

Le nozze di Figaro: "Lessons from the Autograph Score"

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revival in London in 1972), an invented (by Da Ponte) addition to mythology whereby Cupid, with the help of a magic apple tree, overcomes Diana's inveterate taste for chastity. Martín's music is charming, and Da Ponte thought the text his best work, 'full of love and yet not lascivious'.

Da Ponte wrote *Diana* contemporaneously with two other librettos. With a bottle of Tokay to the right of his table (clearly he had been quick to take up the sweets of the Austro-Hungarian union), an inkstand in the middle and a tobacco box to the left, sustained by the housekeeper's daughter on coffee and flirtation, he worked 12 hours a day, writing for Martín in the morning, in the evening for Salieri, for whom he was Italianizing an opera Salieri had already composed in French, and at night for Mozart. He had suggested Don Giovanni as the subject for the opera Mozart had been commissioned to provide for Prague.

Da Ponte probably intended Don Juan, libertine and freethinker, to be another socially rebellious hero like Figaro. Mozart, Da Ponte said later, gave the opera a serious turn from the outset. In picking the subject, Da Ponte had bound himself to a plot that had to be developed as a linear succession of incidents. It had swiftness, which suited both Da Ponte and Mozart, but it lacked the structural balances and ironies that Da Ponte was good at. He was, besides, much less at ease with this vengeful bit of Christian folklore than with classical parody. Perhaps some inherent uncertainty in Da Ponte's tone became the vehicle for Mozart's own violent-

ly ambivalent emotions, guilty yet defiant, after his father's death. Da Ponte's competent rendering of fustian melodrama is carried by Mozart to unsurpassed extremes of spiritual melodrama. Don Giovanni is villain and yet hero brave enough to refuse to repent even though supernaturally bullied by the chill of the tomb itself.

*Don Giovanni* was given (but not much liked) at Vienna and *Figaro* successfully revived there before Da Ponte and Mozart produced, in January 1790, their final work together, the opera that fulfilled (except that there are, symmetrically, six characters, not seven) Mozart's recipe of seven years earlier. The sisters in *Così* are indeed 'two equally good female parts', one of them *seria*. The third woman is indeed *buffa* – the maidservant whom Da Ponte, wisps of seminary learning still about him, named by the Italianized ancient Greek word for 'the mistress of the house'. Da Ponte perhaps drew on his own experience of being equally in love with two sisters in Dresden, Mozart perhaps on his of falling in love with one Weber sister and then falling in love with and marrying another. The story is indeed 'really comic' – and much besides: a masterpiece of tragicomic irony, a 'school for lovers' (the subtitle, and the name by which Da Ponte mentions the opera in his memoirs) whose two pairs of lover – pupils learn painfully that it is not reasonable to expect either one's sweetheart or oneself to be superhuman. The partnership that opened with *Le nozze di Figaro* shut up shop on the unillusioned marriages of Fiordiligi and Dorabella and is itself one of the world's perfect marriages between literary and musical drama.

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## Le nozze di Figaro

*Lessons from the autograph score*

Alan Tyson

Until recently it was probably the case that very few of those interested in Mozart had ever seen the complete autograph score of a mature opera. They could, it is true, have inspected *Don Giovanni* in Paris, and most of *La clemenza di Tito* in West Berlin. But that was about all. It was only portions of the other operas that were available: the last act of *Così fan tutte*, the last act of *Idomeneo*, and the middle act of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* could be seen in West Berlin, and the first two of *Figaro's* four acts in East Berlin.

The rest of these operas, as well as the whole of *Die Zauberflöte*, could be described as war casualties. At the outbreak of World War II their complete scores had been in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek, but the collection was then divided and parts of it were sent away from Berlin for greater security. One consignment, particularly rich in Mozart scores, was not recovered at the end of hostilities. For many years it was rumoured to be in Poland; this was

repeatedly denied but finally conceded in the spring of 1977. The score of *Die Zauberflöte* was promptly handed back to East Berlin, but the others are still in Poland, at the Biblioteka Jagiellońska in Kraków; fortunately they are now to some degree accessible to scholars.

