

An Analysis of the Dramatic Musical Writing for Soprano in Mozart's Arias: A Case Study of *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*

Yufei Liu

Academy of Music, Shanxi University, Taiyuan, 030006, China

Abstract

This study takes Mozart's operas *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* as its objects of investigation, selecting the Countess's *Porgi, amor, qualche ristoro*, Susanna's *Giunse alfin il momento—Deh vieni, non tardar*, and Zerlina's *Batti, batti, o bel Masetto* as analytical samples. From six dimensions—musical form, tonal logic, rhythm and meter, melodic characteristics, accompaniment texture, and vocal technique—it explores how the composer constructed differentiated musical expression pathways based on the characters' social identities and dramatic situations. The analysis reveals three distinct lyrical paradigms: the Countess's aria, characterized by fixed tonality, descending stepwise melodic motion, and soft singing in the high register, forms an introverted, "stoic" tragic expression; Susanna's aria, through tonal deviation, ornamental groups, and a threefold progressive calling, externalizes a "performative" comedic psychological turn; Zerlina's aria, by means of a marked shift in meter (2/4 to 6/8) and tempo (Andante to Allegretto), realizes a "feigned-submission" emotional strategy of retreating in order to advance. These cases collectively corroborate the core principle of Mozart's aria composition—that musical form, tonality, rhythm, and vocal means all serve the character's psychological logic, with instruments and voice jointly participating in dramatic narration, elevating opera beyond formulaic vocal display to a "human art" possessing deep psychological authenticity. This paper provides a concrete and operationalizable analytical framework and theoretical reference for understanding dramatic music in Mozart's arias.

Keywords

Mozart; Aria; Dramatic music.

1. Introduction

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), as a central representative of European Classical period music, achieved an unprecedented artistic output within his brief life. His oeuvre spans opera, symphony, concerto, chamber music, and other genres, numbering over six hundred works, blending formal rigor with flexibility, elegance with ardor. This distinctive artistic quality made him the key bridge connecting Baroque music with Romantic music and established the normative paradigm of Classical period music for later generations. Mozart displayed prodigious talent from an early age: under the musical instruction of his father, he touched the keyboard at four, composed at five, and embarked on concert tours at six, traveling among the major courts and musical centers of Europe. This itinerant experience exposed him to the compositional techniques of diverse musical schools, allowing him to absorb the melodic sensibility of Italian opera, the courtly refinement of French music, and the rigorous logic of German polyphony—laying the groundwork for his future operatic creations[1].

Upon reaching adulthood, Mozart freed himself from the constraints of the Salzburg court and settled in Vienna as an independent composer. This transition not only facilitated the

maturation of his personal artistic style but also ushered his operatic composition into an entirely new phase. His operatic career can be roughly divided into three periods: an early period dominated by imitation and emulation, in which his works had yet to develop a distinct individuality; a middle period in which he began to break through the limitations of opera seria's emphasis on technical display, strengthening dramatic logic and character portrayal, with his composition moving toward maturity; and a late period representing the peak of his creative career, during which his collaboration with the librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte produced such canonical works as *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*, while *Die Zauberflöte* realized an artistic renewal of the German Singspiel. Throughout this process, Mozart consistently upheld the creative principle that "music serves the drama," deeply integrating character emotion, conflict of personalities, and musical language. The writing for the soprano voice is particularly salient—it is no longer merely a vehicle for virtuosic display, but a vital medium for conveying dramatic tension and shaping three-dimensional characters. Within the Classical-era operatic system, the aria is undoubtedly the core unit of vocal expression. It serves both as the principal medium for characters' interior monologues and as a key link in advancing the plot and presenting musical ideas. Since Gluck's reforms, opera had gradually shed the rigid formal constraints and the disjunction between music and plot, and the aria had shifted from pure vocal exhibition toward an organic integration of emotional expression and dramatic propulsion. Mozart's treatment of the aria drove this tendency to its apex. Accordingly, this paper takes *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* as case studies—two operas as objects of investigation—and conducts an in-depth analysis centered on soprano arias, with a focus on: Mozart's innovative approaches in composing soprano arias; the commonalities and differences between the soprano arias in these two works in terms of musical structure, melodic style, harmonic treatment, and dramatic function; and how this writing manifests the aesthetic core of Classical-era opera: "the unity of reason and emotion, the unity of form and content."

