



New York Cultural Center

“Vivan le Femmine!”

Women in Mozart’s Operas

Selections from Mozart with Commentary
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Understanding the Women of Mozart’s Operas

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*transcript not reviewed by the speaker

Touhey: Good evening, and welcome on behalf of Crossroads New York Cultural Center to tonight's presentation. It is a great pleasure for us to have with us Dr. Kristy Brown Montesano presenting her new book on women in Mozart's operas. Dr. Brown is currently head of the music-history faculty at the Colburn Conservatory in Los Angeles, California. Besides being an accomplished musicologist, she is an excellent singer and a very good friend of Crossroads. Her book has just arrived from the University of California Press, and some copies are available here in the back.

If I can say just a few words about what I find most attractive about Kristy's scholarship, it is her desire to take Mozart and his librettisti seriously, and to judge what they propose to us. If you think of it, there are two ways to betray an artist as great as Mozart. One is to turn him into a "classic", whose every musical and poetic utterance can only be approached with unquestioning reverence, in a completely passive and uncritical fashion. This mindset is not uncommon among music lovers and reflects the last echoes of the romantic project to turn art into a substitute religion, and the artist into some kind of secular prophet. The other betrayal, more fashionable among intellectuals, is deconstruction, where the artist is reduced to the sum of certain historical, sociological and psychological factors, denying him the dignity of being responsible for the messages contained in his artistic creation. Dr. Brown Montesano avoids both these ideological temptations: she clearly loves and respects Mozart, but she wants to take him at his word and judge what he has to say. She is drawn by the beauty of his music, but she wants to look for the truth in it, while rejecting all forms of reductionism. This attention to the human and

musical reality of the composer is what gives her work its distinctive freshness and makes it so interesting.

Brown: Good evening. I first would like to thank Crossroads for inviting me here. I have spoken about Mozart's operas many times, but this is the first time I will be speaking about Mozart and his operas since the book was published, so it's particularly exciting for me and kind of nerve-racking, quite frankly, to see the baby out. Along with the three human ones, this one was the hardest with the gestation that I won't even go into how long and how painful it was.

I'd like to survey the audience a little bit. You've heard about me, and I'd like to find out a little something about you. I want to know how many people have never seen (and please be honest) a live production of a Mozart opera? Many of you! How many people have never seen a live or a DVD or video, any visual production of Mozart's operas? So some new people! Excellent! Who has never heard any of the music from Mozart's operas or you're not sure if you have? It shows up as ring tones, so it is possible. But just in case...so you think you've probably heard some things. On the other hand, is there anybody who has been in a Mozart opera or helped to stage one? Alright, so we have some. But for most of you, that would be a new experience.

I started this book speaking to all of you. The dissertation from which it was born was very different. It was directed ostensibly to scholars, to specialists, although they weren't very happy with the result because I wasn't opaque enough. So when the University of California Press said, "We'd like you to hit a broader audience," I was delighted. I wanted to talk to people who maybe just had a passing interest or they really weren't sure what they knew about Mozart's operas. I also wanted to speak to the woman who was playing a character. I wanted to speak to the students. I wanted to speak to the new opera goer. So that was part of why I wrote the book. And probably the beginnings of it arose from what I saw as a problem (and John in the introduction gave some idea about this) of preconception. What I found is that for most people, they have a preconception about opera, and if they know Mozart's operas, they have a preconception about what they mean and who the characters are. What started me on my journey, I can actually pinpoint in some ways was the first quotation on your handouts, and I will read it for those of you that didn't receive one. This is taken from William Mann's, *The Operas of Mozart*, Oxford University Press, 1977.

Anna is an upper class Spanish lady who has etiquette where her feelings and brains should reside. Duty and honor are her watch words. Toward all her fellow creatures she presents a coldly correct personality. If she loves her father, it is because the Bible told her so. Her censorious anger against others is a juvenile trait. All men to her are beasts, and it would be beneficial to her personal growing up if she had been pleasantly raped by Don Juan. Her upbringing has made her afraid of other people, and she has given most of her sincere outgoing emotion to lap dogs or possibly horses.

