dance performed by practiced dancers; the Count would be unlikely to join the throng dancing the relatively rowdy contredanse. Figaro in his vivid imaginings of revenge has transported the Count into an alien social setting, with rules of behavior appropriate to the more "democratized" city life Figaro must have led before coming to the aristocratic seclusion of Count Almaviva's castle; he has lured his victim onto his own turf.

Figaro then uses the contredanse to move in for the attack. The simple rhythms, strong downbeat, and rapid steps of the dance suggest intoxication or dizziness: the contredanse of Don Giovanni's famous "Champagne" aria ("Fin ch'han dal vino," *Don Giovanni*, I, 11) is often taken as a musical evocation of inebriation. In Figaro's contredanse the singer, unintoxicated himself, is attempting to induce the state in another. He stuns his hapless victim with a relentless litany of his own malignant tricks:

> L'arte schermendo,
> L'arte adoprando,
> Di qua pungendo,
> Di là scherzando,
> Tutte le macchine
> Rovescerò.[19]

When in measure 80 he repeats the list again, the dancing master has become choreographer. The tricks become couples separating from the throng of dancers to solo now from the left, now from the right (a choreography suggested by the directions "di qua . . . di là"). The music supports Figaro's choreography skillfully. His vocal line employs a

Example 3-7

FIGARO "couple" 1 "couple" 2
L'ar - te scher - men - do, L'ar - te a - do - pran - do,
Di qua pug - nen - do, Di là scher - zan - do...

quasi-*Brechung*[20] figuration which suggests two voices alternating in the list, now from here, now from there; the same division obtains in the accompaniment, which alternates between full orchestra, *forte*, and *piano* winds and brass (ex. 3–7):[21] The entire section lasts only eight measures, but it shows Figaro at the height of his fantasy. A good Figaro on stage must be both dancer and mime: having performed the minuet and *capriola*, he now becomes a diabolical ringmaster, cracking his whip to summon up the evidence first from this side, then from that. He exits triumphantly after a coda which recapitulates the sequence of minuet and contredanse (m. 104). After the dazzling flourishes of the contredanse, the sarcasm in the tight control of the minuet is all the more menacing.

The first two scenes of *Figaro* combine for an opening which is as throughcomposed and galvanizing in its own way as is the brilliant opening scene of *Don Giovanni*. Focusing on a contretemps in their relationship, Mozart reveals all that needs to be known about Figaro and Susanna, shaping the scenes with the simple device of pairing dances—bourrée and gavotte, contredanse and march, minuet and contredanse. Although their natures differ, the couple has a real harmony. Susanna is a little wiser than Figaro, and her judgment and taste provide a center for his powers without which he would lose all perspective. But Figaro will follow Susanna and learn from her. Having once seen the ramifications of a situation, he faces it with a wit and boldness of imagination which are as attractive in their own way as are Susanna's gentler virtues. Susanna's greater sensitivity must not diminish Figaro too much in stature; it is their union, after all, which is the concern here.

Bartolo and Marcellina

The conspirators Dr. Bartolo and his (in his own words) *serva antica* Marcellina are introduced next, as they plot to thwart the planned marriage. Bartolo announces his motive in an aside—to get even with Figaro for having helped Almaviva marry his ward Rosina.[22] These two bourgeois enemies of the servant couple just introduced are pointedly, one by one, compared with Susanna and Figaro, to their own detriment. First Bartolo's set-piece revenge aria "La vendetta" (I, 4) throws Figaro's particular virtues into sharp relief. In a white-note march the good doctor rather ponderously delivers himself of his "exalted passion," his conventional fist-shaking no match for the inventive wrath of "Se vuol ballare."[23]