2. Theory and Literature Review

2.1. Aria Types and Dramatic Function: From Cavatina to Da Capo Aria

In the context of eighteenth-century Italian opera seria and opera buffa, the aria was not only a central passage for displaying vocal artistry but also a vital means of expressing a character's inner emotions and driving dramatic tension. Based on structural complexity and dramatic function, arias can be classified into the cavatina and the da capo aria.

The cavatina generally refers to short arias with a single emotional state and no repeated sections; its structure is predominantly binary (AB), emphasizing melodic lyricism and directness. In terms of dramatic function, the cavatina primarily serves to present a character's single emotional state at a given moment. For example, Susanna's aria *Giunse alfin il momento—Deh vieni, non tardar* in *Le Nozze di Figaro* exhibits typical cavatina characteristics [2], its aria proper adopts a simple binary form (A-B), with no contrasting thematic development or da capo repeat. The entire aria eschews complex dramatic conflict, concentrating all musical expressiveness on Susanna's boundless longing for the approaching night of love, unreservedly revealing her deep and tranquil love for Figaro. This focus on and invocation of pure love constitutes the singular and core emotional state that the aria conveys.

The da capo aria follows an ABA' structure: the A section states the theme, the B section provides contrast, and the A' section is an ornamented reprise. Its ABA structure supplies an emotional development logic of "statement–contrast–sublimation," yet the inevitable return of the A' section often causes the plot to stall temporally, with the character returning, through protracted virtuosic display, to the emotional starting point, unable to bring about substantive dramatic advancement. This became the point of departure for Mozart's subsequent structural

innovations. By breaking this rigidly symmetrical, static cycle and introducing multi-sectional concatenation or through-composed flexible forms—for instance, exploring binary, multi-sectional, and even comprehensive structures seamlessly integrated with recitative—Mozart carried out his reform. This innovation finds typical expression in both *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*: in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, the Countess's aria *Porgi, amor* employs a Simple binary form, omitting the reprise, using a "no-return" linear structure to mirror the Countess's repressed state of being trapped in a hopeless marriage with no retreat. By varying meter, tempo, and tonality within the aria, it ceases to be a self-contained vocal display panel and becomes an open action space capable of accommodating emotional shifts and dramatic turning points, so that the aria's musical structure closely follows the dynamic changes in the character's psychology and the escalation of external conflict, thereby making music once more the engine that drives the drama forward. For instance, Zerlina's aria *Batti, batti, o bel Masetto* in *Don Giovanni* features a striking internal shift in meter and tempo—the first half in 2/4 andante expressing pleading and vulnerability(Example 1), the second half shifting to 6/8 allegretto displaying joyful confidence—making the aria no longer a closed vocal display panel but an open action space capable of accommodating emotional mutation and dramatic turns(Example 2). Thus, the musical structure of the aria closely tracks the dynamic changes in the character's psychology and the escalation of external conflict, rendering music once again the engine propelling the drama forward.

Example 1. Andante

Example 2. Allegro

Ayres points out that Mozart's late eighteenth-century compositions exhibit a high degree of experimentation with classical period music forms, characterized by distinctive modulations and transitions, as well as unexpected shifts to secondary tonalities [3].By combining the lyricism of the cavatina with the recursive logic of the da capo structure, he synchronized music

with dramatic action, explicitly notated grace notes, trills, and scale runs, and placed virtuosity in the service of dramatic character rather than mere vocal display, thus endowing the aria with multilayered emotional content. For example, *Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen* from *Die Zauberflöte* introduces a pleading tone in the middle section and superimposes coloratura ascending arpeggios in the reprise, creating a powerful dramatic contrast between the character's vengeful fury and maternal entreaty. Donna Anna's *Non mi dir* from *Don Giovanni* achieves structural unity through thematic transformation, allowing Anna's psychological struggle between filial grief and determination for revenge to be directly presented through musical form.