But what difference, it is sometimes asked, does the recovery of a Mozart autograph score really make? Surely the operas were edited in the last century and in this by sound scholars who had access to the autographs? Is there anything really new that can be gained from those old scores? The present essay, by taking the newly accessible third and fourth acts of *Figaro* as its subject, may answer some of these questions.

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Ever since 1965 there has been lively discussion in certain circles about Act 3 of *Figaro*: about the inconsequentiality of some of the stage action, and about a bold means of overcoming its difficulties. For in that year Robert

Moberly and Christopher Raeburn published a short but penetrating article in which they claimed that the present sequence of events cannot have been the one originally conceived, but resulted from a change of plan on the part of Da Ponte and Mozart.

The argument is complex as well as subtle, and the 1965 article deserves to be studied in full;<sup>1</sup> it cannot properly be summarized here. But its two main features can be stated simply. According to Moberly and Raeburn, the Countess's accompanied recitative ('E Susanna non vien!') and aria ('Dove sono'), as well as the short *secco* dialogue between Barbarina and Cherubino that precedes them ('Andiam, andiam, bel paggio'), originally came much earlier in the act, between the Count's aria and the sextet. And an ingenious explanation of the change of plan was provided. In the first production the parts of Bartolo and Antonio were doubled by the same singer; and Da Ponte and Mozart must have found that, in the original sequence, there was no time at the end of the recitative following the sextet for Bartolo to change into Antonio's clothes for the very next scene – Antonio's entry to the words 'Io vi dico, signor, che Cherubino è ancora nel castello'.

The implications of the article were quickly seen by opera producers. If the only reason for abandoning a first-conceived, more satisfactory order of the scenes was a difficulty caused by the doubling of two roles by one singer, why abandon it in any modern performance in which Bartolo and Antonio were sung by two different artists? So a number of productions reverted to what was claimed to be the original sequence of events. From time to time it was asserted that this also produced a more convincing sequence of keys within the act. That is an argument that merits further scrutiny, for it suggests that the music had already been composed before Da Ponte and Mozart were forced to rearrange the numbers.

Which brings one to what some have held to be the greatest difficulty with the Moberly-Raeburn proposal: the total absence of any 'source' evidence to support it. Is that what we should expect? It is true that since World War II the autograph score of the last two acts of *Figaro* was not available for inspection. Yet those who edited the opera for the old Gesamtausgabe in the 19th century, and who consulted the autograph at the time, evidently saw nothing to arouse their suspicion that the third act had been rearranged at a late stage. Nor does the libretto of the first production, although (as we shall see) it differs in places from the final version and preserves some discarded passages, show any sign that the sequence of the numbers has been switched. Accordingly, in editing *Le nozze di Figaro* for the Neue Mozart-Ausgabe in 1973 (when the autograph of Acts 3 and 4 was not yet accessible), Ludwig Finscher felt obliged to retain the 'traditional' sequence,

while at the same time acknowledging the attractiveness of the 1965 'solution'.

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Like the first two acts of *Figaro* in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, East Berlin, which are bound as one volume, the autograph score of Acts 3 and 4 is contained in a single binding, with the pages numbered in an early hand from 1 to 130 (Act 3), 131 to 254 (Act 4), and 255 to 280 (leaves with extra wind parts that could not be accommodated within the score). But up to the time of the opera's first performance (and probably for a while later) it consisted of a whole series of separate numbers, interspersed with recitatives, and written down on paper of various types. The individual numbers (arias and ensembles) were completed at different times and certainly not in the order in which they now stand in the score; except for Act 1, which has a continuous foliation, they are almost always individually foliated in Mozart's hand, and at the beginning is usually to be found a note of the act and scene to which they belong. (Some of these indications have been partly trimmed off when the score was bound, but they can usually be made out.) The recitatives have their correct position indicated by the numbers that precede and follow them; for instance, the recitative 'È decisa la lite' has at the beginning 'Dopo l'aria del Conte' and at the end 'attaca subito il Sestetto', both indications being in Mozart's hand.

