

Classical music V

Exercise 1: Read the plot synopsis for Mozart's opera *Così fan tutte*, and then answer the following questions:

Argument:

Two young sisters are desperate because their boyfriends have to go to war. However, they are soon wooed by two handsome suitors, who are actually their own fiancés, disguised so as not to be recognized.

What do the two young men mean by this malicious deception? Well, show a friend (Don Alfonso), somewhat incredulous about the fidelity of women, that his fiancées are not like other women: they will be faithful to them during their (feigned) absence.

Indeed, the two sisters, madly in love, are inconsolable. But not for long: because of the ideas that Despina (her shameless servant) puts into their heads, and the flattery of the new suitors, who go to the point of being poisoned by love, they give in to the temptation to let themselves be loved.

Will there be deaths and revenge? Well no: everything ends in forgiveness and reconciliation. The conclusion of the opera is typically classic. Although both girls have shown their weakness, they are no less charming for that. Weakness is part of human nature. Also ... who's cheated on whom?

Listen to one of the interventions of Despina, the maid. She is a very practical young woman, and recommends that her ladies go out and have fun. Mozart writes music of great simplicity for Despina, which underlines the popular character of the girl.



Aria of Despina (*Così fan tutte*), (W.A. Mozart)

- You know that Don Alfonso does not think very well of women. What opinion does Despina have of men?

In uomini, in soldati
sperare fedeltà?
Non vi fate sentir, per carità! (bis)
Di pasta simile son tutti quanti;
le fronde mobili, l'aure inconstanti
han più degli uomini stabilità.
Mentite lagrime, fallaci sguardi,
voci ingannevoli, vezzi bugiardi,
son le primarie lor qualità (bis).
In noi non amano che il lor diletto,
poi ci dispreziano, neganci affetto,
né val da barbari chieder pietà...

¿De un hombre, de un soldado
esperar fidelidad?
Por favor, ¡no me hagáis reír!
Todos ellos son de la misma pasta;
el follaje móvil, la brisa voluble
tienen más estabilidad que un hombre.
Lágrimas fingidas, miradas falsas.
Voces engañosas, caricias y mentiras;
éas son sus principales cualidades.
De nosotros sólo buscan su diversión,
luego te desprecian y te niegan el afecto;
de nada sirve implorarles piedad...



- What is Despina's voice?
- What is the meter in which this aria is written?
- Which instrumental family mainly accompanies Despina in this aria?

Exercise 2: Now listen to a fragment of greater dramatic complexity. It is about the scene in which the two lovers, in disguise, pretend to be poisoned by love. Note that the six characters show different feelings in the same situation: this is a great challenge from a theatrical and musical point of view.

Aria (*Final Act I*), (W.A. Mozart)

- Despina and Don Alfonso, accomplices of the deception, have a great time.
- The two boys play their part in the deception, inwardly alarmed at the turn things are taking.
- The two sisters, disoriented and touched by such a dramatic situation, are the only ones who do not fake their feelings.

Despina:
- Cosa vedo!
Morti i nocchini io credo,
o pressimi a spirar.
Don Alfonso:
- Ah, che purtroppo è vero,
furenti, disperanti
si son avveinati!
Oh amore singolar.
Despina:
- Abbandonar i miseri
saria per voi vergogna.
Soccorreti bisogna.
Las dos hermanas + Don Alfonso:
- Cosa possiamo mai far? (bis)
Despina:
- Di vita ancor dan segno;
colle pietose mani
fate in po' lo sesto.
E voi con me correte:
un medico, un antidoto
vogliamo a ricercar.
—Despina y Don Alfonso se van—
Las dos hermanas:
- Dio, che cimento è questo,
evento più funesto,
non si potea trovar!
Las dos enamorados, para sí:
- Più bella commedia
non si potea trovar!
Las dos hermanas:
- Sospiate gli infelici.
- Che facciamo?
- Tu che dici?
- In momenti sì dolenti chi
potria li abbandonar?
- Che figure interessanti!
- Possiam farci un poco avanti.
- Ha freddissima la testa.
- Fredda, fredda è ancora questa.
- Ed il polso?
- Io non gliel'isento.
- Questo batte lento, lento.
- Ah, se tarda ancor l'aiuta
speme più non v'è di vita.
Las dos enamorados:
- Più domestiche e trattabili
sono estrambe diventate;
sia a veder che lor pietade
va in amore a terminar
Las dos hermanas:
- Poverini la lor morte
mi farebbe lagrimar.
- ¡Dios más, qué desgracia!
Una situación más penosa
es difícil de imaginar.
- Una comedia más graciosa
es difícil de imaginar.
- Suspiran, los infelices.
- ¿Qué hacemos?
- ¿Tú qué dices?
- En un momento tan doloroso,
¿quién podría abandonarles?
- ¿Qué atractivos son!
- Acercuémonos un poco más.
- Tiene la frente muy fría.
- También éste: fría, fría.
- ¿Y el pulso?
- No lo encuentro.
- Este late lento, lento.
- ¡Ay, que llegar pronto la ayuda,
no les queda mucho de vida!
- Estas dos se han vuelto
más dóciles y tratables.
Está por ver que su piedad
no termine en amor.
- ¡Pobrecillos! Su muerte
me haría llorar.



- In Despina's speeches, does she sing alone or do more voices accompany her?
- Who sings the phrase: "Cosa possiamo mai far"?
- Once Despina and Don Alfonso leave, the two sisters stay with their lovers. In the first intervention ...
- In this intervention, what phrase reflects the feeling of sadness and helplessness experienced by the two girls?
- And which one conveys the fact that lovers are having a great time cheating?
- However, there is an identical phrase for both girls and boys, what is it?
- This is followed by a dialogue between the concerned girls, in which two phrases do they sing as a duet? Choose one in each section.
- How does this audition end?