Elements of Italian Opera Seria in the Opera "Don Giovanni"

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Abstract. The recent research on Mozart's opera "Don Giovanni" has focused on the integration of its music and drama, especially the use of elements of Italian opera seria (Opera Seria). This study takes the key characters and scenes in "Don Giovanni" as the object, and explores the manifestation of opera seria elements in character creation, musical structure and dramatic function. Through music analysis (such as da capo aria, harmonic progression, etc.) and drama text research, this paper reveals how Mozart used the sublime and moral themes of opera seria to form a unique artistic style.The research conclusion shows that "Don Giovanni" does not simply follow the tradition of opera seria, but through the organic integration of music and drama, it gives this form new expressiveness and philosophical depth. In the play, Mozart not only retains the grand narrative and moral admonition function of opera seria, but also expands the dramatic dimension of opera art through the delicate portrayal of character psychology and the innovation of musical language. This unique creative method not only enriches the aesthetic connotation of opera in the classical period, but also provides an important paradigm and inspiration for the creation of musical drama in later generations.

Keywords: Mozart, Don Giovanni, Italian opera seria. music analysis, dramatic structure.

1 Introduction

"Don Giovanni" is classified as opera buffa, but it contains many elements of opera seria. For example, serious themes, heroic characters, and highly formalized musical structures. How did Mozart combine the seriousness of opera seria with the lightness of opera buffa through music composition? "Don Giovanni" uses typical musical forms of opera seria, such as the da capo aria. However, how these forms are adapted to suit the narrative needs of opera buffa has not been studied in detail. Do the duets and chorus passages in "Don Giovanni" also borrow from the style of opera seria? Opera seria had a specific cultural function in 18th century European society (such as reflecting aristocratic values), and how "Don Giovanni" reflects the social culture of the time through opera seria elements has not been fully explored. This paper will conduct a detailed music analysis of the arias, duets, and choruses in "Don Giovanni". Dramatic analysis

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will be conducted to investigate the subject matter and narrative style of the libretto and to explore its connection with the tradition of opera seria.

2 Dramatic Analysis

2.1 Characters

In this opera, Don Giovanni is a complex character, both comic and tragic. He is indulgent and arrogant, but also charming and courageous [1]. His behavior, the aggression against Anna and the provocation to the commander, embodies the archetype of "noble but corrupt" common in opera seria [2]. Anna is a typical female character in opera seria, with nobility and emotional depth [3].The Commander is a typical role in opera seria, with seriousness and nobility [4]. His return as a statue draws on supernatural and mythological elements common in opera seria [5].

2.2 Scenes

The following analysis focuses on several important dramatic scenes: the opening scene of the commander being killed (recitative), "Non mi dir" (aria), and the return of the statue (finale). The music of these scenes covers the main forms of opera. There are also concentrated elements of opera seria, such as serious themes (moral conflicts, supernatural elements), sublime emotions (Anna's sorrow, the commander's majesty), and complex musical structures (variants of da capo arias, harmonic progressions).

This opening scene (Act 1, Scene 1) is the starting point of the dramatic conflict, setting the tragic tone of the whole play, and is also full of tension and conflict. Don Giovanni tries to violate Anna, the Commander intervenes and duels with Don Giovanni, and is eventually killed by Don Giovanni. In terms of dramatic tension, the fast rhythm of the music and the compact dialogue successfully create dramatic tension [1]. In terms of dramatic themes, the commander's death symbolizes the conflict between justice and evil, reflecting the common moral themes in opera seria [3].

Anna's aria "Non mi dir" in Act 2, Scene 5 is a turning point in the character's psychological development. Anna sings this aria full of emotional depth after learning the true identity of Don Juan. This scene reflects the nobility and emotional depth of Anna's character [4]

In terms of emotional expression, the complex musical structure and ornamentation successfully express Anna's emotions. In terms of character creation, this scene enhances the sublimity and tragedy of Anna's role, reflecting the common characteristics of female characters in opera seria [3].

The banquet scene (Return of the Statue) in Act 2, Scene 6 is the climax of the opera and the core moment of moral judgment. The statue of the commander appears at Don Giovanni's banquet and eventually drags Don Giovanni into hell. This scene is the climax of the play, full of dramatic tension and supernatural elements [5]. The appearance of the statue and the death of Don Juan reflect the supernatural and mythological elements common in opera seria. In terms of dramatic theme, Don Juan's fall and death convey a clear moral lesson, reflecting the didactic function common in opera seria [6].