Marcellina's motive is, of course, to marry Figaro. She and Susanna engage in a duel of *politesse* after Marcellina blocks Susanna's exit, wishing to provoke her. In their duet two rhythmic motives from the opening number of the opera—the bourrée and the peasant triplets—project at once surface civility and the honest feminine venom seething underneath. The *mezzo carattere* bourrée, all "elegance and fine manners," is layered over a rhythmic background of constant triplets: (ex. 3–8). Both rhythms occur almost exclusively in the orchestra; neither woman sings the bourrée motive, and only Susanna takes up the triplets, as a cadential figure in measures 59 and 63. The bourrée rhythm, abstracted from its usual dance phrase structure, is open-ended, not foursquare; cadences occur at the pleasure of the insults, not of four-measure phrases. At the outset the fourth measure of each bourrée phrase is suppressed, resulting in an overlap in the rhythmic scansion:
1 2 3 (4) 1 2 3 4
1 2 3 (4)
Open-ended and riding on the dominant, these phrases resemble the vaudeville "vamp-till-ready" music which accompanies a stand-up comic, making cadences coincident with punch lines. Such music accompanies with equal efficiency the hissed insults of two women jockeying for precedence. As the insults reach fever pitch and the piece turns back toward the tonic, any sense of a suppressed dance structure disappears altogether. Eight times the bourrée motive is repeated (mm. 21–28), each time reaching one step higher. As it achieves and outlines the V^7 of A major, the original tonic (m. 28), Susanna delivers the vicious "Di Spagna l'amore,"[24] coming too close to home even for the jaded Marcellina. The women drop all pretext to *politesse*, the

Example 3-8

Vln I p
Vln II

110. The role of the 2/4 contredanse in *Don Giovanni* is discussed further on pp. 220–23.

111. The English word "generous" traces its lineage to the Latin *generosus*, "highborn" or "noble-minded," and in turn to the Greek εὐγενής (εὖ—"well," γένος—"race" or "stock"), which also signifies either nobility of rank or nobility of character. "Generous" itself can mean "of noble birth," or "magnanimous," in the sense of "great-souled" rather than "openhanded," although these first and root meanings have little currency today.

112. I have adopted this spelling of the word "daemonic" rather than the more conventional "demonic" in order that its meaning not be restricted to a merely Christian context. For a further discussion of the word see p. 216.

113. Sulzer, s.v. "Tanz." Sulzer's comments are not restricted to the *ballet d'action*, the so-called pantomimic dance. "Each of the four forms of theatrical dance can be of two kinds. Either they portray only character and manners, or they perform a specific action with complications and resolution. In the first case . . . it is sufficient that the unity of affect be maintained throughout" (ibid., s.v. "Tanz"). The dances of the *ballet d'action* "suffer neither unity of character nor organization of phrases, and thus are like recitative" (ibid., s.v. "Tanzstück"); they are always at the service of a particular story. Only non-pantomimic dances depict the generalized passions of men, their "characters and manners," through the habitual union of a rhythm with a gesture.

114. Bacquoy-Guédon, p. 55. Bacquoy-Guédon was the first dancing master to open a public school of dance.

115. See p. 4. Training in music, and particularly in proper rhythms, was an important part of the moral education of the guardians in Plato's *Republic* (see, for example, 400a–402b) and of the citizens in Aristotle's *Politics* (8. 5–7).

Read?

CHAPTER 3

1. *The Crazy Day* was the alternate title of *Le mariage de Figaro*, and the sole title of the first German version (*Der närrische Tag*).

2. "No, Master Count, you will not have her . . . you will not have her. Because you are a great lord, you think you have a great nature! . . . Nobility, fortune, rank, position, all that makes you so proud! What have you done to gain so many advantages? You took the trouble to be born, and nothing else. Otherwise, a rather ordinary man" (*Le mariage de Figaro*, V, iii).

3. Pondering in a despondent moment the state to which the Count has reduced her, she sees as a symptom of her misery her need to conspire with a servant ("Fammi or cercar da una mia serva aita!"—"And now I am forced to seek aid from one of my servant-girls!" III, 19, 24–25). The Countess here is not rejecting Susanna, but merely evaluating her own situation in the light of her world's proper orders.