I don't even want to guess what that last meant. What kind of woman do you imagine from that description...if you had just read this and you were a music student just starting to learn about Mozart, what would you think? Is she young from this? Does she have any genuine feelings? Does she have any real complaint, or is she just the word that begins with "B"? You would assume a middle-aged, frumpy, unsatisfied, frigid (I'm using the words that are often used to describe her). You might expect that this

was a kind of beyond the pale, nasty critic, just a lone voice. But this book, William Mann's book, was recommended by *Opera News*, preparing for the MET's production in 1991 of *Don Giovanni* during the Mozart year. He was later quoted by another gentleman, you have the second quotation there, Charles Ford in 1991 in the book, *Così?: Sexual Politics in Mozart's Operas*, and he says:

We never feel that we know Anna's true feelings. She is known only as her silhouette, the thing that cameoed rejection, and this her cardboard one-dimensionality induces a curiosity concerning what seems to be emotional secrecy. The implication that Anna is secretly in love with the man who has violated her cannot be avoided. Within the enlightenment conception of femininity, the complicity of every rape victim must always be in doubt, for no woman can naturally resist the sexual intentions of a man, for she is nothing more than an object of his desire. Anna's unnatural resistance toward Octavio seems to demand explanation by way of her natural lack of resistance toward Giovanni which adds to his greater glory as damned sexual hero. This is why critics feel compelled to establish Anna's sexual complicity, and why William Mann suggests that she deserves to be "pleasantly raped."

So those were two quotes that I came upon when I was doing my research on the women characters of Mozart's operas. I was struck by the second one because he plays an interesting game. He's talking about enlightenment philosophies on gender differences, so he's going back—well THEY thought this...but the voice that he uses also suggests that it's still somehow true, or for Mozart it must've been true, and therefore, even today, it must be true. This presented a puzzle to me.

What is an opera? What is a character? And what is, in this case, her significance? So I began to think about it. It seemed to me that the problem with Donna Anna began several years after *Don Giovanni's* premier. It began with a man named E.T.A. Hoffmann. Are you familiar with the tales of Hoffman? He wrote a tale inspired by *Don Giovanni*, very much the romantic idea of Don Giovanni as the damned, demonic sexual hero and rebel. He wrote something about this and said that Donna Anna was secretly in love. This was in his fantasy, in his story. It was a Donna Anna who was actually a singer, and she was secretly in love with Don Giovanni, and after he has basically purged her with the fire of demonic whatever, she can't get over it after that, and she's changed forever, and her angelic purity and his demonic power come together. They are meant to be together, and at the end she dies because he's dead and she has to go too. This was E.T.A. Hoffmann's take. Strangely what happened is everybody began to think that E.T.A. Hoffmann's Anna was Mozart's Anna. And you'll see it again and again. So because an important literary figure gave his spin, kind of a fantasy on having been inspired by the opera, it was retroactively placed on the character. She was in fact in love.

But when I looked at the libretto and the opera, I just didn't see it. She's supposed to be 17; she's a teenager; she's young; she's getting ready to get married, and the opera doesn't start out the way you expect it. There's no duet with her and Giovanni. I started thinking, are there other *Don Giovanni* plays that set it up this way? And what I found out is that if Donna Anna is in love Don Giovanni, she always says so. She does so in Goldoni's version of the play because the Don Juan story existed long before Mozart. She either says, "I love him," or she's out to get vindication.

For those of you who know the story, in Mozart's opera, what is she trying to get vindication for? What happens? He's murdered by Don Giovanni. He's murdered on stage. Not your usual comic opera. You

don't usually see the dead body with the blood coming out. That was another different thing about Don Juan. It's a hybrid. It's supposed to be a comic opera, but the Don Juan story is dark, as is Don Juan.