3. Dramatic Analysis of Soprano Arias

The light lyric soprano is the lightest, smallest voice type in Mozart's opera buffa, with a range centered on c^1 – c^3 . The timbre is bright and transparent, suited to executing phrases that combine fluidity with ornamentation, and requires maintaining high-position resonance [1]. This vocal quality is typically embodied in Susanna's *Giunse alfin il momento—Deh vieni, non tardar* from *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Zerlina's *Batti, batti, o bel Masetto* from *Don Giovanni*. Zhou Song, taking Zerlina as an example, observes that the light, agile vocal quality externalizes the character's innocent yet slightly cunning personality, with the alternation of trills and staccato vividly conveying the emotional shift from pleading to coquettishness [1]. This reveals an important creative principle of Mozart: vocal technique exists not for its own sake but as a tool for externalizing character psychology—Zerlina's coquettishness requires nimble staccato, while Susanna's wit demands fluid ornamentation. In other words, every technical detail becomes a precise instrument of dramatic expression [4].

3.1. Dramatic Analysis of Soprano Arias in *Le Nozze di Figaro*

Le Nozze di Figaro is an Italian opera buffa composed by Mozart in 1786, adapted from Beaumarchais's play of the same title. The story takes place in Count Almaviva's castle: the valet Figaro and the maid Susanna are in love and about to marry, but the lecherous Count seeks to revive the long-abolished "droit du seigneur" in an attempt to possess Susanna. Susanna and the Countess Rosina join forces to set a trap, ultimately humiliating the Count before everyone, and Figaro and Susanna are successfully married. The opera concludes with the comedic triumph of the Third Estate's commoners over aristocratic intrigue [2].

3.1.1. *Porgi, amor*

This aria appears in Act II, Scene 1 of the opera, marking the Countess's first emotional outpouring after learning of her husband's infidelity. Li Tong observes that Mozart shaped this Countess with a sympathetic gaze: she "changed from a bright young woman into a noblewoman burdened with sorrow yet unable to confide" [5]. Her core predicament lies not in the loss of love but in the impossibility of openly expressing her pain—as an aristocrat, she must maintain decorum and can only pray to the god of love. This aria adopts a Simple binary form, remaining stably in E-flat major throughout, without modulation, proceeding at the slow pace of larghetto in 2/4 time. The orchestral introduction, lasting seventeen measures—approximately one-third of the entire piece—features four occurrences of the trill, like the Countess's irrepressible heartbeat. The near-static tonality, tempo, and rhythm together construct a "motionless prison," fittingly mapping her predicament of being trapped by noble status and a broken marriage. The singer cannot resort to dramatic tempo changes or exaggerated physical gestures to vent anguish; instead, she must, within a highly restrained musical framework, delineate inner despair and struggle through subtle gradations of vocal color. This restraint is itself the drama: she wishes to keep her husband yet cannot lower her

dignity. Yang Yixian positions her as the sole "opera seria" character in the opera [6]—the more elegant the music, the more desolate her plight appears.

The most dramatically charged passage of the aria lies in the B section (mm. 34–51), corresponding to the text "o mi rendi il mio tesoro, o mi lascia almen morir." Before this, an ascending eighth-note scale climbs stepwise from b^1 to a^2 (as shown in Example 3). The singer must gradually increase breath pressure as the pitch rises, with dynamics progressing from piano to forte, like a string gradually drawn taut. This is the dual summit of the aria in terms of technique and drama: the singer must sustain full head voice resonance at an extremely soft dynamic in the very high register, while simultaneously conveying the resolution and helplessness of "rather die than lose my husband." The softer and more focused this note is sung, the more it embodies aristocratic collapse—not hysterical, yet heartbreaking. The fermata that follows allows this "cry" to linger briefly in silence, after which the melody swiftly descends, symbolizing that after the brief outburst, everything returns to repression.