4. Brief accounts of all important dance patterns are given on pp. 33–60. The bourrée is discussed on pp. 48–49.

5. I have adopted certain terms used by Leonard Ratner to describe the entity so often called by the misnomer "sonata form." This so-called "form" is actually a harmonic process, involving in essence a move from a well-established home key to its opposite pole, the dominant, and back again. The events of the motion out and of the return depend on many factors, among them the kinds of material employed, the relative stability of the opening tonic, and the nature of the move to the dominant; no hard and fast procedures can or should be enumerated. The harmonic skeleton has two parts. The first establishes the tonic and accomplishes the move to the dominant, confirming arrival in the new key with a series of strong cadences. The second part begins by undermining the dominant and building up expectations of the tonic: it then returns to the tonic, restating the motivic material of the opening and incorporating the material of the original dominant area into tonic harmony in some arrangement (it need not repeat the original sequence). The practice in opera with regard to motivic treatment is even more open-ended. Since the text already furnishes a dramatic continuity for the piece, the tonic may return cloaked in entirely new material.

The terms I will use in referring to the events of the harmonic process are as follows:

Key:	I	V	?	I I
Name:	Key Area I	Key Area II	X-Section	Return
	Reprise I		Reprise II	

I shall use the traditional terms exposition, development, and recapitulation occasionally, when in complicated situations they can provide a convenient shorthand for readers unfamiliar with the new terminology. (For a more detailed discussion of the process, see Leonard Ratner, "Harmonic Aspects of Classic Form," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 2 (1949):159–68).

6. "Comic," of course, in its classic sense of distinguishing from "tragic" works stories which have happy endings.

7. Sulzer, s.v. "Tanz." Sulzer's classification of theater dance was previously quoted on pp. 68–69.

8. See pp. 127–31.

9. "If perchance Madame calls you at night, ding ding—in two steps you can be at her side" (mm. 5–20).

10. In shaping this movement Mozart seems to have had in mind an actual contredanse tune, in which a twenty-measure strain (never precisely realized) is repeated four times (with a long coda following, mm. 83 to the end). The first strain moves to V, the second cadences in B-flat again, the third begins in G minor and closes on V of B-flat, and the fourth is entirely in the tonic. Although not as taut as a regular key-area form, it allows the point of the duet to be made through the contrasts in the nearly similar strains.

11. "And look, in three leaps . . ." (mm. 66–68)—Susanna's description of Almaviva presenting himself at *her* door.

12. Figaro: "Have courage, my treasure." Susanna: "And you use your head" (I, i, 183–84).

13. "If you want to dance, my pretty little Count, I'll play the guitar for you."

14. In the manner of address also Figaro follows Susanna's lead. She first

used the insulting diminutive "Contino" (actually "il caro Contino," I, 2, 45–51), when describing the Count's subterfuge. In addition, Figaro sarcastically affects the most polite form of address, the third-person *Lei* (*lei suonerò*, for example); it is little used elsewhere in the opera.

15. "Se vuol ballare" is in key-area form, with a full cadence on the dominant in m. 42 and a brief X-section ending at m. 63. The return to the tonic is represented by a new dance (see below).

16. "If you want to come to my school, I'll teach you the capriole."

17. The dancer would rise in the air on a weak beat, perform "beats" with his feet in the air, and land on the first beat of the next measure — a virtuoso performance generally reserved for the ballet. I am grateful to M. E. Little for her help on this point.

18. "The extra-musical association of 'horn' in most languages (It. *corno*, Germ. *Horn*, Fr. *corne*) with 'cuckold' was close and obvious to everybody in an eighteenth-century audience" (Siegmund Levarie, *Mozart's Le Nozze de Figaro: A Critical Analysis* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952], p. 26).

19. "The art of fencing, the art of conniving, pricking from this side, tricking from that — I'll upset all your schemes."

20. A device frequently used in Baroque music whereby a single melodic line seems to imitate two voices at once in dialogue; the mordent figures in two different registers which constitute the opening motive of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 3 are an example of a *Brechung* melody.