It is obvious, then, that to effect an alteration in the sequence of events no more might be needed than to shuffle the leaves of the score and to provide the necessary links with what comes before and after. Let us therefore look at the autograph of the third act up to the entry of Antonio:

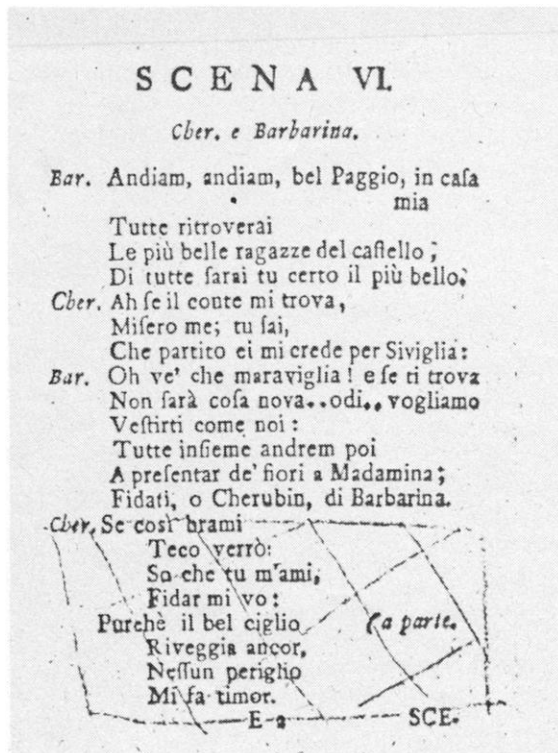
	page of autograph
Scene i. Recitative: 'Che imbarazzo'	1
Scene ii. Enter Countess and Susanna	1
Duetтино: 'Crudel! perchè finora'	5
Scene iii. Enter Figaro	
Accompanied recitative and Aria of Count: 'Vedrò, mentr'io sospiro'	17
Scene iv. Recitative before Sestetto: 'È decisa la lite'	39
Sestetto: 'Riconosci in questo amplesso'	41
Scene v. Recitative after Sestetto: 'Eccovi, o caro amico'	61
	(upper half) 62
Scene vi. Recitative of Barbarina and Cherubino: 'Andiam, andiam, bel paggio, in casa mia'	62
	(lower half) 62
	(top 2 staves) 63
leading to (planned) Arietta of Cherubino	–
Scene vii. 'After the arietta': Accompanied recitative and Aria of Countess: 'Dove sono i bei momenti'	65
Scene viii. Recitative of Antonio and Count: 'Io vi dico, signor'	81

(The scene-numbering here and throughout the article is Mozart's own, not that of the NMA.)

<sup>1</sup> Robert Moberly and Christopher Raeburn: 'Mozart's "Figaro": the Plan of Act III', *Music & Letters*, xlvii (1965), 134–6; see also R. B. Moberly: *Three Mozart Operas: Figaro – Don Giovanni – The Magic Flute* (London, 1967), 103–4

The arrow indicates the relocation of the present scenes vi and vii at what Moberly and Raeburn claim to have been their original positions. But it at once becomes clear that the situation is more complex than might have been predicted.

First, they had said that scene vi 'serves no obvious purpose except as a short *secco* fill-in between the Count's aria and the entry of the Countess'. But this is to overlook the matter of Cherubino's arietta. No music has survived for it, and we do not know its key (or, if it was never in fact started, its intended key), but it was to follow directly on a cadence in C. And up to a late stage Mozart seems to have counted on its being in the opera. The words were even printed in the libretto for the first performance at the end of scene vi



1. Extract from the libretto

In the autograph the arietta is duly cued in. At the end of the recitative on p.63 Mozart writes: 'segue l'arietta di Cherubino'. There follows a figure in red crayon that corresponds to its position within the opera - '20' (crossed out, however). And below this Mozart adds a further cue, this time for 'Dove sono': 'dopo l'arietta di Cherubino viene Scena 7<sup>ma</sup>: - ch'è un Recitativo istromentato, con aria della Contessa'; this is followed by '21' in red crayon. Accordingly, 'Dove sono' was in its present position at a time when the arietta was still to be part of the act.

Second, it becomes clear that in its present form the autograph does not permit both scenes vi and vii to be relocated in the way proposed. For the start of scene vi is written on the same page - p.62 - as the end of scene v,

which must follow directly after the sextet. How damaging is this to the Moberly-Raeburn hypothesis?