Example 3. B section

The same text is repeated three times in the B section, and the singer must design a different psychological layer for each repetition: the first is a tentative entreaty, with a slightly brighter tone; the second is more urgent, with the breath slightly withheld and the timbre darkening; the third falls to the middle-low register, with dynamics gradually fading, like a soliloquy after utter exhaustion. The "static quality" of the entire piece, devoid of tempo changes, requires the singer to employ extremely subtle rubato at each phrase ending and rest, producing a "stoic tremor"—the ebb and flow of breath should resemble the breathing of suppressed weeping, each sustained note inwardly charged with tension rather than blandly held. Only in this way can the Countess's "despair beneath elegance" be fully transmitted to the audience.

3.1.2. *Giunse alfin il momento—Deh vieni, non tardar*

This aria appears in Act IV, Scene 10 of the opera. Susanna performs it deliberately after discovering that Figaro is eavesdropping—it is a "performed aria." The aria consists of a recitative and an aria proper. The recitative is in freely paced 4/4 time, with the tonality shifting from C major to F major, making extensive use of anacrusis, dotted notes, and rests; the delivery is natural yet conceals ulterior motives. The aria proper is in regular 6/8 time, marked *allegretto*, with F major as its primary tonality, embedding a ternary form (A-B-A'); the B section briefly moves into G minor before returning. The accompaniment employs alberti-style broken chords, with the right hand occasionally forming parallel thirds or sixths with the voice, as though the piano is enacting a dialogue between Figaro and Susanna. This musical language directly serves Susanna's dramatic act of "performing a love song." The singer's dramatic shaping is first embodied in the transition from recitative to aria. The recitative should flow like natural speech, yet each rest must be infused with psychological action—for example, pausing and inhaling after "Giunse al fin il momento", (as shown in Example 4) with the eyes glancing toward the thicket where Figaro hides, as if silently saying, "Very well, I'll perform for you." Upon entering the aria, the voice must immediately become bright, fluid, and alluring; the

breath shifts from contained to flowing; the timbre moves forward; the corners of the mouth lift slightly. The sudden regularization of the rhythm is precisely the sonic signal that she has begun to actively take control of the situation.

SUSANNA:

Example 4. Giunse al fin il momento

The B section of the aria (mm. 34–42) possesses the greatest psychological depth. The text reads "Deh vieni, non tardar, o gioia bella, vieni ove a amore per goder t'appella, finché non splendi in ciel notturna face," yet Mozart shifts the tonality from F major to G minor. The singer must, beneath a bright surface, secretly infuse a shade of darkness—slightly lowering the laryngeal position, increasing the degree of vocal fold closure, making the timbre marginally darker than the surrounding phrases, and moderately tightening the breath support, so as to convey a fleeting sense of loss or grievance from within. This change must be extremely subtle and never sentimental, lest it undermine the witty, playful foundation of Susanna's character. The brief flash of the minor mode is like the character inadvertently leaking genuine emotion amid a sweet performance—this is Mozart's genius in portraying psychology through tonality (as shown in Example 5).