So her father's been killed, and Don Giovanni snuck into her bedroom. In most of the stories that preceded Mozart's opera, he snuck in pretending to be someone she loved. So whoever her fiancée was, he pretended to be him—"Hello, hello. Good evening, Donna Anna." And Donna Anna says, "Oh! Oh!" And the problem is Donna Anna has to feel, was I guilty for not immediately even telling my fiancée to go away? This is 17th Century Spain. They're not very tolerant of midnight meetings in your bedroom, even if it's your fiancée, for women, right? Spain was the most conservative. That's why they love setting these things in Spain. The women had honor. In fact in Tirso de Divino's *Don Juan*, the father, when he hears Donna Anna screaming, "Kill him! He is a betrayer! He snuck into my bedroom!" What does the father say? He doesn't say, "Guards, go and kill the intruder!" He's like, you mean her honor has been threatened and she's telling everyone? That's the line. "And her tongue is tolling it to the world." So he's not worried about his daughter's well-being. He's worried that she's telling everybody what just happened. So you can see this is the idea behind Donna Anna. She feels guilt because her father is dead.

What in the opera do we know? There's a little clue. That it happens in a recitative—that's the quick, I'm-going-out-for-pizza part of the opera. After the duel, Donna Anna's father has been killed and he's lying bleeding. They take him away. Don Giovanni and Leporello are hiding. Leporello is his servant, and he's like, Who's dead, you or the old man? And he answers, "The old man, of course, you idiot!" And Leporello answers, "Oh, alright. Nice job! Kill the father and ravish the daughter." And Don Giovanni says, "Well, the old man asked for it." And Leporello says, (and it's the most telling line of the opera), "And Donna Anna, what did she ask for?" And Don Giovanni says, "Shut up unless you want something too."

It goes by so quickly that you hardly notice it. But they put it in there for a reason. They want us to know that this is not the woman who likes lap dogs and horses. She's a young woman and her life has just been completely up-ended. Nothing will be the same.

So that's where I started, was to look at some of these places where preconception has taken the place of the real—what is actually there.

Let's take a step back. Let's look at the types of characters you're likely to encounter in a Mozart opera so that you can also understand ways that Mozart created his characters. You can see that there are three basic types. I believe it's on the first page of the handout. I've given some of the main characters of the most popular Mozart operas. There's *seria* characters. That's pretty straight forward. That's serious. They tend to be aristocratic. Donna Anna would be a *seria* character. The *buffa* character is the comic relief character. In *Don Giovanni* we expect for Zerlina to be a *buffa*, and for her fiancée Masetto to be a *buffo*. The *mezzo carattere* is the mixed character. Don Juan, Don Giovanni, is mixed as is Donna Elvira.

Now Mozart was very aware of the dramatic potential of all of these types particularly when they were blended together. In fact, in 1783 he wrote a letter to his father outlining an idea for a new opera and hoping that Leopold could secure a good libretto in Salzburg, and this is from his letter:

The most necessary thing is that the story, on the whole, be truly comic, and if then, if it were possible, to introduce two equally good female roles: One must be seria, the other mezzo carattere, but both must be absolutely equal in quality. The third female character may be entirely buffa, and so the four male characters, if necessary.

When Mozart made these distinctions about the female characters—seria, mezzo carattere and buffa—he was talking about more than dramatic quality. He was talking about musical style as well. Mozart's most famous operas, as listed on the hand out, are comic operas of some type or another. A general comic opera was flexible enough to allow for serious and comic characters in the same dramatic framework, something that opera seria (serious opera) was not. It really didn't have the same flexibility.

It's difficult today, just giving you that background, to think of something that works that way for us, some kind of entertainment genre. Something that is comic, but it has to have a serious character that you take seriously. He wants the woman to have quality, both vocal and dramatic. And then you need the comic character. Today, sitcoms don't really work that way. And even some of our comic movies—they tend to be mixed. But it's harder to have a serious plot line within the comedy. Sometimes you have, (I don't know why...this just came to my head...sometimes I really worry about myself!) but I just suddenly thought of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Did anybody see it? Okay, so it's basically kind of silly, but ironically the male couple..there's this moment when there's the funeral and that is the kind of moment where you have this thing, but it's not the same. It's not what they're talking about. It's not *Don Giovanni* when you watch the guy stabbed on the stage, but then you have these funny things going on around it. Opera buffa was strange that way. Mozart was strange that way. *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute* all have rather serious dramatic threads. *Così* less. And so it's as though he puts those together in a way that is very much from the 18th Century and not easy to duplicate in the 21st Century.

