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# W. A. Mozart *Idomeneo*

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of the German-speaking world's two premier opera houses (Berlin and Vienna), while his dramatic collaborator Hofmannsthal was recognised as the finest living librettist and a major poet in his own right. But by 1929 Strauss had been hounded out of his post in Vienna, his more recent operas were no longer the success that *Rosenkavalier* had been, and – worst of all – Hofmannsthal was dead, having completed only the first act of the libretto for *Arabella*. Strauss can hardly ever have felt a comparable sense of loss of direction.

The timing of the Vienna proposal to revise *Idomeneo* was thus peculiarly lucky, for it provided Strauss with some stability as a temporary alternative to the uncertainty of *Arabella*. Nevertheless, Einstein's word 'Vergewaltigung', with its sexual dimension 'rape', is most appropriate, because Strauss's labour of love for *Idomeneo* constitutes a manifest, often violent act of penetration and possession. In a sense it is an attempt, not to 'win back [*Idomeneo*] for the German stage', but to win back the German stage for himself by uniting his own musical personality with that of Mozart. Perhaps he felt that such a union might prove to the world and to himself that – with or without Hofmannsthal – he was still the one legitimate heir of the German operatic tradition. He might even have considered his revisions justified by an allegorical interpretation of the plot of *Idomeneo*: Idamante/Strauss braving all obstacles before ascending to the throne of his father Idomeneo/Mozart.

The performing version of *Idomeneo* by Strauss and Wallerstein may at first glance appear merely an example of a now *passé* pre-Harnoncourt aesthetic. Yet it no more deserves such criticism than does, say, Stravinsky's treatment of Pergolesi in *Pulcinella* – a work that has more in common with Strauss's *Idomeneo* than the artistic views of their respective creators might lead one to suppose. The musical and dramatic qualities of Strauss's *Idomeneo* cannot be denied; there is also undoubted appeal in its juxtaposition of Mozart, Mozartian pastiche and straightforward late Romanticism. It certainly remained a work of significance for Strauss himself, for he included it in the suggested operatic repertoire for the major German cities in his 'artistic legacy' to Karl Böhm of 27 April 1945.<sup>44</sup> His *Idomeneo* has, nevertheless, slumbered now for fifty years. It will perhaps for ever remain the white elephant of his dramatic *œuvre*; but it is one that should be occasionally allowed out on parade and given the opportunity to blow its own trumpet.

## 7 General structure of *Idomeneo*

### STAGE WITH THE CAST

#### The libretto

For all its allegiance to Franco-Italian reform opera, *Idomeneo* remains within the eighteenth-century norm of alternation of action and introspection, recitative and aria. The three ensembles are more closely merged with the preceding recitative than most of the arias, and all proceed from dialogue to combined voices, yet they function like multi-voiced arias more than the developing ensembles Mozart cultivated in *opera buffa*; they do not further the action. Three static numbers involve solo and chorus, and the full choruses are largely decorative; only the shipwreck, the end of Act II and – static as it is – No. 24 ('O voto tremendo') involve the chorus closely with the principals.

The general structure of the libretto is admirably simple; all three acts begin intimately, and end in public scenes. Act I unfolds the pattern in two stages. A monologue and dialogue are followed by a semi-public scene of rejoicing. The first dramatic event is the announcement of Idomeneo's shipwreck. We are then confronted with the intimate feelings of Elettra, and, after the storm, with those of Idomeneo, before another dialogue. Haltingly, the action returns to soliloquy (Idamante) before the public scene of the divertissement. Such a stop-go process is perhaps a necessary concomitant of exposition. Mozart's cutting axe hardly fell on Act I, which lasts fifty to fifty-five minutes.

The second act, the shortest at around forty-five minutes, begins with an *opera seria* sequence of dialogues and soliloquies before the public scene focuses on Elettra. After the trio the finale brings the elements, the people, and the king into fierce dispute. The libretto does not state when Idamante, Elettra, and even Idomeneo should leave the stage; at the last, our attention is on the chorus and the monster.

Act III, much the longest even when 'authentically' cut, begins the most quietly, and builds to a preliminary climax of intimate feelings in the quartet. After the Arbace interlude the scene with the High Priest moves the action toward the Cretan body politic, and the scene shifts to the temple. The struggle at the altar and the oracle itself are as public as the end of Act II. The only doubt is whether 'Madame Elettra' is, in fact, left alone to sing her aria.<sup>1</sup>

This grand design must have been the basis of the original agreed 'plan' to which Leopold Mozart referred (see chapter 5, p. 77, n. 15). Despite many alterations of detail it remains intact even in the 1786 version, probably prepared without the knowledge of either Leopold or Varesco. The Munich cuts were generally confirmed; the other principal alteration is the removal of a scene between Arbace and Idomeneo (leading to the former's aria, No. 10a). This is only the largest example of Mozart's determination not to waste his musical sweetness on the desert air of explanation. Instead, he provided an opportunity for the second tenor (No. 10b); but the new scene for Ilia and Idamante, which amounts to a mutual declaration of love, deprives their encounter in Act III of any point.

Even if some of his ruthless cutting was dictated by the need to allow time for the ballet, Mozart was certainly justified in protesting that the libretto was too long. It was not Varesco's fault that neither Raaff nor dal Prato could maintain tension during recitatives, although this fact doubtless contributed to the shortening of their dialogue in Act I, and hence to reliance on the *argomento* and printed libretto for the audience's comprehension of what is going on. Reduction of the recitative to a minimum is certainly a step in the Gluckist direction. But the *argomento* does not explain Idomeneo's plan to have Idamante escape from the island, which is outlined in the first scene of Act II; cutting this dialogue (as in the 1786 version) forces the audience to rely on inference. Mozart, however, like Verdi and Berlioz after him, relied on the musical vitality of each scene to overcome such apparent lacunae in the plot.

The four main roles were originally well balanced, although the *primo musico* (dal Prato) and *primo uomo* (Raaff) commanded the greatest exposure (see Table 7.1). Ilia's is the shortest role in the original plan, but it was the only one not seriously affected by the 1781 cuts. Table 7.2 assumes omission of the duet No. 20, the middle of No. 26, and the last three arias, though Idamante's third aria may finally have been included (see chapter 2, p. 41, above).

Table 7.1. Disposition of roles, original version

	Arias	Ensembles	Other solos	Big orchestral recitatives
Ilia	3	2	None	R. 1
Elettra	3	2	No. 15	R. 4, 29
Idomeneo	3	2	No. 26	R. 12, 18, 27; No. 30
Idamante	3	3	None	R. 7, 27

Table 7.2. Disposition of roles, 1781 performances

	Arias	Ensembles	Other solos	Big orchestral recitatives
Ilia	3	1	None	R. 1
Elettra	2	2	No. 15	R. 4, 29
Idomeneo	2	2	None	R. 12, 18, 27; No. 30
Idamante	2 (3)	2	None	R. 7, 27

This version leaves Elettra with five pieces of measured music against four for the others, and her exit after the oracle is very striking even without the aria. It is a minor mystery why the least involved of the four characters acquires such musical prominence, and why in the theatre we do not notice any redundancy, a point which must await later discussion (see chapters 11 and 12, below).

