

REFLECTIONS ON MOZART'S 'NON SO PIÙ COSA SON, COSA FACCIO'

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Daniel Leeson's intriguing suggestion that the opening ten-note theme of Cherubino's Act 1 aria in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* is immediately taken up by Basilio in the following trio, in order to indicate that he has overheard the page sing, raises a number of very thought-provoking questions.¹ As the clear implication of this idea is that the theme of 'Non so più' was composed before, or at least in conjunction with, 'Cosa sento', it will be interesting first to look at the original manuscripts to see if they provide any chronological support. In an honest, if perhaps slightly regret-tinged comment on the value of his work on Mozartean watermarks, Alan Tyson wrote: 'It is the destiny of paper-evidence to be suggestive rather than conclusive.'² As it transpires, this remark sums up very effectively the sources for 'Non so più'. Suggestive they certainly are, but, as is so often the case, a chasm remains between observable physical features such as ink colours, watermarks, paper types, corrections and revisions, and any particular theory of compositional intent that might be based on them. In this instance it would be unwise to claim that the palaeographic evidence provides direct support for Leeson's thesis; on the other hand, it certainly poses no obstacle to it, and it raises interesting questions about the circumstances in which this very fine aria was composed.

The palaeography of Act 1 of *Figaro* was first studied in depth by Karl-Heinz Köhler, who proposed a broad chronology of composition for the first two acts.³ At that time, Acts 3 and 4 were still unavailable in Poland. As other scholars have since confirmed, he concluded that, with a few exceptions, the ensembles were composed before the arias. This was Mozart's usual practice, enabling him to consult with his singers to take full account of their strengths and weaknesses in writing the solo numbers. In view of the general uncertainty over the casting of the women's roles in the early stages of preparing for *Figaro*, it is not surprising to find that their arias were among the last pieces to be composed. The only exception is in fact Cherubino's Act 1 aria. Thanks to the meticulous work of Alan Tyson and Dexter Edge on the autograph, it has been established that (with the exception of one leaf to be discussed shortly) 'Non so più' was written on type 74-I paper, which was most probably in use during the first phase of work on the opera in late 1785.⁴ Mozart's apparently early start on this aria raises an obvious question: since its eventual singer had not yet even joined the Italian opera company in Vienna – Dorotea Bussani did not make her debut until the delayed premiere of *Figaro* on 1 May 1786 – could 'Non so più' have been begun with another singer in mind? Edge discusses several possibilities, focusing in particular on the soprano Giovanna Nani.⁵

Although much recent work (including my own) on aria composition has stressed the centrality of the relationship between composer and performer, it is nevertheless important not to lose sight of the fact that

1 Daniel N. Leeson, 'Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*: A Hidden Dramatic Detail', *Eighteenth-Century Music* 1/2 (2004), 301–304.

2 Alan Tyson, *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 120.

3 Karl-Heinz Köhler, 'Mozarts Kompositionsweise – Beobachtung am Figaro-Autograph', *Mozart Jahrbuch* 1967, 31–45.

4 Alan Tyson, *Wasserzeichen-Katalog, Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke* (hereafter *NMA*) X/33/2 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1992). Dexter Edge, 'Mozart's Viennese Copyists' (PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 2001). Edge's very valuable chronology of paper types is given as Table 3.1, and his is the numbering system used here.

5 For Edge's discussion of the sources of *Figaro* see 'Mozart's Viennese Copyists', 1416–1741. The casting of *Figaro* is discussed on 1437–1446.



an aria was also part of an extended dramatic structure, and that, in taking account of the wishes of his singers, a composer had to strike a balance with broader musical considerations.⁶ In the light of Leeson's hypothesis, therefore, is it possible that Mozart simply committed the opening theme of this aria to paper well in advance of actually composing the full piece, and with no particular singer in mind? The autograph of *Così fan tutte* strongly suggests that on occasion Mozart did do this, simply writing down the opening bars of an aria on the first leaf of an 'allocation' of blank sheets, only to set this pile aside for work at a later stage. The evidence is especially unambiguous in the case of Don Alfonso's aria 'La mano a me date', which was later turned into a quartet. This approach would allow for the possibility that Mozart might compose the opening bars of an aria in advance of knowing who had been cast in the role, because he had a particular dramatic or musical purpose in mind for its theme.