The dramatic climax of the entire aria is concentrated in the threefold repetition of "Vieni" (Come) at the conclusion. Mozart designed different musical treatments for three identical textual phrases, and the singer must propel the dramatic progression through the layered escalation of breath, dynamics, and emotional investment. The first "Vieni" is executed with a diminuendo, a whispered testing—extremely sparing of breath, soft in volume, conveying the trepidation of "Did he hear me?" The second moves from piano to forte and back to piano, forming an arc; the breath flows more rapidly, the volume swelling then receding, representing the slight boldness that follows the confirmation that the listener is indeed attending. The third, on an ascending fourth leap, receives a free fermata, with the strongest dynamic and longest duration; the singer must support the high note with ample breath, maintaining a bright and open timbre, and deliver it as a fusion of declaration of love and playful provocation. Between the three calls, the breaths should grow increasingly shorter; the intake before the third must be swift and deep to ensure the energy of the high note. Gaze and facial expression must change in synchrony with the voice: from slight shyness, to a smiling confirmation, to steadfastness tinged with love. After this sustained note, the piece concludes in a light coda, and Susanna's

wit and self-assurance are ultimately confirmed by the clean closure of the sound(as shown in Example6).

[Andante]

Deh vie - ni, non tar - dar, o gio - ja bel - la.

Vie-ni o-ve a- mo - re per go-der t'ap - pel - la fin - chè non splen - de in

ciel not-tur - na fa - ce— fin - chè l'a-ria e an-cor bru - na, e il mon - do

Example 5. mm. 34-42

Ai pia-ce-ri d'a- mor- qui tut- to a- de- sca. Vie - ni, ben

mi - o, tra — que - ste pian- te a- sco - se, vie - ni,

vie - ni! Ti vo' la fron - te in - co - ro - nar — di ro -

colla voce

Example 6. The threefold repetition of "Vieni"

Moreover, the aria's abundant ornamentation (appoggiaturas, turns) demands that the singer execute them with a nimble, agile vocal line, free of any dragging—which precisely externalizes Susanna's lively, spirited personality. The sustained high f^2 on the word "nar" of "coronar" before the ending further concentrates all emotion into a single point; here, the singer should project the voice like a parabola, allowing it to arc outward and naturally recede (as shown in Example 7).

se, ti vo' la fron - te in - co - ro - nar, in - co - ro -

Example 7. The sustained high f^2 on the word "nar" of "coronar"

The two arias form the strongest dramatic contrast: one silently endures suffering in prayer, the other actively defuses crisis through performance. Through differences in voice type and

musical temperament, Mozart achieves the most profound characterization of these two female figures: for shaping the stoic Countess, he constructs an introverted tragic lyricism through fixed tonality, descending melody, and soft high-register singing; for shaping the witty Susanna, he externalizes a comedic psychological turn through tonal deviation, ornamentation, and progressive calling. Their commonality lies in the fact that form, tonality, rhythm, and technique all submit to character psychology, with instruments and voice jointly undertaking the function of dramatic narration.

3.2. Dramatic Analysis of *Batti, batti, o bel Masetto* from *Don Giovanni*

3.2.1. Introduction to *Don Giovanni*

The *Don Giovanni*, composed by Mozart in 1787, is an opera buffa [7]. The work fuses life narrative with philosophy, concentrating on the profound delineation of character psychology, and stands as "the forerunner of later musical psychological drama." It recounts the story of the Spanish nobleman Don Giovanni, who, in the course of wantonly seducing women and committing countless misdeeds, kills the Commendatore, who had attempted to protect his daughter. After a series of absurd and dramatically charged episodes of flight, deception, and seduction, Don Giovanni impudently invites the Commendatore's stone statue to dinner at a graveyard. Ultimately, at the banquet, faced with the apparition's warning to repent, he steadfastly clings to his arrogant will and refuses to submit, whereupon he is dragged into fiery hell—completing an ultimate contest of desire, will, and divine judgment [7]. Although the work is grounded in the comic mode, it in fact harbors tragic conflict, exhibiting the generic hallmark of a "fusion of the tragic and the comic" [8]. In this opera, Mozart employs orchestral techniques to precisely convey the emotional states and temperamental differences of the characters, thereby heightening the dramatic tension of the entire work [7].