We have a different idea about class. You would think that here in the United States with our democratic society that class would be gone. But it's just very different. Class issues dovetail with economic issues. They dovetail with racial issues, and those are much more complicated than the kind of stratified society that Mozart lived in. It made it very easy to kind of blend these things because the rules were understood.

Did anybody see the Peter Sellers Mozart's? A few of you. He did a very odd thing with *Don Giovanni*. He cast Don Giovanni...well, I think he ran into these two Afro-American baritone twin brothers, and he just couldn't pass it up. He said, "That's it! I have a Leporello and a Don Giovanni. It's gonna be great!" So he made Don Giovanni a drug dealer, an inner city, urban drug dealer. What is the problem with that? Don Giovanni was an aristocrat, right!? This is not drug dealer city, this is not the marginalized person who happens to have...no! And basically what he made all the women want were the drugs. Don Giovanni has to have access to everybody's bedroom. That's the idea. And nobody can believe—are you sure? Are you sure it was him? He's the highest member of society. He's an aristocrat. They don't do that! So of course we can say the same. Nobody who's important or powerful or in a high position today would every take advantage sexually of another person. [laughter] Of course not. So he didn't really have to work that hard to figure out what he might have done, but he didn't. He went for a gimmick. That's the problem.

These are old operas. They are over two hundred years old. It's very impressive. But the strategy that people have taken to keep them alive. One – Oh, it's historic. It doesn't mean anything anymore. It's a document of its time. But that only works up to a point because we're still listening to it. It's still doing cultural work today. It influences you. It touches you. If it doesn't, Mozart's going to cry. I mean, that would be sad. That would be the worst thing in the world. In some ways it would be worse to say, "Well, I just listen to the music." And what great music! I mean, it's undeniable, undeniably beautiful. The opera is a staged genre, and what's more, it was always about the words and music. It always mattered, from the very beginning. The theoretical underpinnings of the development of opera were about the power to move a person to the partnership of poetry and music. That's why it was invented, period. All these crazy guys in Florence, humanists in the late 16th and early 17th Century saying, We're going to do what Plato said that music could do. If you play the Dorian mode, people become macho. If you play the Phrygian, they go crazy and dance naked on the table. That's really the way the modes kind of affected you. And the idea was that music sung properly with the words would change you. So opera still needs to do that or it is indeed a dead genre. So I didn't accept the argument—It's historical so it doesn't matter. It needs to still say something to us today.

So part of it is paying attention to the words, and part of it is getting to know a little bit about how Mozart constructs musically a character, and where his hints are. And this requires a lot more work on an audience member's part than they often want to put into it. We find this all the time. People don't really know quite what they're listening to and so it becomes a wash of sound. But he did make differences. He had pure styles and then he would play with those styles. Today, I come in and I hear [sings rap beat], I don't have to tell you where I'm going with that. Probably you can tell that wasn't Mozart. Right? Could be. Could be the back track for it. But it's not. Everybody's going to know it's hip hop/rap because you know the musical style. You just know it. It's familiar. Acoustic guitar is soft rock/folk. You have sounds. So did Mozart's audience. They knew.

So let's listen to a genuine seria aria. This one is *Or Sai Chi L'onore*. This is Donna Anna's. I believe you have the text there. She has just discovered from the way he says her name that Don Giovanni was the guy who attacked her that night and killed her father. And she turns to her fiancée and says, "You know now who did it, so I'm now asking you to avenge that man that you saw bleeding on the ground." So that's where she's coming from. So let's listen a little bit to track 1. [music plays]

Okay, so that was Donna Anna doing her thing. It was interesting. I hadn't seen anybody talk about this. When I was listening to *Così Fan Tutti* I started thinking, I've heard this music before. I was listening to Fiordiligi's aria where she says, "My heart is like a rock and I will never give way to you, oh evil seducers, because I am constant to my beloved," in *Come Scoglio*, and I thought, gosh, that sounds quite similar to *Or Sai Chi L'onore*. Could we hear track 2? [music plays]