The libretto conventionally marks the division of recitative and measured numbers (aria, ensemble, chorus) by means of versification. Even when simply translating Danchet, Varesco adopted the elevated diction of Metastasio (see chapter 5), who, however, was seldom guilty of Varesco's obscurities.<sup>2</sup> The recitatives predominantly use the traditional lines of seven syllables (*settenarii*) or eleven (*endecasillabi*), with only occasional rhymes.<sup>3</sup> These syllable counts require frequent (but not invariable) elision between adjacent vowels; but at the end of a line, adjacent vowels (as in 'o-ma-i') are counted separately. The punctuation sometimes, though not always, overrides the elision. These points become clear from the first recitative. Hyphens within words indicate divisions necessary for the syllable count; elisions are also conventionally indicated:

VERSIFICATION - RECIT TEXT

ARIA TEXT



1. Quan-do-av-ran fi-ne o-ma-i (7)
2. L'as-pre sven-tu-re miè? I-lia-in-fe-li-ce! (11)
3. Di tem-pe-sta cru-del mi-se-ro a-van-zo, (11)
4. Del Ge-ni-tor, e de' Ger-ma-ni pri-va (11)
5. Del bar-ba-ro Ne-mi-co . . . (7)

In 'omai' (line 1) the first syllable is elided with the previous word, but Mozart correctly sets 'a-i' as two syllables (Ex. 3.2, p. 55, above). But in line 2 where the scansion requires 'mie' to be one syllable, Mozart again uses two notes, written as a pitch-repetition but presumably sung with an appoggiatura. He takes advantage of the punctuation to treat it as a line-ending; three beats of expressive string music intervene between 'mie' and 'Ilia'.

All the lines of this recitative are *versi piani*, bearing a principal accent on the penultimate syllable: the setting of 'mie' is typical of a recitative line-ending, a musical convention which arose out of *versi piani*. The first line after the aria, however, is end-accented, a *verso tronco*: 'Ec-co, I-da-man-te, ahi-mè!'. Ostensibly six syllables, such lines stand for a *settenario*; the six-syllable line still has three accents on even-numbered syllables. In setting this line, Mozart elides across the first comma but inserts a rest at the second; he thus requires seven notes. Mozart also treats certain words, such as 'Dio', as two syllables, and 'Idomeneo' as five, even in the middle of a line.<sup>4</sup> In the music, the first twenty-four lines of recitative contain eleven extra 'syllables'. Such anomalies recur throughout, divorcing the musical setting from the already fluid structure of recitative verse. With no disrespect to the latter, therefore, it must be admitted that once set to music it might just as well be prose. Mozart's inattention to its qualities as verse appears also in certain authorised cuts beginning or ending in the middle of a line.

In arias, Varesco mostly followed tradition in using two stanzas of shorter lines, partly rhymed, a procedure susceptible of free repetition and syllable extension without completely destroying the sense. Each stanza consists of *versi piani* until a final *verso tronco*, which enables the voice to cadence on a downbeat. There are normally two rhyming lines within each stanza. In Ilia's third aria (No. 19), written in *ottonari* (eight-syllable lines, with four accents on the odd-numbered syllables), the middle lines are rhymed; the unrhymed line and the *verso tronco* rhyme with their equivalents in the next stanza:

Zeffiretti lusinghieri,	A ( <i>piano</i> )
Deh volate al mio tesoro:	B ( <i>piano</i> )
E gli dite, ch'io l'adoro,	B ( <i>piano</i> )
Che mi serbi il cor fedel.	C ( <i>tronco</i> )
E voi piante, e fior sinceri,	A
Che ora in affia il pianto amaro,	B1
Dite a lui, che amor più raro	B1
Mai vedeste sotto al Ciel.	C

Varesco rings the changes, for instance offering five-line stanzas of *ottonari* in Idamante's 'Non ho colpa', and three stanzas in Idomeneo's 'Vedrommi intorno'. Chorus texts follow similar patterns, with a preference (certainly agreeing with the composer's) for short lines. But Varesco offers little prosodic variety: the few *versi tronchi* in recitative, and the absence of *versi sdruccioli* (lines of antepenultimate stress), leave an excess of *versi piani*. In the music, however, this matters little.<sup>5</sup> If not greatly imaginative, Varesco's work is competent, and at times (not always thanks to Danchet) poetically uplifting. Nevertheless, it does suggest an author without much experience in viewing his work critically in performing conditions: that input is all Mozart's.

### Musical form

Mozart's aria forms are mostly conventional, but their classification is still a matter of controversy. In *Idomeneo* he shows a clear preference for arias which may reasonably be compared to instrumental sonata forms.<sup>6</sup> These fall into two principal classes. The first is binary: two stanzas are each sung twice, in the 'exposition' with a modulation to the dominant (or relative major), and in the reprise which remains in or returns to the tonic. Thus, binary forms end with the second stanza. The second principal class, less well represented in *Idomeneo*, is ternary. The 'exposition' uses the first stanza only, cadencing in the dominant. The second stanza forms a distinct musical unit – a middle section – followed by the reprise of the first stanza, ending in the tonic. The handling of the text to end with the first stanza recalls the by now archaic da capo aria.

In Ilia's second aria, 'Se il padre perdei', Mozart uses the binary design as a framework for particularly rich deployment of a plethora of musical ideas, in the manner of a concertante slow

EXPO + REP

ABA

movement. The text has two five-line stanzas of *senarii*, four *versi pitani* and one *verso tronco*:

Se il padre perdei  
La patria, il riposo,  
Tu padre mi sei.  
Soggiorno amoroso  
E Creta per me.

If I have lost my father  
my homeland, my peace,  
You are a father to me.  
A sojourn of love  
Is Crete for me.

Or più non rammento  
L'angoscie, gli affanni.  
Or gioia, e contento,  
Compenso a miei danni  
Il ciel mi diè.

Now I no longer recall  
the anguish, the distress.  
Now joy and happiness,  
consolation for my injuries,  
Heaven grants me.

The five-line stanzas are grammatically subdivided, the first as three plus two lines, which Mozart marks by perfect cadences (bars 26, 69) corresponding to the full stops.<sup>7</sup> Imperfect cadences (bars 39, 81) divide the second stanza into two plus three lines. In each case the main cadence is followed by new, sharply characterised thematic material. The first clear punctuation introduces the dominant key (bar 27) with the first phrase given unaccompanied to the quartet of solo wind instruments (Ex. 7. 1b; Ex. 7. 1a shows the opening).

In the second stanza *Ilia* denies that her memories are bitter; the music (Ex. 7. 1c) perhaps questions her denial. But after a half-close on the dominant of the dominant (bar 39), further new material (Ex. 7. 1d) characterises 'Gioia e contento', and the last line includes an elaborate measured cadenza (Ex. 7. 1e) in which the voice and wind flourish in turns. The strings provide their own cadence (Ex. 7. 1f). The two-bar link by the solo wind restores the tonic E<sub>b</sub>, settled by a string cadence (upbeat to bar 58) which delicately elides with the return of the first stanza, text and music. The reprise corresponds in length to the exposition. 'B' begins in the subdominant and it returns to the tonic (bar 70), which is unchallenged by 'C' (bar 84). 'E' (bar 90), or 'F' (bar 106). The exact repeat of what was previously a link, followed by the string cadence (bars 108-11 repeat bars 55-8) is the very picture of contentment.<sup>8</sup>

Overall symmetry is most elegant when details are asymmetrical. In the reprise 'A' is unchanged and 'B' rearranged within an equivalent length, seven bars. 'C', however, is extended by repetition; and the voice part is reconceived so that its tessitura corresponds to the exposition despite the new harmonic situation. The setting of 'Or più non rammento' is equally affecting in the reprise. The

base line is transposed, the voice adjusted: in the exposition it centres on the descent from f" c", in the reprise, while rising a little higher, it is focused on a lower pitch, the dominant (b<sup>b</sup>'). The rising sixth of the exposition is answered by a chain of falling sevenths in the reprise (Ex. 7. 1g). Even where a mechanical repetition was available to him, Mozart heightens the expression: 'E' is rearranged so that the voice can rise to b<sup>b</sup>" (Ex. 7. 1h).<sup>9</sup>

This aria design is also used for Nos. 1 ('Padre, germani': see chapter 8), 4 ('Tutto nel cor vi sento': see chapter 11), 7 ('Il padre adorato'), and 13 ('Idol mio'). Mozart uses a variant of this form with the same disposition of stanzas, but where the second half does not return at once to the tonic and the opening music. Instead a procedure used in sonatas by D. Scarlatti and J. C. Bach is adopted: in the reprise, the first stanza is tonally unstable, and only the second corresponds to the exposition, though now in the tonic. This form is used in the quartet and No. 29 ('D'Oreste, d'Aiace'), pieces of exacerbated emotion: the recapitulated second group in No. 29 emphasises the minor tonic, and the quartet subjects its material to exceptional harmonic and polyphonic intensification.<sup>10</sup>

In ternary sonata-arias only the first quatrain is recapitulated, but principles of symmetry and partial asymmetry continue to apply. In 'Zeffiretti lusinghieri' nothing in the form of the poetry (see above) prevented Mozart from using binary form. Instead, at the point where the second stanza would appear in a binary aria, the first is repeated in the dominant with a new melodic idea. This expansive three-section design is suited to a peaceful soliloquy, and Mozart presumably wanted the mood of the first quatrain to precede Idamante's unexpected entry.