21. Mozart often orchestrated with choreographies in mind. Leopold Mozart, in a letter to his wife written from Rome in 1770, says: "Wolfgang is splendid and sends herewith a contredanse [K. 123]. He would like Herr Cirillus Hofmann [dancing master at the Salzburg court] to make up the steps for it; when the two violins play as leaders, only two persons should lead the dance; but whenever the orchestra comes in with all the instruments, the whole company should dance together. It would be by far the best arrangement if it were danced by five couples. The first couple should begin the first solo, the second dance the second, and so on, as there are five solos and five tutti passages" (Anderson, 1:127–28).

22. "Avrei pur gusto/Di dar in moglie la mia serva antica/A chi mi fece un dì rapir l'amica" ("It would give me great pleasure to marry off my aging servant to the man who once had my beloved snatched away from me" — I, iii, 149–52).

23. "La vendetta" is discussed further in connection with the Count's *alla breve* revenge aria "Vedrò, mentr'io," III, 17 (see pp. 144–45).

24. "The amour of all Spain" (mm. 28–29).

25. Before they close they repeat the glories of the second reprise, with added embellishments (mm. 38–55).

26. "Perbacco, precipito,/Se ancor resto qua!" ("By Bacchus I shall do something rash if I stay here any longer!" — mm. 33–36).

27. "You decrepit old Sibyl, you make me laugh" (mm. 36–38).

28. Marcellina "leaves in a rage."

29. "Go on, you old pedant, you stuck-up lady scholar; just because you once read two books, and annoyed Madame in her youth . . ." (I, v, 75–78).

30. "Leggila alla padrona,/Leggila tu medesma,/Leggila a Barbarina, a Marcellina,/Leggila ad ogni donna del palazzo!" ("Read it to my mistress, you read it yourself, read it to Barbarina, to Marcellina, read it to every woman in the palace!").

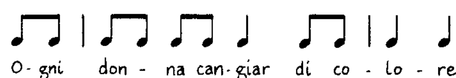
31. "Povero Cherubin, siete voi pazzo?" ("Poor Cherubino, are you mad?" — I, v, 115–116).

32. In the play the Countess explains that Cherubino is related to her family and is her godchild (I, x). Da Ponte omitted the scene in which these lines occur, but Cherubino refers to the Countess as his *comare* or godmother (I, v, 86 and II, 10, 165–66), and it was customary to take noble-born boys into noble households as pages.

33. "I don't know what I am, what I'm doing . . . Sometimes I'm on fire, sometimes I'm all ice . . . Every woman makes me blush, makes me tremble. At the mere names of love, of pleasure, I grow agitated, my heart skips a beat, and a desire which I cannot explain forces me to speak of love!"

34. See Putnam Aldrich, *Rhythm in Seventeenth-Century Italian Monody* (New York: Norton, 1966), pp. 103–14.

35. Lines three and four of the first stanza might seem to be an anomaly in an anapestic scheme because of the string of six eighth notes with which they begin:



But the first eighth note on the syllable *don* — is an appoggiatura which varies the line by embellishing the all-important word *donna*; it does not distract from the underlying rhythm.

36. M. 22, using for the first two lines the syncopation from the earlier cadence.

37. M. 27 — V^7 of F, the new dominant. Or the D-flat could be regarded as a chromatic appoggiatura to a V^6_5 of V; the effect is the same.

38. Ordinarily, in order to register "truest" passion in the middle of an operatic aria, the character moves from strictly measured music to the freer rhythms of recitative. For example, in the finale to the second act of *Figaro*, in the midst of a spirited 4/4 exchange between the Count and the Countess, he calls her suddenly by her Christian name and she, deeply stung, answers him in a phrase of recitative which brings the rhythmic action to an abrupt halt (II, 15, 229–33). In "Non so più," on the other hand, the regular rhythms of the strictly "poetic" setting are apprehended as the artifice, and the singer need not resort to declamation to register his natural voice.

39. "I speak of love when I'm awake, I speak of love when I'm dreaming: to the water, to the shadows, to the mountains, to the flowers, to the grass, to the fountains, to the echo, to the air, to the winds, which bear away with themselves the sound of the empty syllables" (mm. 54–91).

40. "E, se non ho chi m'oda,/Parlo d'amor con me" — the last two lines of "Non so più."

41. "Throw out the seducer!" (I, 7, 8–11).