So, in fact, what Mozart did was take one melody, which is *Or Sai Chi L'onore* just to bring this out a little bit more clearly for you. [plays piano and sings] That's how she begins. What's the difference between the two arias dramatically? She's a girl who's kind of overacting for the situation. There are

these two who have shown up at her and her sister's house and they're asking for a date. She suddenly goes, "Nay! I will not go out with thee for thou art crude, and my heart is taken by my beloved." That's really about how she does it. Way, way more make up than she needed for the part. In fact, Mozart wants us... [sings loud, sustained note]. My teenage daughter does that sometimes. I'm familiar with that mode sol seria. Sometimes when she starts it I say, "Honey, stop now or I'm going to go Queen of the Night." That has become a catch phrase in our house and they all know what it means!

Okay, so that's the difference. He know how to play with that, but it also shows how much more serious Donna Anna is. I'd hear people say, "Oh, that seria style always means it's ironic." Not when you parody it later in your own opera. It's showing here's the real situation, the real style, and here's the teenage tantrum, using, adopting that style. So that's another way that Mozart began to play with things, and something that's generally not out there. I'm kind of giving you a scatter shot of some of the examples of what I thought, if you really look, are very obvious, but in the literature and the way they're produced, it's not always clarified for audiences.

Now I'd like to show a little bit about one of my favorites. I'm just going to set it briefly and then let us watch it. On the other side of the seria is the super buffa. And Despina is someone I want to talk about. I had a preconception about Despina. I was pretty sure she was into the whole bet thing. For those of you who don't know *Così*, two young guys are out with an old man who has control issues, and the two young men say, "Our girlfriends are the best ever. They are so confident and faithful and beautiful and lovely." And he says, "No, they're women, and that means they'll break your heart." And they say, "Those are fighting words." And he says, "Put down your swords. Let's make a bet. I bet you I can make them go out with somebody else in 24 hours, but you have to do everything I say." The young men say, "Fine." That should tell you something right there! Flash to the two girls—See my boyfriend. He's the prettiest... No, no, mine is the prettiest. The two girls are lovely and they say, "We're going to love them, love them, love them forever." The boys come in with the control freak, Don Alfonso, and they say, "We're sorry. We have to go to war." The girls get very upset because they're teenagers, the same one that we just heard singing, and that's where we come in. We're going to meet Despina, their maid, and hear what she gives them as advice. So we have the DVD. [plays] She's making chocolate and she says, "I'm making chocolate a half an hour for you spoiled rotten girls. Why should I have to make it and you get to drink it?"

Their boys have gone away and "the furies don't know my pain." It's going to rip me apart and my shrieks...really this is the parody, the faux seria going on. And what happens is that Despina tries not to laugh. There are a couple things we saw going on. They toss the bread. In the libretto they're supposed to throw the chocolate aside. So she's been making the stuff for a half hour and they come in and say, "Get out of my way!" and fly all over. Again, referring to my own experience, if my child were to do that, after I had made dinner for half an hour, there would probably be some kind of punishment. I don't know how you feel about somebody coming into your kitchen after you've been working and throwing the plate to the floor. This is the servant's life. She has to deal with two very young women who are going through a lot of emotional things and they don't treat her too well. So her answer to them, and we're going to skip forward to her take on the whole situation about the boys leaving...[music plays]