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There seem to me to be two lines of escape, depending on the time in the collaboration between Da Ponte and Mozart at which a change of plan is thought to have taken place. If the problem arising from the doubling of roles was detected at a very early stage, *before* the numbers of third act were written down, then there would be no reason why any 'change of plan' should be reflected in the autograph score. But in that case one would expect Mozart to devise a sequence of keys suitable to the revised order of the numbers; if it happened to accord well with the original order as well, this would be no more than a coincidence. If, on the other hand, it is supposed that the score of the third act had been completed before the 'change of plan', then it is necessary to assume that scene vi was rewritten in its new position.

Thus we shall be grateful for any help we can get in separating the various chronological layers of the autograph score. Our best guide here is the different types of paper on which the various numbers and connecting recitatives are written. This is no new topic for readers of *The Musical Times*; in 1975 I explained at some length the governing principles and applied them to the autograph of *La clemenza di Tito*.<sup>2</sup> And similar methods (though perhaps not so strictly directed) had already been used on the first two acts of *Figaro* by Karl-Heinz Köhler in 1967.<sup>3</sup> Köhler was handicapped by not having access to the autograph of the last two acts; nevertheless his conclusions as to the order in which Mozart tackled the numbers in Acts 1 and 2 appear to stand up well. What follows, then, is a highly condensed report of much detailed work on the autograph's various papers.

★

About the time that he started to work on the third and fourth acts, Mozart acquired paper of a type that he had not used before. It can be distinguished from the other papers in the score most readily by its watermark: the letters 'GFA', with three moons over the word 'REAL' as a countermark.<sup>4</sup> The 'total span' ('TS') of the staves, measured vertically, is either 186 mm (sometimes 186.5) or, much less commonly, 182 mm (sometimes 183). Moreover the pages of this paper-type with the 186 mm staff-ruling have a recurrent irregular pattern in the 'profile' created by the left ends of the staves. The fourth line of the third staff, for instance, projects further to the left than the other lines of that staff, as does also the second

<sup>2</sup> Alan Tyson: '“La clemenza di Tito” and its Chronology', *MT*, cxvi (1975), 221-7

<sup>3</sup> Karl-Heinz Köhler: 'Mozarts Kompositionsweise - Beobachtungen am Figaro-Autograph', *Mozart - Jahrbuch 1967*, 31-45

<sup>4</sup> All seven paper-types in *Figaro* have versions of this countermark; they can be differentiated by its size and spacing.

line of the ninth staff. The value of such banal observations is that the paper-type can be identified with a good degree of certainty from photographs.

Not that the whole of Acts 3 and 4 is on paper of this New Type. In Act 3 the opening recitative, the duettino between the Count and Susanna (except its last page), the recitative that follows it, the sextet, the second page of the dialogue between Barbarina and Cherubino (p.63), and the recitative after the chorus of village maidens are all on another paper-type found also in the first two acts, where it was used for some repair-work and for a few recitatives – i.e. *late* in the construction of those acts. But what of Act 3? (It does not occur in Act 4, perhaps in itself a clue.) Can one say if it is earlier or later than the New Type? Some overlapping no doubt occurred, but the evidence points to its being in the main earlier. For Mozart, we know, is likely to have tackled the less 'soloistic' duettino and sextet before undertaking the major solos in this act, the arias of the Count and Countess; both these arias are on the New Type – as indeed is almost all the rest of the act, as well as the whole of the last act (apart from Barbarina's Cavatina, seemingly a last-minute addition at its very beginning), and also the supplementary wind parts at the end of the score. In general terms, then, the New Type may be said to have been the last paper that Mozart used for *Figaro*.

The instances of its use in the first half of the opera merely strengthen that impression. It was used for the

overture, and for three numbers at the start of the second act – the Countess's aria 'Porgi amor' at the very beginning, Cherubino's arietta 'Voi che sapete', and Susanna's aria 'Venite inginocchiatevi'.<sup>5</sup> Köhler claimed all these as late additions to the score, and Finscher has pointed out that 'Voi che sapete', which has the same metre as the text of Cherubino's lost arietta, may have been a last-minute substitution for it.