The tonal and melodic aspects of both settings of the first quatrain (forming the first and third sections of the aria) are related to each other in exactly the same way as the two halves of 'Se il padre perdei'. The exposition ends with a greatly expanded cadence featuring a prolonged f<sup>#</sup>" on 'fedel'. The reprise begins like the exposition, as far as the imperfect cadence on 'tesoro' (bars 29 and 93). There is no short cut: the quatrain is repeated in the tonic, the voice part skilfully rearranged to preserve the tessitura of the second part of the exposition (Ex. 7. 2). The prolonged high note is now only an e", but it rises chromatically to f<sup>#</sup>" (bar 129) for a still more emphatic cadence. In a coda typical of sonata thinking, Mozart brings back the original melody of the second stanza, otherwise missing from the reprise (bars 38, 125).

## Example 7.1

No. 11

a 15  
Se il pa-dre per-de-i, La pa-tria, il ri-po-so.

b 27  
Or più non ram-men-to L'an-go-scie, gli af-ni.

c 34  
Or più non ram-men-to L'an-go-scie, gli af-ni.

d 40  
Or gio-ia e con-ten-to, com-pen-so a mei-dan-ni il cie-lo mi diè.

e 46  
Or gio-ia e con-ten-to, com-pen-so a mei-dan-ni il cie-lo mi diè.

f 52  
Or gio-ia e con-ten-to, com-pen-so a mei-dan-ni il cie-lo mi diè.

g 58  
Or gio-ia e con-ten-to, com-pen-so a mei-dan-ni il cie-lo mi diè.

h 64  
Or gio-ia e con-ten-to, com-pen-so a mei-dan-ni il cie-lo mi diè.

f 53  
Or gio-ia e con-ten-to, com-pen-so a mei-dan-ni il cie-lo mi diè.

g 77  
Or più non ram-men-to L'an-go-scie, gli af-ni.

h 90  
Or gio-ia e con-ten-to, com-pen-so a mei-dan-ni il cie-lo mi diè.

i 96  
Or gio-ia e con-ten-to, com-pen-so a mei-dan-ni il cie-lo mi diè.

j 102  
Or gio-ia e con-ten-to, com-pen-so a mei-dan-ni il cie-lo mi diè.

k 108  
Or gio-ia e con-ten-to, com-pen-so a mei-dan-ni il cie-lo mi diè.

For the second quatrain Mozart could either continue in the same tempo and metre, or choose new ones. In No. 19 the middle section makes use of music from the exposition (the orchestral scales, bars 66 and 68), a clear analogy with a sonata development section.<sup>11</sup> But No. 12 ('Fuor del mar') is of the same general type as 'Zeffiretti lusinghieri'; any archaism lies in its style, not its form. No. 31 ('Torna la pace') retains the sonata-like relation between the first and third sections, but uses a contrasting tempo, whereas the only other aria with a contrasting middle section, No. 27 ('No, la morte io non pavento'), has outer sections related like the two



## Example 7.2

No. 19

a Ilija  
 [channel] ch'io l'a - do - ro, chi mi  
 b Eg - li di - te  
 a ser - bi il cor - fe - del.  
 b ser - bi il cor - fe - del.

parts of No. 29: the reprise starts with a version of the opening motive on dominant harmony, so the two new settings of the quatrain are different in detail from the exposition.

Mozart surely selected aria designs and manipulated their details with a view to characterisation, which he conceived in the light of the singers available to him. Where Arbace's arias are deliberately stiff, the ternary 'Zeffiretti lusinghieri' has a modern, developmental middle section. Ilija's other arias are richly expressive binary designs, as are Elettra's most characteristic utterances. Elettra's 'Idol mio' follows the binary plan with artless simplicity (reinforced by strings-only orchestration), contriving to be idyllic without altering one's conception of the character. Idamante's forms are always clear, perhaps reflecting dal Prato's simplicity but also emblematic of straightforward nobility; for which reason the elaborate rondò with obbligato violin (No. 10b) seems to fall outside appropriate stylistic bounds.<sup>12</sup>

Mozart uses a modern three-part form (if an archaic style) for the active 'Fuor del mar', an old-fashioned design for Idomeneo's abdication ('Torna la pace'). A less conventional form is used in No. 6, 'Vedrommi intorno'. The slow opening exhausts two quintains of text, the first leading towards the dominant, the second ('Nel sen trafitto', from bar 27) actually in it. At this point a return to the opening would be possible, making a simple binary aria. Instead, the tempo changes to allegro with a new quintain ('Qual spavento'); there is no reprise. The allegro resolves the

dominant modulation by close adherence to the tonic, albeit often the tonic minor. After three sonata-type arias this openness of form is an effective metaphor of Idomeneo's confusion.<sup>13</sup> The only other two-tempo numbers on this pattern are the equally distressed trio in Act II (No. 16), and the rapturous 1781 love duet (No. 20a), which conforms to a well-established duet pattern.<sup>14</sup> In 1786, Mozart reduced the duet to a single movement (No. 20b), closer in length to an *opera buffa* duet, but retained a hold on his 1781 conception by use of the same material.

For choruses, Mozart felt able to respond to the dramatic situation directly. The binary form of the shipwreck chorus (No. 5) is a minimum gesture towards formality, and at the end of Act II the chorus's contributions are still more naturalistic. On the other hand, the move to ritual (after the revelation in No. 23) brings appropriately symmetrical forms (Nos. 24 and 26, separated by a march). The presence of a march in each act marks the usefulness to a dramatic composer of the most conventional rhythmic patterns, and also shows Mozart's care in tailoring his conventional material to each situation. No. 8, the march for the disembarkation, is suitably festive. The other marches both cover scene-changes: No. 14, scored for wind, is an outdoor piece, whereas No. 25 breathes an air of mystery which anticipates another temple, in *Die Zauberflöte*. The choral sections in the divertissements, like the dances of which, indeed, they sometimes form a part, have a suitable lucidity. Their firm structures, indeed, underline the boldness of ending Act II with a divertissement-substitute (No. 18, 'Corriamo, fuggiamo') of frightening realism. But such modulation from the intimate to the public and from formal, even ceremonial forms of interaction to raw feeling, is characteristic of the whole opera and forms its boldest departure from decorum.

After its ambiguous start (Ex. 8.3), the reprise is exact until the 'Grecia' motive (originally a stark unison, bar 14) is clothed in a fiercely rising tremolando (bar 66). Ilia's weakening resolve and growing misery appear in her failure to match the minim rhythm of the wind instruments; the phrase 'Cagion tu sei' (bar 73) lacks its earlier lyricism (compare bar 17), and the lively three-note motive used in bars 23-7 is replaced by undifferentiated tremolo, the altered melody soaring to a pained top A.

Example 8.5

Ilia

re an - cor... non so,

Recitativo

Ee - co, I - da - man - te, ah - mè! sen vien.