It's a lovely aria. A couple things come out with this. First, the musical style, that kind of 3/8 or 6/8 feeling, is very typical of servant or Contadina or peasant girls. There's a drone at the beginning, then it's light, it's easily singable; it goes a little bit faster; they're lots of words—a little bit more pattern-like. So all of that is telling us about her class, but there are also some other hints. There is one moment when she talks about [sings] that is a seria moment. And it's a moment where what happens? I love the way they stage this because it was exactly right. What happens when they are without pity? Did anybody notice? The music is cuing you that she's had a moment of being hurt, and the girls walk forward. It's such a lovely aria because it tells you a lot about her in one musical number. She says, "Cheat on them" not because "così fan tutte"—all women are like that. Yes, there's a reason that's not usually translated into English. You notice that. All women are like that. They all act that way. But why does she say to act that way? Because men do. By the end, Despina will be completely trampled on as well, so that position, that countering position is lost as the opera goes on, and it's something I really had to think about, about what her weight and her influence of what she stands for, because we have to move along they will have to wait if you ever read the book... But yes, that's part of what you think about—the devils and the details, the reality and the character, just that one little moment where she says, "pieta" her musical style changes completely. Everything changes.

Now I want to look at... quickly turn to another problematic opera, and that is *The Magic Flute*. There are so many ways, and if I had to give you negative quotes about the Queen of the Night, we would have a 7-page handout just on negative quotes. Somebody did in fact call her the "B" word in print, a critical. "A cold, selfish b----" I believe was the phrase. A different advisor I had asked me, "Are you trying to make the Queen of the Night a heroine for the 18th Century?" And I said no, and yet there are things about her that are heroic. So I'd like to bring those out more than they've been brought out to date.

I've got an interesting note. The musical *Wicked* came out when I was kind of cleaning things up with the Queen of the Night and I found out very similar in the way that it's put, the preconception that the Queen is bad, Sarastro is good. And yet that was challenged, not because of some kind of feminist agenda that I had, but because of my 4-year-old daughter. We were watching a Bergman film. I was looking at it to see how he dealt with the opera, and she turned to me and she said, "Mama, is the Queen a good lady or a bad lady?" How interesting that a four-year-old child picks that up. But then she asked me another question. That might be the obvious one, but then she said, "Why did the man take the little girl away from her mother?" That's what struck her. Not many critics ask that question seriously about this opera. It's assumed that there is a good reason. *The Magic Flute*, if you take it as a fable, is easy. It's a bad step-mother, wicked. You can reduce it to that. But that's not where Mozart was coming from. This is one of the bigger problems. Mozart was a Mason. The opera without a doubt has strong Masonic symbolism. You can read about that. The Queen represents a lot of things. That's why the women seem to be good at the beginning; they are actually going through certain rites. There were women lodges of adoption in France. Let's just say Vienna was not quite friendly to that idea. So you could interpret the entire thing as the women trying to set up their own Masonic lodge, and it's not acceptable because "without a man's guidance," as Sarastro says, "a woman will overstep her stair." That's a quote. I'm not putting things into it.

Also, with an opera that's older, in the 21st Century what do you do with a character Monostatos who is black and they say, "Your soul is as black as your skin."? Now unless you're willing to go "la, la, la" during that part, you should be a little uncomfortable. You should. It's being produced today. A director has to answer questions. I had a friend try to write notes about these problematic parts of *The Magic Flute*, as well as the gorgeous music, and you try to write about this and the major opera companies say, "No way! Do not write about these things!" We say, "Why? It's all there. These are grown up people. They can handle it. Mozart can handle it. The opera can handle it." And they said, "Because people come to the opera, they pay a lot for their tickets, and they want a pleasant evening." That's a true story. I have the emails back and forth. He sent them all to me and I found that very interesting.

I can see where the opera company is coming from. They've got to sell tickets. But I also don't believe that Mozart or *The Magic Flute* are so fragile or that audiences are so weak intellectually not to be able to try to grapple with that problem.

For me, the opera is ambiguous. Sarastro is enlightened; he's also a patriarchal bully. The Queen does feel love for her daughter, she's also a queen. We have no problem with kings choosing state over their children; we have a much harder time with a queen defending. You see that in history. In fact, many people said this was Empress Theresa, Maria Theresa. It's much harder to accept that.