3 Music Analysis

3.1 Don Giovanni's Airia "Fin ch'han dal vino"

This aria still uses the ABA' form (da capo aria), which is a typical structure of aria in Italian opera. Section A presents a fast and lively melody, mainly leaps and fast scales, expressing Don Giovanni's eagerness and excitement. For example, the opening melody line jumps from the tonic of B flat major to the dominant, and then returns to the tonic through the descending scale, forming a strong sense of dynamics (see Fig. 1). The harmony of section B has changed, the rhythm has slowed down, and the melody line has become more lyrical, expressing Don Giovanni's inner expectations. It expresses his anticipation for the upcoming enjoyment. Section A' returns to the theme of section A, forming an emotional closed loop (see Fig. 2).
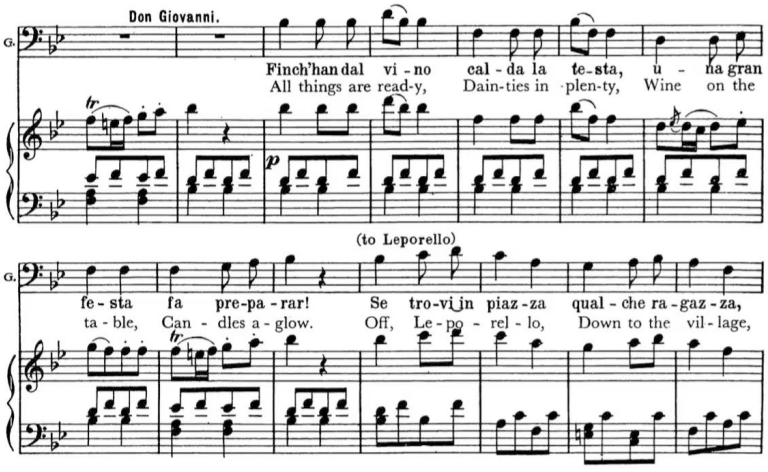
Fig. 1. Melody lines A [7].
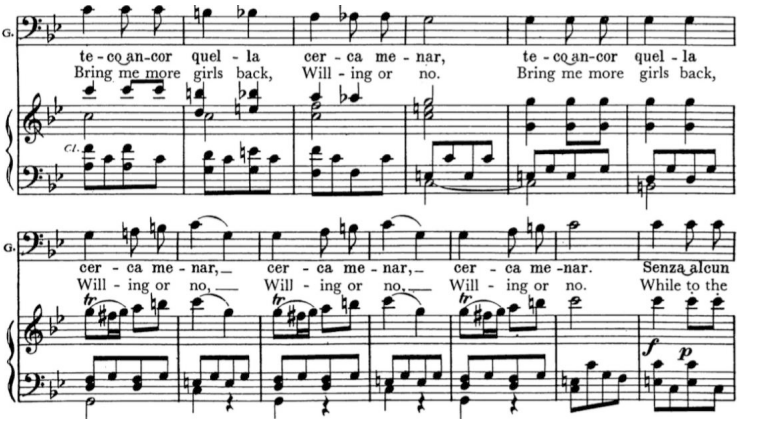
Fig. 2. Melody lines [7].

The harmony of section A is mainly in the key of B flat major, and the chord progression is I - V - I, which emphasizes the dominant and dominant relationship and expresses Don Giovanni's confidence and indulgence. (see Fig. 3)