The recapitulation of the second stanza is more exact, as sonata form demands, but Mozart skilfully remoulds the voice part over a replica of the earlier accompaniment. Where simple transposition would produce  $e_b$ , high  $g''$  is still placed on the first beat of the bar, but 'quel' is again  $g''$ ; transposition would produce  $b_b''$ , perhaps not ideal for Wendling (Ex. 8.4b). The repeat of this passage is followed by an extended cadence, with another  $g''$  (and  $sfp$ ), where previously there has been  $f''$ ; and the gracious  $B_b$  cadence (bars 53-5) is transformed into a fervently chromatic complaint (Ex. 8.5, bars 108-11). Despite the repetition of the two stanzas, the moods of the second part do not duplicate the first. Instead, the conventional form of the aria conveys a dramatic point: Ilia recognises her weakness, but she cannot yet be reconciled to it. Accordingly Idamante finds her ready to listen, but not to accept his avowal.

*recitative looking  
Ilia's aria = D  
Wendling's = D  
f = D*

### The centrepiece: 'Fuor del mar'

Idomeneo's recitative (R. 12) links two arias of contrasting sentiment and tonality; indeed, the recitative is more strongly connected to the previous aria than to No. 12. Idomeneo has just listened to 'Se il padre perdei' and is disturbed by Ilia's 'equivocal' speech: the recitative opens with a distorted form, on still-muted strings, of the obbligato wind phrase (Ex. 7.1b). Why is Crete 'a home of love' for the orphaned princess? Her joy is untimely. The cadence of the aria returns, still in  $E_b$ , followed by a brief chromatic surge to a diminished seventh; he understands that she loves Idamante. The mutes are whipped off. A pointed figure marks an enharmonic modulation towards  $F\sharp$  minor, and a variant of Ilia's 'Gioia e contento' ironically frames his declaration: 'I am not deceived; their love is mutual.' This moment of recognition coincides with the arrival of D major, the key of the aria. As the king realises that Neptune will have three victims, the rich harmonic accretions of a minor cadence cast a tragic shadow.<sup>2</sup> The first quatrain of the aria brings images of menace:

Fuor del mar, ho un mar	Free of the sea, I have a sea
in seno	in my breast
Che del primo è più	More deadly than the first,
funesto,	
E Nettuno ancor in questo	And Neptune again in this one
Mai non cessa minacciar.	Never ceases to threaten.





the text implies that it should be particularly expressive. In the revised form of 'Fuor del mar', the middle section, itself unchanged, bulks large (thirty-two bars out of 152, instead of 174 in the 1781 form); but in the first version it already offers impressive support for Gluck's thesis. A curt modulation to F $\sharp$  (82/66) introduces the second quatrain:

Fiero Numel Dimmi almeno: Proud God: tell me at least  
 Se al naufragio è sì vicino If to shipwreck is so close  
 Il mio cor, qual rio destino My heart, what harsh fate  
 Or gli vieta il naufragar? Now prevents that shipwreck?

Mozart begins with a variant of 'Ho un mar in seno' (bar 17), treated imitatively and traversing an immense tonal space (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1

84/68	89/73	93/77	94/78	95/79	99/83
[A] F	V of B $\flat$	→ evaded	V of A	→ A mi.	F $\sharp$ mi.
				cadence	sequence
				evaded	→ cadence

This chilling image of desolation is achieved by moving a semitone down between dominants (92-4/76-8, from B $\flat$  to A) and then down a minor third: A minor is linked to F $\sharp$  minor by reinterpreting a single diminished seventh (98/82), before Mozart restores order by associating these keys in a sequence which uses a rhythm virtually absent from the first section (Ex. 8.9).

In the reprise, Mozart shows characteristic finesse in reworking the modulatory passage ('E Nettuno...'). He begins on the subdominant and moves to the home dominant (133/117) by a sturdy, even menacing, sequence. The coloratura (first version) comes earlier, leaving space for an improvised cadenza (which, however, is marked for omission in the Munich performing material). Massive symmetry (so different from the insecure design of 'Vedrommi intorno') does not preclude a return of the menacing semiquavers (the three-bar diminished seventh, 153/131), but it also implies the recovery of the principal topic, reinforced by a final ritornello and emphatic cadence.<sup>5</sup>

Designed as a showpiece for Raaff, 'Fuor del mar' is also, or perhaps therefore, the dramatic centrepiece of the opera. It is one of the most fully instrumented pieces, the first aria with trumpets, and in the 'main key', D major.<sup>6</sup> Yet it may be understood in more than one way, and its impact depends more than that of Ilia's arias

Example 8.9

77.8 79  
 or gli vie ..... ta il nau ..... fra -  
 dim. 7 V: A minor  
 Cadenzal preparation (A)  
 gar, or gli vie ..... ta il nau ..... fra -  
 Dim. seventh (enharmonic) [Cadenza interrupted]  
 F minor sequence  
 gar, il nau - fra - gar, il nau - fra - gar.  
 f p  
 LONGER x SHORTER VERSION

on the actual performance. Its vehemence is enhance the coloratura obligatory in a grand aria for Raaff; the revised version is decidedly weaker in impact, for Mozart used display to suggest a surge of energy. The weary Idomeneo of the sea-shore and the scene with Arbace now shows his kingly stature. The aria implies defiance; at the end of Act II, coincidentally or not in the same key, Idomeneo openly challenges the gods. Arguably, therefore (but see chapter 10 below), the aria represents the identification of the king with the principal tonality of the opera, one of those most readily recognisable in eighteenth-century music, and here associated by an opening arpeggio and instrumentation with the overture.

But *should* an aria concerned with divine menace, shipwreck, and death, be so confidently formed an assertion of the 'tonic'? And why, when the second stanza points ahead to the king's defiance, does Mozart adopt a ternary form, ending with the first stanza? The lively rhythms support the harmony and form; even the desolate middle section is governed by a gavotte-like metre, while the overall 'topic' of the aria is a march.<sup>7</sup> A stereotyped view of

the expressive capacities of major and minor might lead a post-Romantic listener, or even one well acquainted with Gluck, to expect the minor mode in an aria of defiance.

But we ought not to assume a simple correlation between music and words, least of all in a dramatic work. The brilliance of D major reminds us that tragedy includes illumination. The modulatory direction of the recitative suggests that here at least D major symbolises Idomeneo's understanding and acceptance of the full horror of his situation. The major mode implies more resolution than the minor; both senses of 'resolution' are appropriate as a counterpoint to the literal meaning of the words. Resolution, too, is implicit in the structure. Idomeneo understands the full extent of the tragedy which, paradoxically, his own salvation may bring about; he cannot see a solution, but he finally faces the problem from which, in Act I, he literally ran away. After the yielding and agitated 'Vedrommi intorno', this aria demonstrates his full stature and makes him worthy of sympathy when he is no longer able to conceal the need for Idamante's sacrifice.

## 9 *The musical language of Idomeneo*

A serious opera composer, even one as fluent as Mozart, is absorbed in this work over a relatively extended period. It is natural, therefore, that singularities of style should contribute to its particular character, what in the nineteenth century would have been called its 'colorito' or 'tinta'.<sup>1</sup> Musical ideas are prone to recur in an intriguing fashion, although not necessarily in circumstances which impel one to search for what Dent called a 'ridiculous' or 'Wagnerian' name.<sup>2</sup> This chapter seeks to describe aspects of the musical language which have struck responsive chords in one listener's extended exposure to *Idomeneo*.

It is no part of my intention to demonstrate that the opera is musically an 'organic whole'. It may be that, of course, but only if conceived as an inextricable combination of a dramatic idea, words, scenery, and music. The music is undoubtedly the most important single element, but it is never independent of the others. Mozart himself, in excising so much as the performances approached, made it clear that musical integrity was not the principal criterion in shaping his work.