3.2.2. Dramatic Analysis of *Batti, batti, o bel Masetto*

The *Batti, batti, o bel Masetto* is situated at the close of Act I of *Don Giovanni*. Zerlina, having been deceived by Don Giovanni and nearly betraying her fiancé Masetto, must, upon coming to her senses, return to her beloved and beg for forgiveness. Mozart creates a lyric soprano character who is simple in image and lively in disposition—one who, though she has erred, still elicits tender affection [7]. Yet this innocence is not weakness: she knows full well that Masetto is soft-hearted, and thus adopts "feigned submission" as a strategy, using coquettishness to win back his love.

The piece is in ternary form (A–B–A'). The A section spans mm. 1–35; the B section, mm. 36–60; and the A' section, mm. 61–100 [7]. The score reveals the following design: the A section is in 2/4 Andante, with the tonality shifting from F major to C major; the B section remains in 2/4 Andante, with the tonality returning to F major; the A' section shifts to 6/8 Allegretto, with the tonality stabilizing in F major. This design allows the first two sections to build an atmosphere of pleading through the slow 2/4 meter, while the A' section, through the dual transformation of meter and tempo, directly externalizes the character's psychological turn from humility to confidence. Melodically, the A section is dominated by descending stepwise motion, with the accompaniment providing support through block chords; the B section introduces syncopation and non-chord tones, adding a sense of unease; the A' section, by contrast, is built from staccato and dotted notes, with the accompaniment shifting to fluid broken chords and a light, buoyant rhythm.

The most dramatically charged passage lies at the end of the A section through the beginning of the A' section, corresponding to the text shifting from "Batti, batti" to "Ah, lo vedo, non hai core." Prior to this, Zerlina sings "Lascie-ro ca-var-mi gli oc-chi"; her mood is tense and uneasy, and the music is correspondingly heavy. The singer employs a slightly tremulous, soft timbre to convey the ambivalent psychology of "outwardly fearful, inwardly testing."

When she sings "Ah non co-re," Masetto's reaction confirms her belief that he will forgive her, and the music accordingly transitions into the A' section: the meter shifts from 2/4 to 6/8, the tempo rises from Andante to Allegretto, the melody ascends, and the dynamics intensify. At this moment, Zerlina's tone transforms into one of playful pique [7]. The singer must, in that very instant, adjust the breath—from contained and constrained to flowing and buoyant; the timbre shifts from dark to bright; the expression changes from evasive to direct. Mozart uses the transformation of meter and tempo to externalize the psychological turn "from testing to taking control." Once the A' section is entered, the 6/8 meter generates a waltz-like lilt, and the text turns to visions of a happy future. This melodic passage, rhythmically bright and emotionally exuberant, fully embodies Zerlina's personality and her yearning for a joyful life. The singing must therefore employ a light and agile vocal line, with the ends of phrases slightly lifted, so as to accentuate playfulness and self-assurance. Every vocal technique employed in the piece serves a single purpose—to let the audience see how Zerlina, through coquettishness, takes command of the situation(as shown in Example8).

6

56

non hai co - re! Ah non hai

59

co - re, ah lo ve - do, non hai co - re!