The harmony of section B shifts from B flat major to its parallel minor (g minor), and the use of diminished seventh chords increases the tension (see Fig. 4).
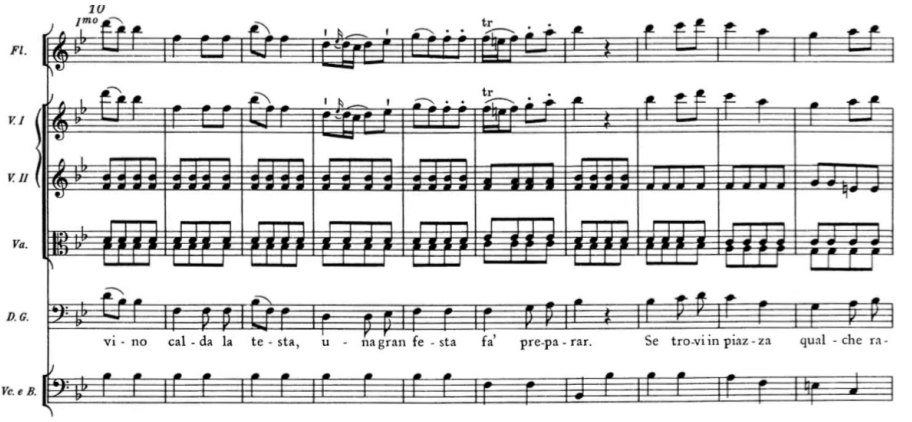
Fig. 3. Harmonic structure A [8].
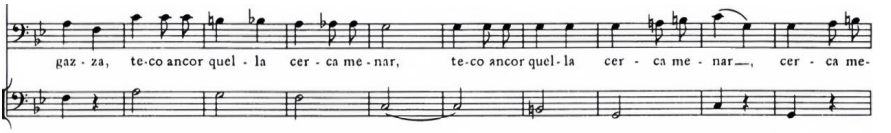
Fig. 4. Harmonic structure B [8].
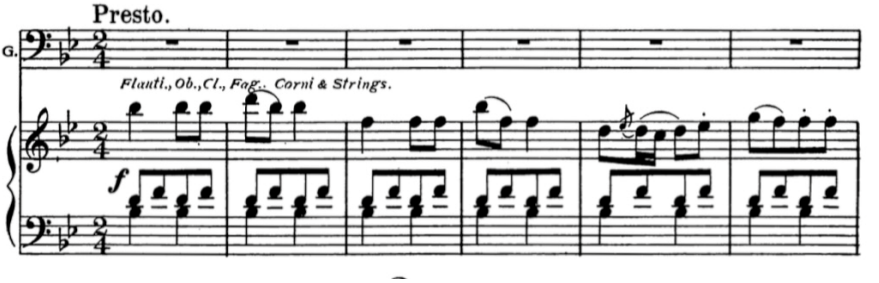
Fig. 5. Rhythm in aria "Fin ch'han dal vino" [7].

The rhythm of section A is mainly fast, showing Don Giovanni's eagerness and excitement (see Fig. 5).

The tempo of section B slows down, mainly consisting of eighth notes and quarter notes, expressing a turning point in emotion (see Fig. 6).
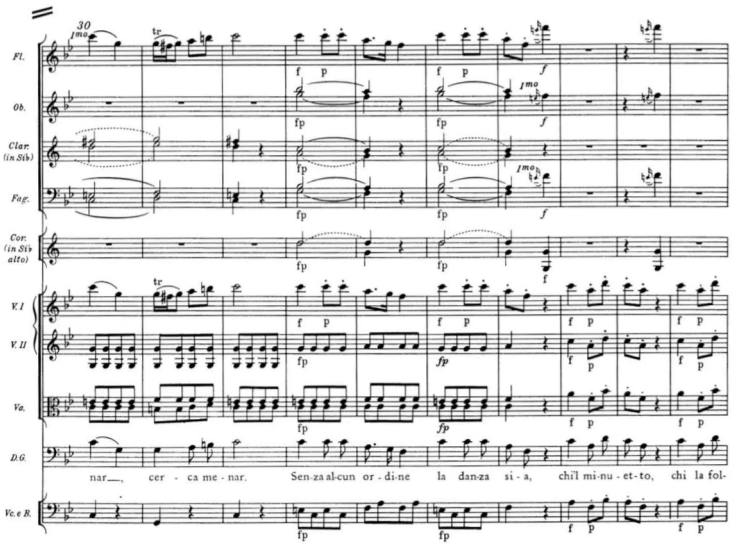
Fig. 6. Tempo change [8].
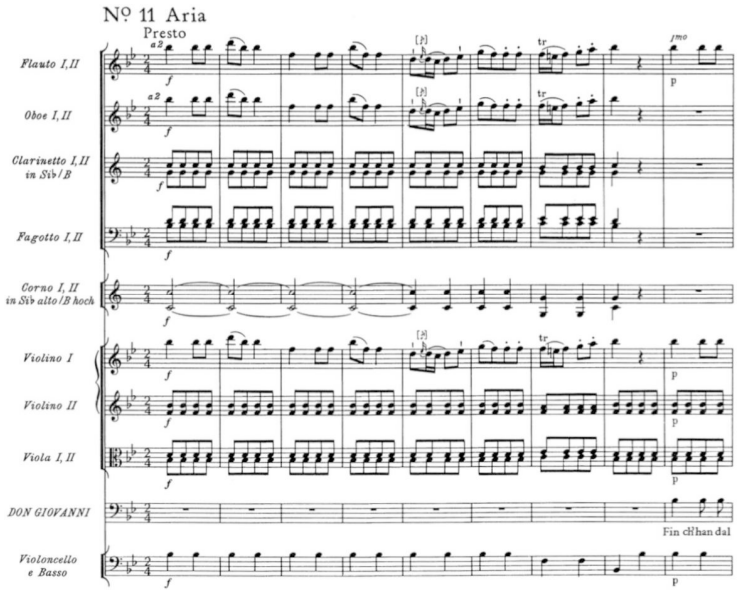
Fig. 7. Melody lines A [7].