In practice external factors, apparently restraints upon the composer's fantasy, may contribute positively to the unique colour of an opera. In *Idomeneo* one such factor was the personnel of Munich (see chapter 3, above), because of whom the orchestration is of unparalleled richness; Mozart had to order trumpet mutes from Salzburg, but Munich provided the four horns, the excellent strings, and wind players clearly equal to the Viennese for whom he composed later. But orchestral players do not impose a style to the extent that singers may. That singers' idiosyncrasies affected Mozart is clear from the correspondence relating to *Die Entführung* ('I wrote it expressly to suit Adamberger's voice . . . ' and 'I have sacrificed Constanze's aria a little to the flexible throat of Mlle Cavalleri': letter of 26 September 1781). Mozart worked just

The breakdown of any semblance of tonal order in Act III (not that Acts I and II possess much more than a semblance) argues neither haste nor a failure of aesthetic vision; nor is it the inevitable result of the violent reversals of the plot. It may, however, be a symbol of these reversals.

Cumulation, continuity, and contrast, expressed by a strong degree of foreground coherence, are principles at work in most operas, including the earliest. Mozart uses every audible means available – among which tonal structures are hardly to be included – to realise a dramatic goal in which music plays the major articulative role. I do not dispute Craig Ayrey's suggestion (chapter 11, p. 142, below) that tonal relationships add to understanding; nothing in such a complex masterpiece is to be rejected as irrelevant without careful evaluation. These comments on tonality and motives are not meant negatively; they are only intended to continue their evaluation, begun by others. Mozart's own recorded thoughts about both *Idomeneo* and *Die Entführung* concern structure only in so far as they refer to longueurs and matters of proportion, the latter, of course, a vital part of the analytical and aesthetic evaluation of any opera. But whether or not Mozart deliberately provided tonal and motivic clues to his intentions, we should chiefly assess the results, and any other part of his operas, in the light of what he surely considered very closely, their dramatic significance.

## II *Elektra's first aria and the storm scene*

CRAIG AYREY

The most remarkable feature of Elektra's first aria ('Tutte nel cor vi sento', Act I, Scene 6, No. 4), much commented on by Mozart scholars, is the modulation to C minor in bar 77. This key, decidedly remote from the tonic D minor, appears at the beginning of the reprise of this binary sonata form (without a development section) at the point where the return to the tonic is expected. Indeed, Mozart heightens this sense of expectation by approaching C minor from the relative major, F, but interrupts a conventional progression to the dominant A major (and thence to D) by introducing a diminished seventh chord with fermata in bar 76. This chord is harmonically ambiguous: it may resolve either to C minor as in the score, or with the Ab notated enharmonically as the augmented sixth G#, to an A major chord, the dominant of D. Ex. 11.1 shows the two interpretations of the chord and their resolutions.

Example 11.1

The aural ambiguity of the chord lies in the fact that it can be understood only retrospectively, in this case when we hear C minor in the following bar. Mozart exploits this property in the recitatives of *Idomeneo*, where the volatile emotions of the characters are most often presented (see chapter 9, p. 120, above). But the chord has a special expressive power and meaning in arias or ensembles in which there is normally greater unity of expression and idea. (Significantly, the diminished seventh plays a crucial role in delineating the characters' fluctuating and diverse emotions in the quartet,



No. 21.) According to its context, then, the diminished seventh is 'marked for consciousness': together with its resolution to C minor, it presents a problem of structural ambivalence and discontinuity on various levels within Elettra's first aria that can be explained only in terms of character and dramatic purpose.

The diminished seventh chord has a formal function generated by Mozart's deployment of the two four-line stanzas of the text (see below) within the binary sonata structure.

Tutte nel cor vi sento,  
furie del crudo averno,  
lunge a sì gran tormento  
amor, mercè, pietà.

In my heart I feel you all,  
Furies of bitter Hades,  
far from such fierce torment  
are love, mercy, or pity.

Chi mi rubò quel core,  
quel che ha tradito il mio,  
provin' dal mio furore  
vendetta e crudeltà.

Let her who stole that heart,  
which has betrayed mine,  
feel my fury  
and cruel revenge.

Both stanzas are sung in the exposition, the first set as the first theme in the tonic, the second in the relative major with a new chromatic melodic figure (bar 40) related to an earlier motive (bar 31) setting lines three and four of the first stanza (see Ex. 11.2).

#### Example 11.2

40 Elettra

Chi mi ru-bò il co-re, Quel che tra-di-to ha il mi-o,  
31 lun-ge a sì gran tor-men-to a-mor, mer-cè, pi-e-tà.

The presentation of all the textural and melodic material in the exposition achieves the concentration of expression appropriate to Elettra's highly charged emotion; maintaining this intensity obviates the need for a formal development. Yet, a renewal of expressive force in the reprise is required that a simple recapitulation cannot provide. Thus, the resolution of the diminished seventh chord on C minor has a strategic role in heightening the temperature of the return of Elettra's opening couplet by raising the expectation that the textual and thematic reprise is simultaneously the beginning of a tonal development. The technique here is similar to Haydn's 'false recapitulation' technique, except that in this case, the deception

turns out to be the thing itself. And the effect, of course, is quite different from that in Haydn's sonata forms: in the aria, the dramatic effect of the reprise a tone lower than expected is of Elettra containing her fury almost literally under her breath, after which her anger escalates in the three arpeggiated ascents (not two as in the exposition) leading to the tonic thirteen bars later (bar 90; see Ex. 11.3). Harmonic ambiguity is therefore the agent of formal ambiguity, and these structural features are the technical basis of the power of Mozart's characterisation. Elettra's furious frustration at the point of reprise is communicated by Mozart's carefully placed aural correlative of this emotion, and in the larger context of the opera this detail becomes a symptom of ambivalence and fragmentation in Mozart's construction of her character.

#### Example 11.3

Exposition (23)

Fu-nie del cru-do a-ver-no, fu-nie del cru-do a-ver-no,  
Reprise (87)

no, del cru-do a-ver-no.  
Extension

no.

C minor also in the following chorus

William Mann notes that the reprise 'apparently begins in the wildly foreign key of C minor (relevant however to the next chorus) which, having caused a shock, is quickly replaced by the home key of D minor'.<sup>1</sup> Mann's parenthetical reference to the chorus, the storm scene, is in fact the first clue to the larger dramatic purpose of Mozart's tonal procedure in the aria, since apart from the transition from aria to chorus (traversing the change of scene in the libretto, without change of tempo), C minor is the most obvious relation between the two numbers. The issue, though, is the significance of these and other connections: the explanation lies in Elettra's character as presented by Varesco and in Mozart's interpretation of her function in the drama – that is, in her musico-dramatic characterisation through large-scale tonal structure and motivic relationships.

### The 'drama' of Elettra

Elettra first appears in a short recitative (R. 4) beginning in C major in which she admonishes Idamante for freeing the Trojan prisoners: 'Prince, signor, tutta la Grecia oltraggi; tu proteggi il nemico' (Prince, my lord, you offend all Greece; you protect the enemy). This statement contains the seeds of the ambivalence of Elettra's character: it is here that what can be called the 'drama of Elettra' begins. Although we have been told in Ilia's opening recitative that Elettra is her rival in love for Idamante, Elettra challenges Idamante from the outset for both personal and political reasons. As she makes clear in her second recitative (Scene 6), she wishes to break the bond between Idamante and Ilia (whom she describes as a 'schiava Trojana', a Trojan slave) and to preserve the traditional antagonism between Greece and Troy. This dimension of her character shows her to be the representative of the old order and allied with Idomeneo, in so far as he puts political necessity (his survival as king) above personal considerations (Idamante's life). After the mistaken report of Idomeneo's death at sea, Elettra finds herself in a world in which the distinction between the personal and the political is blurred, and potentially erased by the bond of love.