cresc. f

Allegro

62

Pa - ce, pa - ce, o vi - ta mi - a, pa - ce, pa - ce, o vi - ta

p

Example 8. A' section

4. Mozart's Creative Principles as Reflected in the Three Arias and Their Significance

Table1. Narrative Functions of the Two Works

Arias	<i>Porgi, amor</i>	<i>Giunse alfin il momento—Deh vieni, non tardar</i>	<i>Batti, batti, o bel Masetto</i>
Character Identity and Situation	Upper-class lady, marital breakdown.	The Soubrette	Rustic soubrette, Begging for forgiveness, Strategic submissiveness.
Musical Form	Simple binary form, Non-recapitulating, Through-composed.	the piece takes the form of a traditional recitative-aria pairing. The aria itself is cast in a ternary form (ABA), featuring a distinct internal recapitulation of the primary theme.	A-B-A'
Tonal Logic	Remains entirely in E-flat major, Without modulation.	Rooted in F major, The B section modulates to G minor.	A section: F Major → C, B section: F Major, A' section: F Major
Rhythm and Meter	2/4 time, Larghetto, Constant speed.	Rhythmic elasticity, Compound duple meter, Allegretto	A, B section: 2/4 Andante, A' section: 6/8 Allegretto
Melodic Characteristics	descending stepwise motion, with a narrow tessitura, soft delivery at the melodic peak.	The melodic line features a balanced interplay of conjunct motion and delicate leaps. Punctuated by sustained, accented climactic notes.	descending stepwise motion (A) → Ascending leaps (A'), Crisp staccato
Accompaniment Texture	Supported by a framework of block chords, the music features a transparent texture, while the pulsations in the introduction echo the rhythm of a heartbeat.	the piece presents a stark contrast: the recitative is supported entirely by sparse block chords, whereas the aria shifts to a fluid accompaniment of broken chords. In the upper register, the right-hand part enriches the texture through expressive parallel voices.	Block Chords (A/B), Flowing Broken Chords (A')
Vocal Technique	Floating high notes, Nuanced breath control, Inner tension of the sustained notes.	Parlando delivery, Instantaneous shifts in vocal coloring, Threefold iteration of "Vieni".	Breath and Timbre shift during metric/tempo modulation. Vocal agility
Timbre orientation	Mellow, Dark, Restrained	Squillo, Ethereal lightness	Squillo, Ethereal lightness
Force Handling	Predominantly soft dynamics, Floating high notes.	Subtle dynamic shading, Terraced dynamics.	Crescendo transition: Section A: mp / Mezzo-piano, Section A': mf / Mezzo-forte
Core Dramatic Expression	Ascending scale → A floating high note → Descending resolution	Recitative → aria, g minor tonal detour, Threefold iteration of "Vieni".	2/4 → 6/8 time, Andante to Allegretto, Melodic Contour: Descending to Ascending
Musical Style	Restrained lyricism: emotions are layered and tightly contained, with brief sudden ruptures breaking through restraint before quickly being reined back in.	Performative Lyricism	Vulnerable lyricism: using "showing weakness" as a strategy to achieve an "advance through retreat" through musical shifts.
Commonality: Form is the drama.			The choices of musical form, tonality, and rhythm are all determined by the character's psychology and environment, serving as the vehicle of the drama.
Commonality: Skills serve to express musical emotions			Techniques such as A floating high note, the three escalating calls, and shifts in meter and tempo serve the character's psychological state at that moment, rather than being mere vocal display.
Commonality: Equal status of human voices and instrumental music			The accompaniment texture (trills, broken chords, block chords) works together with the voice to complete the dramatic expression; the instrumental part is not simple background filler.

In *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, Mozart, in accordance with each character's social identity and dramatic situation, devised markedly distinct musical techniques and lyrical paradigms. The Countess's aria, characterized by fixed tonality, descending melody, and soft high-register singing, presents an introverted, "stoic" tragic lyricism; Susanna's aria, through

tonal deviation, ornamentation, and a threefold progressive calling, externalizes a "performative" comedic psychological transformation; Zerlina's aria, by means of the marked shift in meter and tempo, realizes a "feigned-submission" emotional strategy of retreating in order to advance. The three works collectively corroborate Mozart's core creative principle: musical form, tonality, rhythm, and vocal technique are all subordinated to the character's psychological logic, with instruments and voice jointly undertaking the function of dramatic narration. (Table 1.)

From the analysis of the three arias, three core principles of Mozart's operatic composition can be distilled: form serves drama, technique externalizes psychology, and instruments and voice collaborate in narration. These principles collectively point toward a fundamental transformation—Mozart elevated opera from "formulaic vocal display" to a "human art."