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It is not merely the major arias for the third act that are on paper of the New Type; the same is true of their sketches. Fig.2 shows a sketchleaf that is today in the Biblioteca Estense, Modena; the left-hand 'profile' of the staff-ends confirms the paper-type. The first three staves contain sketches for the Countess's aria, while the rest have sketches for the Count's. The opening of 'Dove sono' on the top staff (transcribed in NMA II: 5/16, ii, p.634) differs a little from the final text, but that this is not a sketch for an earlier but nevertheless completed version of the aria is indicated by bars 8–10 of the third staff (omitted from the NMA transcription); these give the voice part of bars 60–62 of the aria in a form that is to be found in the autograph, where however it has been deleted and replaced by the final text. (The bass line has had to be changed,

<sup>5</sup> The paper of Susanna's second-act aria – like that of the third-act letter-duettino, and of the start and one later passage in the fourth-act finale – has the TS of 182 mm. There is evidence to suggest that this was available to Mozart slightly earlier than the New Type with a TS of 186 mm.



2. Sketchleaf for the Countess's and Count's arias (Biblioteca Estense, Modena)

but the other strings and wind go only with the new notes, showing that for a time the score consisted of vocal line and bass line alone.)

It is the destiny of paper-evidence to be suggestive rather than conclusive. All that has been established here is (a) that much of the autograph score of the third act (and some of its sketches) was written rather late, after the first two acts had been more or less completed, and (b) that in its present form the autograph score, as represented by pp.62-3, is inconsistent with the Moberly-Raeburn hypothesis. But it could always be argued that p.63 was a late insertion to enable scene vi to be recopied on pp.62-3. This is probably the best line of defence. That it is not on the New Type paper may not matter all that much, but it must have been recopied when Cherubino was still expected to sing 'Se così brami', and any account of the 'change of plan' is obliged to take the lost arietta into consideration.

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The key-sequence of the third act, since it has been adduced as evidence for the original order of the numbers, merits a few words. The present order, and the claimed original order, can be set out:

Duetting (Count, Susanna)	a - A
Count's aria	D
Sextet	F
Arietta (Cherubino)	?
Countess's aria	C
Duetting (Susanna, Countess)	B flat
Chorus	G
Finale	C

In what key was Cherubino's arietta intended to be? A cadence in C would normally be expected to be followed by a number either in the same key or a 4th higher. But C major is already usurped by 'Dove sono', and F major is the key of the sextet; possibly the key of G major, a relationship to the end of the recitative that has a few parallels, was what Mozart had in mind.<sup>6</sup>

The key-sequence ultimately adopted seems perfectly acceptable. The same is true of what is claimed to have been the original order; if we posit an arietta from Cherubino in G, we have an inexorable series of 4ths, broken only once near the end in the transition from the letter-duettino to the following chorus: A - D - G - C - F - B flat - G - C. A fearful symmetry? Probably not, but at any rate Mozart settled for something else.

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It is likely that problems of key-sequence, and possibly some uncertainty as to the best arrangement of the numbers, arose also before Act 4 was completed.

Fig.3 shows part of an incomplete score for an early version of Susanna's fourth-act aria. All that is known of this version will be found transcribed in NMA II: 5/16, ii, pp.638-41: a sketch for part of the aria, and a score for the accompanied recitative (34 bars) and the first 36 bars

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the recitatives before 'Aprite, presto aprite' in *Figaro*, Act 2, and before the chorus 'Giovnette' in *Don Giovanni*, Act 1. But precedents must be handled with care. Masetto's aria 'Ho capito', in F, is preceded by a recitative with a cadence in D - a strange relationship. It seems likely, however, that this aria was originally written in G, and later transposed down a tone for the singer's benefit. This finds support in the fact that it is the only part of the first-act score of *Don Giovanni* that is on Prague paper.

of the aria. It is described (at the end of this recitative score) as a 'Rondò' – i.e. as an aria with a slow section followed by a fast one, though we have no sketches or score today that relate to the fast part.<sup>7</sup>

From fig.3 we can see that it is on paper of the New Type, and – more bewilderingly – that it is in E flat. For the aria that replaced it ('Deh vieni non tardar') is in F major. Why the change of key? In each case the preceding accompanied recitative has much the same musical content, but that leading to the E flat rondò makes a cadence on B flat; that leading to the F major aria makes a cadence on F.