Such a dilemma is conventional in *opera seria*, and in this respect Elettra is a stock character, presented by Mozart in a schematic way. She is given three arias. The first in D minor ('Tutte nel cor') and the last in C minor ('D'Oreste, d'Atace') are rage arias, while the second ('Idol mio') is a simple statement of love for Idamante, in G major. This generic scheme, representing starkly the extremes of Elettra's character, has a dramatic purpose. While she does little to advance the plot, Elettra does embody the conflict of the personal and the political in its most elementary form. In contrast to Idomeneo's response to his similar dilemma, Elettra calls upon the guardians of conventional, political morality in the first of her two minor-key arias, and on the tormented heroes Orestes and Ajax in the second. But her anger is fuelled from a personal source, her love for Idamante, given full expression in the major-key aria. Since she lacks the emotional pliancy of Ilia and the humanity of Idamante, Elettra belongs to a different, harsher world of dichotomy and dilemma. Like Idomeneo, but more directly, she is associated with the mythological realm (palpable in the opera as the spring-board of the plot), a connection revealed most clearly in the relation of her first aria to the storm scene. As the aria ends with Elettra's

threat of vengeance upon Ilia for stealing Idamante's heart ('Chi mi rubò quel core, quel che ha tradito il mio'), the music moves without a break across the change of scene to the resurgence of the storm, a transition that cannot have a dramatic motivation in the plot. We have been informed earlier of the storm in which Idomeneo is thought drowned: indeed, it is this fact that occasions Elettra's outburst of fury in the aria. If we are to credit Varese with any dramatic skill, then it must be concluded – as by Mozart – that the 'reprise' of the storm (but here portrayed in the music for the first time, No. 5) is a poetic device which functions as a physical representation of Elettra's personal feelings: the Furies of Hades are made real.<sup>2</sup> Considered as a symbolic manifestation of her threat of vengeance, the storm is the first demonstration in the opera of Elettra's access to the supramundane. This type of symbolism is both archaic and modern in the period: it is typical of both the *tragédie lyrique* (the source of the *Idomeneo* libretto) and of early Romantic literature, as the 'pathetic fallacy'.

The following recitative (Act I, Scene 8) restores order and calm: Idomeneo enters, declaring 'Eccoci salvi alfin', and the music moves from the turbulent C minor of the storm to E♭ major. Elettra returns to the prospect of revenge in the quartet with the words 'Quando vendetta avrò?' (bars 31–4), in a chromatic progression to the dominant; and after the four characters meditate on their various misfortunes ('Soffrir più non si può'), the drama moves towards the realisation of Idomeneo's vow to Neptune to sacrifice Idamante for his own life. Elettra's third, exit aria follows Idamante's reprieve by the Oracle. Here, having been thwarted by the gods, she threatens suicide: 'Squarciatemi il core, ceraste, serpeni, o un ferro il dolore in me finerà' (Tear out my heart, vipers, serpents, or a sword shall end my pain). She then leaves the stage to Idomeneo who announces in E♭ major: 'Popoli. A voi . . . Pace v'annuncio' (see chapter 12, below).

These three sections define the stages of the drama of Elettra, each involving a threat of violence, first to Ilia, then in the quartet requesting vengeance from heaven, and finally towards herself in suicide. But each threat has a similar context, emphasised by Mozart's key scheme. Except in the quartet, where the context is chromatic, Elettra's threats of violence always occur in C minor, followed by the symbolic intervention of the supernatural in the first two (the storm scene, and Idamante's slaying of the monster); and according to the peripeteia of classical tragedy, her exit aria is



preceded by the Oracle (No. 28).<sup>3</sup> Thus Elettra's reversal of fortune is represented also by a reversal of the order of events. Each of the C minor sections is followed by a restoration of order in Eb major with the appearance of Idomeneo. The tonal contexts of the three sections are shown in Table 11.1.

This scheme defines the extremes of Elettra's character: her address to Idamante and her love aria are both in major and are related as tonic (C) and dominant (G). The predominant aspect of her personality is defined by the minor key numbers (including the storm scene), between which the second aria in G major acts as a dominant major interlude. However, the scheme is not closed or self-contained as a large-scale tonal progression. Instead, its thrust is the descent harmonically from major to minor, and tonally from D major to C minor, as a symbol of Elettra's descent to the depths, to Hades, the world to which she most naturally belongs. Such a reading of large-scale symbolic tonal relations raises difficult interpretative issues. Clearly, the tonic-dominant relation of C major/minor and G major cannot be perceived in performance, and is in any case disturbed by the intervention of the D minor of Elettra's first aria: the most immediately expressive features are the contrasts of major and minor, tempo and instrumentation (the G major aria uses strings alone). In fact, the apparently factitious nature of the key relations presented in Table 11.1 represents the type of structural analysis recently challenged by James Webster, as the 'myth of musical unity' in Mozart.<sup>4</sup> But Webster and like-minded critics (who begin at the latest with Tovey) ignore the fact that, once stated, such analysis can modify the nature of our understanding of a work (and even our perception of it in performance).

That this understanding is informed by an interpretation of structural relations (an interpretation that, by definition, can be only one of many) does not invalidate, necessarily, the 'myth' the interpretation promotes. In this particular example, the large-scale tonal structure, based in the C/G polarity, is pertinent precisely because of the elements for which it cannot account – the 'restoration' to Eb major, and the D minor aria. The key of the latter reveals the febrile nature of Elettra's rage simply by its tenuous position within the tonal framework. While the C minor reprise disrupts tonal structure within the aria, the disruption of the larger tonal scheme by the tonic key of the aria itself can be interpreted as a symbol of Elettra's potentially disruptive role in the plot, and her negative intentions (vengeance and cruelty) in a moral climate in which love

Table 11.1

Act/scene	Number	Character	Key	Section
I/1	R. 4a 'Pence, 'Tute, nel cor'	Elettra	C minor (+F major)	1
I/6	No. 4 'Tute nel cor'	Elettra	D minor	
I/7	No. 5 'Pietà' 'Recit.'	Chorus	C minor	
I/8	'Recit. 'Eccoci' 'Idol' 'Andrò, ramingo e solo'	Idomeneo	Eb major	
II/4	No. 13 'Idol' 'Andrò, ramingo e solo'	Elettra	G major	2
III/3	No. 21 'Andrò, ramingo e solo'	Quartet	Eb major	
III/7	Recit. 27 'Sire'	Arbace	D major (+Eb major)	
III/scena ultima	No. 28 (recit.) No. 29a 'D'Orreste, 'Alace' No. 30 'Popoli'	La voce	C minor	
		Elettra	C minor	
		Idomeneo	Eb major	3