In the case of 'Non so più' an unusual feature of the autograph turns the spotlight firmly on its opening bars. For some unknown reason, its original first leaf was removed by Mozart at a late stage and recopied. The replacement was written on type 82-I paper, identified as probably one of the 'latest' papers in use in *Figaro*. This would place the date of this recopied leaf around the time that the composer was working on the other solos for the women singers, very close to the completion of the score. Apart from the overture, which was often the last piece in an opera to be composed, this leaf is in fact the only 'late' page in the whole of Act 1. It is at this point that the gap between evidence and explanation is frustrating. There are many entirely plausible nonmusical reasons for the loss of a single page: the unruly and voracious dog, the defective copying equipment, the spilt beverage – the contemporary university teacher will be familiar with them all! But if the explanation relates to the compositional process itself, intriguing questions are raised.

Further helpful information on the compositional history of 'Non so più' is to be found in an abandoned particella, which begins on the first leaf of an intact bifolium in the British Library, MS Zweig 57.⁷ This continuity draft is on the same 'early' paper type as that of the final version, and its first leaf contains what was very probably Mozart's original beginning: the first fifteen bars of Cherubino's opening stanza and the bass line.⁸ As he often did in a particella, Mozart also added in the string parts for the first few bars, in order to indicate the figurative style of the accompaniment. On the conjoined leaf is a passage from later in the aria (starting at bar 44) which gives a continuation in the subdominant, very different from the one that we now know. On the verso of this leaf above the continuing particella are several later sketches for unrelated pieces, and in the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale is one further leaf, which apparently continues this draft. The likely explanation for the current state of the British Library fragment is that it was one of a 'nested' pair of bifolia – in other words with one double leaf folded inside another. According to Alan Tyson, Mozart's routine use of nested bifolia ceased around mid-1786, after which time he usually separated the two sheets before starting work.⁹ In this case, the outside conjoined bifolium (comprising pages 1–2 and 7–8) survived, while the inside conjoined bifolium (comprising pages 3–4 and 5–6) was lost. That the continuation begins at bar 44 adds weight to this suggestion: as the first leaf contains fifteen bars, the two lost leaves would very likely have contained around thirty bars in total.

Although only segments of this continuity draft survive, there is enough material at the critical junctures to allow us to reconstruct Mozart's original thoughts with some confidence, although uncertainty surrounds the ending (see Table 1).

6 Ian Woodfield, 'Mozart's Compositional Methods: Writing for His Singers', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, ed. Simon Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 35–47.

7 Ulrich Konrad, *Skizzen, NMA XI/30/3* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998). The sketch of 'Non so più' is listed as No. 69, skb 1785 κ (1). A colour reproduction of the second leaf of the British Library fragment is given.

8 The first side of this bifolium is reproduced in Alec Hyatt King, *A Mozart Legacy: Aspects of the British Library Collection* (London: The British Library, 1984), 51.

9 Alan Tyson, 'A Feature of the Structure of Mozart's Autograph Scores', in *Festschrift Wolfgang Rehm zum 60. Geburtstag am 3. September 1989*, ed. Dietrich Berke and Harald Heckmann (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1989), 95–105. Cited and discussed further in Edge, 'Mozart's Viennese Copyists', 390.