The clue would appear to lie in Figaro's aria, 'Aprite un po' quegl'occhi'. For in the completed opera this comes before Susanna's aria, and is in E flat. Clearly two arias in E flat in succession would be maladroit. But what if Figaro's aria was originally intended to be in a different key, and to come *after* Susanna's E flat aria? That would help to mediate the otherwise brusque sequence of Susanna's aria in E flat being followed directly by the finale in D.

And there is evidence that Susanna's aria in its F major form, and Figaro's E flat aria, were among the last pieces in the opera to be completed. The recitative at p.161 of the autograph ends with the words: 'Segue Recit:

<sup>7</sup> The Countess's 'Dove sono', too, seems originally to have been designated a Rondò in the autograph. It is certainly in the requisite two tempos, but at both places in the score where the word was apparently used (p.67 and p.68), it was neatly scratched out and the word 'Aria' substituted.

strumentato con Rondò di Susanna', so that when that was written her aria was still the rondò version in E flat. But a sketch for the F major version (NMA II: 5/16, ii, p.641) is on the same page as a sketch for part of the overture (ibid, p.628), surely a sign that it was written very late. And at the top of p.174, otherwise left blank by him, on the last side of the bifolium that he had used to complete the final version of the F major aria, Mozart wrote: 'Manca il Recitativo istromentato di Figaro avanti l'aria No.30'. Probably it had not yet been composed – seemingly another sign of last-minute rethinking.<sup>8</sup> In the autograph score, Figaro's aria has been placed *after* Susanna's F major aria. It obviously does not belong there any longer, but perhaps this reflects in some way an earlier organization of the act, in which both the arias had different keys from their present ones. If Susanna's original aria in E flat had been followed by an aria for Figaro in F, that would have given a key-sequence no different from the one that Mozart finally adopted.<sup>9</sup>

It may be that working with an autograph score solves some problems. But it also provides new ones in exchange. Perhaps that is why I find working with it so appealing.

<sup>8</sup> The autograph of this recitative is today in the Memorial Library of Music, Stanford University.

<sup>9</sup> But Figaro would then have had two solo numbers in F, since his first-act Cavatina is also in that key. Mozart seems usually to have avoided this.

## Così in Context

Peter Branscombe

*Così fan tutte* marks the end of an era. It was Mozart's last operatic commission from the Viennese court; and its première was the last of any opera in the reign of Joseph II. It is also something of a mystery in that no one has yet come up with a satisfactory explanation of the antecedents of the libretto – entirely original librettos, like faithful operatic lovers, were about as rare at this time as the phoenix of Arabia. We should discount the legend that the emperor himself chose the subject, said to be based on a current local scandal.

But Joseph II's ideas and achievements in other directions were remarkable. Not only was he the last Habsburg to have any deep knowledge of and skill in music; he was also the father of the Vienna Burgtheater, the oldest and most famous of German theatre companies. When in 1774, at the age of 33, he was entrusted by Maria Theresia with supervising the court theatres, he threw himself into the task with the impatience, self-effacement and patriotic fervour that were to characterize his endeavours in wider and more important spheres after he became sole ruler in

1780. Unlike Frederick the Great, whose Prussian theatre became German rather than French more out of royal disillusionment than from inner conviction, Joseph II was deeply conscious of the need for a German national theatre in Vienna. His musical tastes favoured the light, witty confections of the Italian *opera buffa* masters; yet in 1778 he was prime mover in the replacement of the Italian Opera company by the Deutsches National-Singspiel. The company lasted four seasons, and was later tentatively revived. Ultimately it failed because the number of native composers capable of writing worthwhile operettas was limited, and because the Italian opera party intrigued venomously against it. Of the some 70 works it mounted only a handful became popular successes, and of those scarcely half a dozen were native works. Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* is the one masterpiece; otherwise, apart from Umlauf and Gluck (the latter represented by a German adaptation of *La rencontre imprévue*), the successful composers were mainly Frenchmen.

If the 1780s saw the failure of the attempt to establish a