*Interpreting large-scale tonal relations!*





- 7 Otto Jahn, *W. A. Mozart* (Leipzig, 1856), trans. as *The Life of Mozart* (London, 1882; 3 vols).
- 8 *Berlinische musikalische Zeitung* 2 (1806), 11–12.
- 9 *Mozarts Opern: kritische Erläuterungen* (Leipzig, 1848).
- 10 Jahn, *W. A. Mozart*, pp. 148, 145, 156. This nationalistic tendency – Jahn wrote in the period before the unification of Germany – was excised by Hermann Abert in his revision of Jahn. Generally better versed in Italian opera, Abert makes several references to specific models and to the strength of Italian taste in Munich. H. Abert: *W. A. Mozart. Neubearbeitete und erweiterte Ausgabe von Otto Jahn* (Leipzig, 1923), from p. 839.
- 11 *Aus dem Opernleben der Gegenwart* (Berlin, 1884), reprinted in *The Collected Musical Criticism of Eduard Hanslick* (Farnborough, 1971), III: 107–14.
- 12 A. Heuss, 'Mozarts *Idomeneo* als Quelle für *Don Giovanni* und *Die Zauberflöte*', *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 13 (1931), 177–99.
- 13 A monster similarly visible as consisting only of a head featured in Colin Graham's production for the Aldeburgh Festival c. 1970.
- 14 See J. Rice, *W. A. Mozart: 'La clemenza di Tito'* (Cambridge, 1991) for the reception history of that opera.
- 15 E. Lert, *Mozart auf dem Theater*, from page 293.
- 16 For details see R. Angermüller, 'Bemerkungen zum *Idomeneus*-Stoff', pp. 293–7.
- 17 Loewenberg lists one sung in Italian, at Basle, that year.
- 18 Wolf-Ferrari's version formed the basis of one of the earliest 'complete' recordings, confined to two LPs (Mercury MG 10053).
- 19 Wilhelm Zentner, in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 98 (1931), 622–3 (and not p. 621 as in the periodical's index).
- 20 H. G. Bunte, in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 98 (1931), 329.
- 21 E. Blom, *Mozart* (London, 1935), 99, 279–82.
- 22 A. A. Abert, 'The Operas of Mozart', pp. 134–5. Abert's account is otherwise unexceptionable.
- 23 E. J. Dent, 'Idomeneo', *The Listener*, 26 February 1948.
- 24 Rice, *W. A. Mozart: 'La clemenza di Tito'*.
- 25 The version of 'Fuor del mar' sung by Richard Lewis is some thirty bars shorter than the 1786 version (though, perversely, he supplies a cadenza); yet it appears to be cut from the 1781 version until the 1786 lead-in to the following scene. The economical reissue of this recording (EMI, CHS 7 63685 2) cannot offset its lack of dramatic continuity and generally slow tempi.
- 26 *The Musical Times* 124 (1983), 440–1.
- 27 EMI IC 191–29 271 (1972), not available on CD.
- 28 On three CDs, DGG 429 864–2.
- 29 Respectively on Nikolaus Harmoncourt's recording (1980: TELDEC 8. 35547) and John Elliot Gardiner's (1991: DGG ARCHIV 431674–2) (each 3 CDs).
- 30 Both Lewis (note 25) and Pavarotti (1983, Decca 411–805–2) were working under John Pritchard in association with Glyndebourne; the 1983 version, significantly as a sign of the times, is virtually complete (3 CDs).

- 31 Davis's recordings for Philips (both on 3 CDs) are (1968) 420 130–2, and (1991) 422 537–2.
- 32 Not quite all the music available is included; see my review in *Early Music*, November 1991.
- 33 L. von Köchel, *Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amadé Mozarts*, 3rd edn, revised by A. Einstein (Leipzig, 1937), 445.
- 34 Letter from Strauss to Bruno von Niessen, 27 February 1932, in *Der Strom der Töne* *trug mich fort*, ed. F. Grasberger (Tutzing 1967), 338.
- 35 'Richard Strauss's *Elektra*', interview with the composer in *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 39, 25 September 1908, p. 669.
- 36 *Idomeneo*, revised by L. Wallerstein and R. Strauss (Magdeburg 1931). For a detailed description of Strauss's alterations see S. Kohler, 'Die *Idomeneo*-Bearbeitung von Lothar Wallerstein und Richard Strauss', in *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*, p. 176. On the soprano notation of K. 490 in Mozart's autograph, see p. 45.
- 37 Letter from Strauss to von Niessen, 27 February 1932, in *Der Strom der Töne*, 338.
- 38 Review by 'Hamel' of the Berlin performance in a newspaper cutting held by the Richard Strauss Institute, Munich, and identified as 'D A Z. 13/11 32'. The precise source is unknown to me.
- 39 'P. Zsch.', writing in the *Dresdner Nachrichten*, 15 November 1932.
- 40 Review of the Magdeburg première in a newspaper cutting held by the Richard Strauss Institute and identified as 'BBZ 27/4 31' (presumably *Berliner Börsen Zeitung*, which employed Köppen in the 1930s). See, however, the favourable review by Viktor Junk, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 98 (1931), 410–11.
- 41 Letter of 11 April 1932, in *Richard Strauss: Autographen in München und Wien. Verzeichnis*, ed. G. Brosche and K. Dachs (Tutzing 1979), 368.
- 42 Letter from Strauss to von Niessen, 17 February 1932.
- 43 *Ibidem*.
- 44 R. Strauss, *Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen*, ed. W. Schuh (Munich 1989), 72.

#### 7 General structure of *Idomeneo*

- 1 On Elettra's aria, see letter of 3 January 1781. As a result of including or omitting various numbers in Act III (22, 27, 29, 30a/31) widely divergent timings appear on recordings.
- 2 Daniel Heartz refers in particular to the obscurity of No. 13, 'Idolo mio' (*Mozart's Operas*, p. 23).
- 3 Varesco is stiffer in his adherence to these line-lengths than Calzabigi in *Alceste*. For a fuller account of Italian libretto verse in the eighteenth century, see T. Carter, *W. A. Mozart: 'Le nozze di Figaro'* (Cambridge, 1987), 76–87. On versification, see also D. Kimbell, *Italian Opera* (Cambridge, 1991), xvii.
- 4 Mozart possibly regarded such combinations as AI, OI, IE, OE, and EO as hard to sing smoothly as elisions. IO is not difficult: perhaps the dignity of the deity ('Dio') required two syllables.



- 5 *Versi sdruccioli* particularly suit patter-singing (Carter, *W. A. Mozart: 'Le nozze di Figaro'*, p. 80), and Varesco may have avoided them for their association with *opera buffa* (he makes use of them in the unfinished *L'oca del Cairo*). He ignored one precedent within the immediate tradition; Jommelli apparently relished stanzas of variable length, for instance, nine and then three lines. See McClymonds, 'Mattia Verazi and the Opera', *Studies in Music* (1982), 100–1.
- 6 See the synopsis; C. Rosen, *Sonata Forms* (New York, 1980), chapter 4 ('Aria', particularly pp. 43–68); Hirschberg, 'Formal and Dramatic Aspects of Sonata Form in Mozart's *Idomeneo*', which deals mainly with structural proportion; and Webster, 'The Analysis of Mozart's Arias', 114–22.
- 7 Precise punctuation is not a feature of eighteenth-century librettos, still less of scores. I have used the punctuation of Libretto 2 except after verse 1/3 and verse 2/5, where it has a comma. Neither *MW* nor *NMA* places a full stop after 'affanni'.
- 8 This form of sonata, without development, is sometimes called 'slow-movement sonata form'; a perfect example is in Mozart's string Quartet K. 387. However, the tonal-thematic pattern also suits fast tempi, for example, the overture to *Le nozze di Figaro*.

9 The rearrangement of 'E' provides the performers with least extended ranges – the horn and voice – with effective, and in the former case playable, scales, though the second horn scale, f' to f'', remains very difficult on the instrument of Mozart's day.

10 Tonal and verbal reprises do not quite coincide in Nos. 1 and 4, but the sense of return is unmistakable and exact coincidence is restored well before the point at which the exposition modulated (see chapters 8 and 11). This binary form differs more in expression than in underlying structure from the first type described.

11 The ternary sonata-aria is sometimes referred to as 'transformed Da Capo' (see H. Smither, *The Oratorio in the Classic Era* (Oxford, 1987), 78–82, and N. Temperley, *Haydn: The Creation* (Cambridge, 1991), 74). The crucial difference is that in true da capo arias, the first section ends in the tonic, not the dominant, and the reprise is a repeat, not a recomposition.

12 Stanley Sadie observed after hearing it that the aria is 'about as helpful to the drama as a tourmiquet to the circulation' (*The Musical Times* 124 (1983), 440–1). For a more positive view see Hertz, *Mozart's Operas*, p. 58. The problem, however, is precisely that, in Hertz's phrase, No. 10b reflects 'one of the latest fashions in arias'. It is perhaps no coincidence that this Weber-like form (unlike many others) was not interfered with in Wolf-Ferrari's version.

14 The lively and socially not elevated 3/8 metre even appears at the end of Act I in Jommelli's 'old-fashioned' *Armida*. The key of A major, incidentally, was much favoured for love duets in this period.

## 8 Two soliloquies

1 The incidence of G minor in Mozart's mature work is unusually high for a minor key. Other heroines, such as Konstanze in *Die Entführung* ('Traurigkeit') and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* ('Ach, ich fühl's'), use it at the nadir of their fortunes.