Table 1

Source	GB: Lb1	missing	missing	GB: Lb1	F:Pn
Form	A	B	A	C	Climax
Stanza	1	2	1	2	last line of 2
Tonality	I	V	I	IV	I
Comments	The last bar of the first leaf of the bifolium prepares a modulation to V			The first bars of the second leaf of the bifolium contain the end of the repeated A section I	

Assuming that the Paris leaf is a continuation of the British Library fragment – it certainly fits musically – then it contains what may well have been the composer's first attempt at the ending.¹⁰ The multiple text repetitions (and tonic key) suggest either the end of a major section or the conclusion of the entire piece. The particella appears to break off before the orchestral postlude, but draft arias were often left without their conclusion at this stage, pending a final decision on whether to include the piece more or less as composed.¹¹ The most striking feature of this page, however, is that its text is that of the last line of the second stanza, which might well mean that Da Ponte's continuation of the aria text was not yet in the libretto. At this point, 'Non so più' could have consisted of just two stanzas of *decasillabo* verse, suggesting a binary-form piece with a straightforward repetition of the two stanzas in order, followed by a climactic conclusion based on the final line. If, before starting work on the revised version, Mozart did indeed ask Da Ponte for additional text, it was an inspired decision. The nine lines of *settenari* he would then have received greatly facilitated his musical depiction of Cherubino's character, allowing him to deploy to excellent effect the techniques of the catalogue aria and the concluding punch line.

After setting aside his original draft, but before completing the composition of the aria in its final form, Mozart may have made one further abortive attempt at a beginning. This would have been written on the first leaf on a new batch of the same paper as the particella. Since this leaf is now missing, we cannot exclude the possibility that the new beginning was different in some way from the one we know. A plausible explanation for the loss of this leaf (though far from the only one) is that, in making the revisions necessary to reinstate his first thoughts on the opening leaf, Mozart left it too heavily corrected to be certain that the copyist would reproduce it accurately, and so for this reason had to recopy it. Quite apart from the use of the 'late' paper type, it is evident from other palaeographical features reported by Köhler that this was a recycled substitute page.

Whatever the sequence of compositional events may have been, the use of the same 'early' paper type for both versions of 'Non so più' certainly implies that Mozart was working with unusual intensity on this particular aria early on. It must be stressed, however, that the process of drafting and revising seen in its sources was the composer's normal way of working. Although the possibility of a different beginning to the aria is intriguing, it can offer no direct support per se to the ingenious suggestion of the reference.

In recent years it has become increasingly accepted that Mozart's contribution to the development of the written text of his operas did not end with the completion of the autograph but continued during the rehearsal period and beyond. In particular, there is good evidence that he was sometimes involved in making cuts. Dexter Edge reports one cut removing bars 70–88 which was made in the original orchestral parts for 'Non so più'.¹² The court theatre score of Act 1 of *Figaro* appears to have been lost, which is unfortunate, as

10 An edition of the draft fragment is given in Ludwig Finscher, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, NMA II/5/16 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1973), 629–631. It is headed 'Zwei Bruchstücke' (two fragments) but barred (hypothetically) as one piece.

11 See Woodfield, 'Mozart's Compositional Methods', 45.

12 Edge, 'Mozart's Viennese Copyists', 1630.



Mozart sometimes contributed to the editing of any agreed cuts in this 'official' score himself. The status of this particular abbreviation in the composer's eyes thus remains rather uncertain. But in the light of the compositional history of 'Non so più', which apparently saw Mozart expand its concluding sections considerably, it is interesting to speculate that he (or someone else) felt that the piece had become unbalanced in the opposite direction. The concluding passage of text, possibly supplied by Da Ponte upon request, consists of seven lines, followed by a couplet containing the punch lines. What the cut does is to remove a repetition of the seven lines, and this has the effect of hastening the arrival at the climax.

There is yet another autograph of this aria which is distinctly unusual in character. This is an arrangement by Mozart for voice, violin and keyboard in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.¹³ It too is written on one of the paper types identified by Edge as probably belonging to the first phase of work on the opera in late 1785, though as only four other leaves of type 78-I are used in *Figaro* (for the Act 2 finale), this must remain a rather tentative conclusion. As this is a version of the aria we now know, it tends to reinforce the impression that Mozart had completed the final draft quite early on. The arrangement is not presented as an independent aria, and indeed its first page is laid out as though it were intended for inclusion in the full score: 'Atto 1^{mo} / Aria di Cherubino / Scena V'. This version could certainly have been used by a singer to rehearse, yet Mozart almost always left the routine work of providing role-books to copyists, so perhaps there was a more formal requirement for an early performance of 'Non so più' as a chamber piece. We can only speculate. Surely Mozart was not toying with the very original idea of having Cherubino perform this piece as an aria with chamber accompaniment on stage? Alternatively, did he have need of a few completed aria drafts in order to sell his opera to the theatre management or to win the support of influential singers? If Edge is correct in arguing that an intense period of work on *Figaro* in October and November of 1785 was undertaken by the composer in the expectation of a premiere date much earlier than the one eventually allocated to it, perhaps no explanation is necessary.¹⁴ 'Non so più' could have been among the first of the solo pieces to be tackled simply by chance, and the relative 'lateness' of the other arias for the women singers merely a consequence of whatever factors caused a delay in the production of the opera.