First, Mozart broke through the highly conventionalized compositional practices of eighteenth-century Italian opera, designing unique musical forms according to each character's status, situation, and psychological state. In Mozart's operas, the associative treatment of harmony, themes, and motifs blurs the boundary between recitative and aria, so that musical form is no longer an appendage to the plot but becomes the intrinsic driving force of dramatic progression [4]. This principle of "form serving drama" enabled opera, for the first time, to attain a genuine musical-dramatic unity.

Second, Mozart firmly bound vocal technique to the psychological demands of the character. The Countess's soft high-register singing externalizes an aristocratic collapse; Susanna's threefold progressive calling externalizes the psychological progression from tentative testing to deep affection; Zerlina's shift in meter and tempo externalizes the turn from feigned submission to self-assurance. In Mozart's writing, voice and orchestra occupy a fundamentally equal status, and the orchestra is even capable of conveying emotions more affecting than those of the voice [4] p.8. This means that technique is no longer an end in itself—a goal of virtuosic display—but a means of expressing dramatic content, a method for conveying the character's emotions.

Finally, Mozart endowed the instruments with an unprecedented dramatic function. In all three arias, the accompaniment texture is never mere background filler: the trill is like a heartbeat, the broken chords like dialogue, and the shift from block chords to broken chords directly participates in externalizing the psychological turn. The orchestra, in the interstices of the vocal line, assumes the function of "speaking"—this mode of collaborative narration between voice and instruments renders the orchestra "the unspeaking protagonist" of the drama [4]. The core significance of these three principles lies in this: Mozart writes drama with music, rather than accompanying drama with music. Paul Henry Lang assessed Mozart as "the greatest dramatic genius of all time," holding that his operatic conception possesses a purely aesthetic nature, and that its core means of expression is music itself [4]. The principles that Mozart established provided a fundamental aesthetic reference for the subsequent development of opera.

5. Conclusion

Through a comparative analysis of three representative soprano arias from *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*—the Countess's *Porgi, amor*, Susanna's *Giunse alfin il momento—Deh vieni, non tardar*, and Zerlina's *Batti, batti, o bel Masetto*—this study has systematically examined how Mozart constructed differentiated pathways of dramatic musical expression tailored to characters' social identities and psychological states. The findings reveal three distinct lyrical paradigms that correspond to three dramatically divergent female figures: the Countess's aria, anchored in fixed tonality, descending stepwise melodic motion, and restrained high-register delivery, embodies an introverted, "stoic" mode of tragic expression; Susanna's aria, realized through tonal detours, ornamental figuration, and a threefold progressive invocation,

externalizes a "performative" comedic psychological turn; and Zerlina's aria, effected by a pronounced shift in meter (2/4 to 6/8) and tempo (Andante to Allegretto), enacts a "feigned-submission" emotional strategy of advancing by way of retreat.

These case studies collectively corroborate the three core principles underlying Mozart's operatic composition. First, form serves drama: Mozart broke free from the rigid formal conventions of eighteenth-century Italian opera, designing musical structures—whether simple binary, ternary, or through-composed—that arise organically from the character's inner logic rather than imposing a prefabricated mold. Second, vocal technique externalizes psychology: floating high notes, layered dynamic gradations, agile coloratura, and timbral modulations are never ends in themselves but precise instruments for rendering the nuances of a character's emotional state. Third, instruments and voice collaborate in narration: the orchestral accompaniment—whether pulsing trills evoking a heartbeat, Alberti bass suggesting dialogue, or the transition from block chords to broken chords mirroring a psychological shift—functions not as decorative background but as an equal dramatic partner, what may be called the "silent protagonist" of the opera.

In sum, Mozart's revolutionary contribution lies in his elevation of opera from a formulaic vehicle of vocal virtuosity to a genuine *human art*—one in which every musical dimension serves the truth of psychological experience. By writing drama through music rather than merely accompanying it, Mozart established an aesthetic paradigm of musical-dramatic unity that would become a foundational reference point for the subsequent development of opera, foreshadowing the psychological depth and dramatic integration that would characterize the art form in the centuries to follow.

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