2 These include the Neapolitan sixth (bar 24), two diminished sevenths, and an augmented sixth on G (bar 25). See Rushton, '... hier wird es besser seyn, ein blosses Recitativ zu machen'.

3 David Cairns regards bars 19–20 of 'Fuor del mar' as a version of motive C (*Responses*, p. 63).

4 Similar falling sevenths underline Leporello's terror in the graveyard (*Don Giovanni* No. 22, e.g. bars 24–6).

5 In the revision, the final cadence is elided with the following scene.

6 The only other aria with trumpets is No. 29; No. 4 has four horns.

7 See Ratner, *Classic Music*, for a discussion of topics, and W. J. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart* (University of Chicago Press, 1983), for an exploration from this point of view of Mozart's comedies.

## 9 The musical language of *Idomeneo*

1 The 'tinta' or 'colorito' was identified by Basevi in 1859 as the sign of a unified conception within certain of Verdi's operas. See Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi* I (London, 1973), 40, and II (London, 1978), p. 53.

2 Referring to 'motive C', Dent said, 'there is no reason to call it a *leitmotiv* or give it a ridiculous name' (*Mozart's Operas*, 1st edn (London, 1913), 80; in the second edition (p. 50), 'ridiculous' is replaced by 'Wagnerian').

3 Consideration for dal Prato would not, of course, determine the key of the aria composed in 1786, still in B $\flat$ . It is certainly curious that this aria and the 1786 duet, No. 20b, should begin with the same four-note motive in the same dotted rhythm, the latter with halved note values.

4 On details of certain recitatives see Rushton, '... hier wird es besser seyn, ein blosses Recitativ zu machen ...' and 'Tonality in Act III of *Idomeneo*'.

5 The progression could be rationalised by taking the second chord as the enharmonic notation of a 'German sixth' (A $\flat$ –C–E $\flat$ –F $\sharp$  for G $\flat$ ), which would normally resolve back to G. Such 'explanation' happily does not deprive the progression of its strength.

6 Another forty bars, including some magnificent recitative, originally preceded No. 28, but are cut in the autograph; the words are not in the libretto. *NMA* makes this cut; *MW* reproduces the original, uncut version in which the dominant seventh on B $\flat$  (bar 114) was duly resolved onto E $\flat$ . Making the cut simply replaces this with the C minor of No. 28. Hertz (*NMA* Vorwort, p. xxiv; facsimile, p. xxxvii) rightly calls this 'un-Mozartian' and proposes instead a diminished seventh on B $\flat$  in bar 114 and a modification to the voice part (*NMA* p. 471).

- 7 Some references to this arpeggio not otherwise mentioned are: R. 4 (bar 33); No. 24 (the Priest implores clemency, declaring 'The vow is inhuman'); and less clearly, No. 2 (bar 73), marking the return of the first quatrain.
- 8 The principal study of rhythm as a dramatic sign is W. J. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni* (Chicago, 1983).
- 9 Hertz, 'Raaif's Last Aria'. Arbace's aria (No. 22) is in triple time, as is the middle section of No. 27, 'No, la morte'; but if these and 'Torna la pace' were indeed omitted along with the duet No. 20a there remained (both in 1781 and 1786) no triple time between No. 19 and the divertissement. Both triple and compound triple time have a far stronger representation in Mozart's comedies.
- 10 R. 6, bar 34 in *MW*; bar 12 in *NMA* appendix (the passage is thought to have been omitted even in 1781). This motive Hertz, noting its fusion during No. 23 with motive C, calls the 'duol motif'; this refers to No. 10a, bar 50, where a variant of it is sung to that word (*Mozart's Operas*, p. 50). No. 10a was omitted, of course, in 1786, somewhat weakening the configuration.
- 11 See, for example, in the same key, the slow movement of the G minor Symphony, and Tamino's 'Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön'. The idea is not confined to Mozart; it occurs, still in E $\flat$ , in the slow movement of Haydn's String Quartet in C minor, Op. 17 no. 4 (1771).
- 12 The ambiguity of this remarkable invention is fortified by a grammatical risk: the structural pitch at every half-bar lies a (dissonant) perfect fourth above the bass.
- 13 See Rushton, '... hier wird es besser seyn, ein blosses Recitativ zu machen ...'.

## 10 Tonality and motive

- 1 *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1973-4, p. 82.
- 2 See Somfai and Hertz in *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1973-4, and Hertz, 'Tonality and Motif in *Idomeneo*'.
- 3 Liebner in *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1973-4, p. 91. Liebner includes Elettra's first aria which, however important in the scheme of the whole, is hardly a turning-point.
- 4 On this question, within R. 7, and on tonal links within *Idomeneo* in general, see Rushton, 'Tonality in Act III of *Idomeneo*'.
- 5 Hertz, 'Tonality and Motif', p. 383; Somfai, *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1973-4, see the plan on p. 90; Kunze, *Mozart's Opern*, p. 124.
- 6 Numbers referring to breezes in *Zaide* and *Così fan tutte* are also in E major. However, in the latter, so is a *buffo* trio and Fiordiligi's introspective 'Per pietà'.
- 7 I have discussed this motive more fully, listing over thirty occurrences and comparing the comments of other critics, in 'La vittima è Idamante': Did Mozart have a Motive?
- 8 Cairns, *Responses*, p. 63.
- 9 Floros, 'Das "Programm" in Mozarts Meisterouvertüren', p. 152.

## 10 *Ibidem*.

- 11 See Rushton, "'La vittima è Idamante'": Did Mozart have a Motive?'. Elettra is, of course, obsessed with Idamante; a consciously leitmotivic composer would have made these allusions obvious, whereas they are neither exact nor (except in No. 13), very prominent. As the chorus flees from the monster, Idamante is hardly in the forefront of anyone's mind. A more persuasive reason for the undeniable presence of a relation of motive C is the function of No. 18 as a dark parody of the overture.
- 12 Where motive A is concerned, it may be pertinent that descending arpeggios covering a sixth, without glissandi, open the Act I and Act III choruses 'Nettun s' onori' and 'Scenda Amor', which do honour to gods, and the great Chaconne. This is also the head-motive of 'Fuor del mar', but for such a commonplace figure it would be difficult to argue convincingly for a very definite signification.
- 13 See chapters 11 and 12 and Rushton, 'A Reconciliation Motive in *Idomeneo*'?
- 14 Liebner, *Mozart on the Stage*, p. 69.

## 11 Elettra's first aria and the storm scene

- 1 William Mann, *The Operas of Mozart*, p. 266.
- 2 Varesco's failings as a librettist caused Mozart much trouble, especially in Act III (see p. 39, above), and have often been discussed since (see, for example, Edward J. Dent, *Mozart's Operas* (1947), 33-44). In the case of the aria and storm scene, Mozart has turned dramatic awkwardness to musico-dramatic advantage: what appears in the libretto as an inconsistency becomes, in Mozart's treatment, pure music drama.
- 3 The multiple versions of this pronouncement are discussed in chapter 2 p. 41, above.
- 4 Webster, 'Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity'. An example of the conventional search for tonal structural coherence in Mozart's operas is found in Hertz, 'Tonality and Motif in *Idomeneo*'.
- 5 See p. 138, above.
- 6 The term 'counterstructure' originates with Christopher Wintle; see 'Kontra-Schenker: Largo e mesto from Beethoven's Op. 10, No. 3', *Music Analysis* 4 (1985), 145-82. For a specific discussion of the issues of unity and discontinuity in Mozart's operas see Webster, 'To Understand Verdi and Wagner We Must Understand Mozart', and 'Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity'.
- 7 For discussion of the treatment of the binary aria form in *Idomeneo* see Hirschberg, 'Formal and Dramatic Aspects of Sonata Form in Mozart's *Idomeneo*' and chapters 7-8, above.
- 8 See Julian Rushton, *W. A. Mozart: Don Giovanni* (Cambridge, 1981), 101-2.