The orchestra in section A is mainly composed of strings, supplemented by fast scale accompaniment of flute and oboe, which enhances the lightness and vitality of the music. The orchestration in section B is richer, and French horn are added to enhance the heaviness of the sound (see Fig. 7).

3.2 Anna's Aria "Non mi dir"

"Non mi dir" adopts a da capo aria form similar to opera seria, namely the ABA structure [9]. Although Mozart did not completely follow the traditional da capo aria, its structure still reflects the typical characteristics of opera seria. Section A expresses Anna's sadness and contradiction with a slow rhythm (Andante) and lyrical melody. Section B changes to a faster rhythm (Allegro), showing Anna's emotional outburst and determination. Section A' reproduces the opening melody, but enhances the emotional expression through ornaments and variations.

Opera arias often require the singer to demonstrate great technical skills, including ornamentation and improvisation. The ornamentation in "Non mi dir" (especially the recapitulation of section A) reflects this tradition. The A section is mainly in G major, with a smooth harmony, expressing Anna's sadness and contradiction. The B section changes to a brighter key (such as C major), with rich harmony changes, showing Anna's emotional outburst. The A section has a soothing melody and a steady rhythm, reflecting Anna's inner struggle. The B section has a jumping melody and a faster rhythm, showing Anna's determination and hope [10]. The recapitulation of the A section enhances the emotional expression through ornaments and variations, reflecting the technical requirements of opera seria.

In terms of character creation, although Don Giovanni is the protagonist of comic opera, his debauchery and tragic ending embody the archetype of "noble but corrupt" in serious opera [11]. Anna's aria "Non mi dir" shows the sublimity and emotional depth of female characters in serious opera, with delicate melody lines and profound emotional expression. The scene of the commander returning as a stone statue borrows the supernatural elements common in serious opera, enhancing the seriousness and moral conflict of the drama.

In terms of musical structure, Anna's "Non mi dir" adopts an ABA structure similar to the Da Capo Aria, which embodies the formal characteristics of serious opera. Through harmony and tonality changes, Mozart shows the emotional typology (Affektenlehre) of serious opera in "Don Giovanni", such as Anna's sadness and the commander's majesty .

From the perspective of dramatic function, Don Giovanni's fall and punishment embodies the common moral education function of opera seria, conveying profound ethical thinking through the combination of music and plot [12]. Opera seria emphasizes expressing the inner world of the characters through music, and the arias and choruses in "Don Giovanni" successfully achieve this goal.

4 Conclusion

"Don Giovanni" inherits many traditional elements of Italian opera seria, including serious themes, complex plots, highly skilled arias, and the use of recitatives. The elements of opera seria make the characters in "Don Giovanni" more multi-dimensional. For example, the Anna's nobility and the Don Giovanni's complexity, which enhances the tension and emotional depth of the drama. Mozart skillfully combines the musical

forms of opera seria and opera commedia dell'arte in "Don Giovanni", such as the variations of the da capo aria and the richness of the harmony, showing his superb skills in music composition. The elements of opera seria make "Don Giovanni" transcend a simple comedy and become a profound work that explores human nature, morality and society, opening up a new dimension for the expressiveness of opera art. In addition, how the opera seria elements in "Don Giovanni" reflect the social values and moral concepts of 18th century Europe is not covered in this article. However, this issue remains significant for research into how Mozart responded to the Enlightenment and the social changes of the time through the opera seria style.

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