In evaluating the likelihood of an eighteenth-century melodic resemblance being intentional rather than accidental, Leeson distinguishes overt repetitions of musical elements, which were intended to be recognized instantaneously by the whole audience, from the subtler range of references, recalls and allusions that are less clear-cut and therefore less certain. The motivation for these could include Bruce Alan Brown's concept of connoisseurship – the idea that a composer could play to the knowledge and perhaps vanity of the well informed music lover, the *Kenner* rather than the *Liebhaber*.¹⁵ The well known (and widely accepted) derivation of the motto of *Così fan tutte* from the trio 'Cosa sento' could be a case in point; it would take a very acute listener indeed to make the connection without being alerted to it. If there is a weakness in Leeson's idea as stated, it is that in the manner of its execution the allusion seems well hidden, despite the fact that it has a clear-cut and far from insignificant dramatic function of the kind that one would normally expect the composer to have made plain. Yet there is a way round this difficulty, and that is that Mozart did at first intend a reference of the kind proposed, but that he thought better of it, perhaps for the very reason that it was difficult to make audible and was thus liable to fail in its primary dramatic purpose. In *Così fan tutte* there are a number of similar cases of references that seem too exact to be mere coincidence, but have no obvious function in the onstage drama. I have come increasingly to feel that some of these might represent an unintended legacy from earlier stages in the compositional process. A musical or dramatic idea abandoned during a work's creation might leave residual traces, too subtle to have been of any concern to the composer at the time (because he knew that they would not be perceived as such), but which can nevertheless

13 Reproduced in Ludwig Finscher, *Le nozze di Figaro*, NMA II/5/16 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1973), xxv.

14 Edge, 'Mozart's Viennese Copyists', 1437.

15 Bruce Alan Brown, 'Beaumarchais, Paisiello and the Genesis of *Così fan tutte*', in *Wolfgang Amadè Mozart: Essays on his Life and Music*, ed. Stanley Sadie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 312–338.



be picked up by the modern analyst, who has the benefit of being able to build upon the intense scrutiny of several hundred years of scholarship and performance.

The first leaf of the original draft of 'Non so più' in the British Library resembles the final version very closely, but there are a few revisions of interest.¹⁶ One of these, a potentially significant alteration in the character of the melodic line, could have a bearing on Leeson's thesis. As he points out, the resemblance between the theme of the aria and that of Basilio's entry in the trio is not quite exact: the last two notes of the melody of both opening phrases in 'Non so più' are in the form of a falling appoggiatura, whereas in 'Cosa sento' there are reiterated notes on one pitch. It is very interesting indeed to see in the British Library fragment that Mozart first wrote a pair of reiterated notes for each of the opening phrases, and only later scratched out the first note of each pair, replacing it with a descending appoggiatura. It seems probable that this change was not made immediately, because in the later section on the conjoined leaf, there is the same melodic pattern as in the opening before its revision: lines one and two ending with reiterated notes, line three with an appoggiatura and line four with the usual single accented note (*tronco*). It could be argued, therefore, that the reiterated notes relate to the time early on when Mozart was actively considering the reference, with the alterations being made once this idea was abandoned.