I see the Queen of the Night kind of like Katherine Hepburn in *The Lion in Winter*, right? She spoke not very nice and wonderfully heroic and rebellious at the same time. If you can grasp the Queen that way, you understand. That's why she can't kill Sarastro herself. She says, "You have to kill him. And if you don't, because he's taken everything away from us, then you belong to him." It's not a nice speech, but it's a true speech; it's genuine, and Mozart gave her the most amazing music for this. I want you to listen to just a little bit, 1 track of Sarastro. I'm just going to let a few seconds go by. This is Sarastro, the nemesis of the Queen of the Night, the good guy. So we'll listen just a little bit to that track, track 3 I believe. [music plays]

It's nice, right? Pretty, soothing, lovely melody, but not many people wait to hear it. It's not like, "Oh, I can't wait for that Sarastro aria!" It's pretty, but it's not a moment that makes you feel chills. But when the Queen goes nuts, when she can't believe that her daughter's actually taking her enemy's part, because that's what happens in the dialogue before—Well Dad liked him, so maybe we could stay here—that's when she goes crazy. Everybody waits for that moment, and Mozart knew it. On his deathbed he said, "She's taking the stage now; she's hitting the high note. Here the mother's vow, the mother's curse!" So let's listen to this. [music plays]

So that is the moment that everyone awaits. The Queen of the Night is either booed or cheered off the stage, not because of the character, but whether she can pull that aria off. It's really what it's about. So the point that she's the bad lady but she has the greatest music—that's the second of the great arias that everybody waits to hear.

I'm going to close with a very different character, a character that almost everybody loves. But she is also a sign of a certain kind of ambivalence about whether we want to be like her, and that's Donna

Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, and I'm actually not using her music, but instead the catalogue aria. That in a way sums up some of the problems of dealing with what is the effect of a character and whether the opera is serious or not, and what was Mozart's perspective? What is our perspective?

The *Catalogue Aria* is one of the funniest arias ever written in terms of music in my opinion. I can't help laughing and yet it is one of the most horrible moments on stage dramatically. In this, Donna Elvira has just realized that she's found the guy that duped her, Don Giovanni. She thinks she was married. She's a young girl, very naive, thought she was married, and he runs into her and is disgusted now by her. He's already had the pleasure, thank you. And he turns to Leporello his servant and says, "Tell her everything." Leporello says, "Everything?" And he says, "Yeah, everything," and leaves. And Leporello sings this to this woman who has travelled for days looking for this husband who abandoned her, and this is what she discovers. You have the words there. Basically he says, "I've made this book of every woman that my master has ever been with, and there are tall ones and short ones and skinny ones and fat ones and Marcheses and Contadinas and princesses and servants...he really doesn't care if they're rich or pretty or ugly, as long as they wear a dress, you know what he does." Those are the words. That's what he says to her. And I've compiled this—here, read it with me. It's a horrible moment. What do you do if you are Donna Elvira on stage? The worst is the Donna Elvira who goes, "Oh! Oh! Oh!" [sways from side to side with the back of her hand over her forehead] It's so over the top that you feel like the guy with the twisty mustache has to come up. It's very hard to take what has just happened. There are a lot of women on that list, in that little black book, right?

Mozart gives us some clues about Don Giovanni, and Leporello knows very well how cruel this is. In the on dante part of it (we'll see the DVD and we'll close with that)...So he's saying basically [sings] When he gets to the old woman and he says, [sings] for the old women he basically conquers them for the pleasure of putting them on the list [sings]. It never sounded so insidious [sings "Lista"]. A good Leporello will play that. And then [sings] "But his real passion is the young beginner." At the very end he's more sad for her with the final one that he repeats that same melody [sings]. "It's enough that they have the gown." And that is the moment that Elvira feels it. Let's watch the video. I hate this movie by Joseph Losey; I generally do not like it, but I thought it was a brilliant way of staging the catalog aria. And then we'll close and we'll take questions.

So there is one example of how a filmmaker actually picked up on that strange harmonic moment in the *Catalogue Aria* to show you "the young beginner" and the consequences of being put on *la lista*; it shows you by her recognizing and by hiding herself. It's just a little detail in the aria, but it gives you a moment where it's funny but then it's not funny at the same time, which is a perfect way to describe Don Giovanni.

That's all that we have time for tonight.