Yet there is an alternative musical explanation for this change, which relates to an important and somewhat controversial aspect of eighteenth-century performance practice: the prosodic appoggiatura. This (sometimes unwritten) convention came into play when a composer set the two final syllables of a line with a penultimate stress (*piano*) to reiterated notes on one pitch. There is overwhelming evidence that it was the normal practice in eighteenth-century Italian opera, both in recitatives and arias, to 'lean' on the stressed note with an appoggiatura in one of a variety of ways, most commonly with a note one step above or below the written pitch. In dispute is the extent to which this was the unwritten practice in Mozart's mature operas, especially in the arias – it has been more easily accepted in the recitatives. The consensus, represented by Frederick Neumann, has been that musical and dramatic considerations sometimes persuaded Mozart to override this practice – a conservative position which is likely to have been influenced by a reluctance to make wholesale changes to the contours of much-loved, time-hallowed melodies. In support of this position, Neumann, citing as it so happens the example of 'Non so più', noted how often Mozart wrote in these appoggiaturas: 'The very frequency of spelled-out appoggiaturas suggests the need to exercise great caution in adding them where they are not specified.'¹⁷ A radical departure from this stance was proposed by Will Crutchfield, who suggested that (whatever we might now choose to do) it was the clear expectation at the time that prosodic appoggiaturas would be added in by singers, even when not indicated in the score.¹⁸ As he observed, not to put them in now might be to continue to perform *Figaro* and other operas with hundreds of 'wrong' notes – at least in the modern sense; it is doubtful whether the eighteenth century would have considered this type of choice a matter of 'right' or 'wrong'. The editors of the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe*, who usually indicate places where prosodic appoggiaturas might be applied in performance, have at different times been accused of incorporating too few or too many suggestions.

16 Mozart had a change of mind about the tempo designation, substituting 'Allegro vivace' for 'Presto'. He also enriched the string texture by turning a single viola line into a divisi part. The question of which string parts should be muted is left rather unclear. At the start of a typical orchestral score some notational elements such as tempo designations were entered only at the top and bottom, but others such as dynamic markings were usually added to every line to which they applied. The instruction 'con sordini', especially when it occurs at the start of a movement or a new section, can be somewhat ambiguous. In the draft of 'Non so più' Mozart added this instruction above each of the three upper string parts, but in the final version (with divisi violas) it appears only once, below the violin 1 line, where it obviously applies to both violins. This might mean that he wished the viola line to stand out unmuted – it is certainly very effective when played in this way – but the lack of an instruction could simply be the result of inconsistent notational practice, in which case the violas should be muted.

17 Frederick Neumann, *Ornamentation and Improvisation in Mozart* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 204.

18 Will Crutchfield, 'The Prosodic Appoggiatura in the Music of Mozart and His Contemporaries', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 42/2 (1989), 229–271.



A significant additional source of evidence in helping us to determine Mozart's attitude to this question is the autograph scores, together with their associated drafts and fragments. As in the case of 'Non so più', the composer is sometimes seen changing his mind. Assuming that the alterations in this instance were not occasioned by the abandonment of the idea of using this theme as a dramatic reference, what are we to make of them? The reiterated notes are not out of character with the theme as a whole, which almost verges on a 'patter' style with its repeated B♭s. On the evidence of the British Library draft, however, Mozart made this change systematically throughout the piece, and it is this fact in particular which points to a carefully considered compositional choice between two equally valid possibilities. Perhaps the composer changed his mind after hearing a singer perform from the draft in a preliminary rehearsal?

In support of the idea that Mozart was guided by his musical instincts in such cases rather than by unthinking adherence to convention, I would like to offer two examples from the autograph score of *Così fan tutte* where the composer removed a prosodic appoggiatura. Both in their own ways are rather striking cases. The first comes at the end of the canon in the Act 2 finale, in bar 204. Fiordiligi originally concluded her statement of the canonic theme with its sighing appoggiatura on 'pensiero', but that was when Mozart was planning to continue with another statement of the canon. When he changed his mind in favour of an immediate four-bar transition to the new E major section, he crossed out this appoggiatura and added in a reiterated A♭. The editors of the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe* quite rightly do not suggest that a singer performing this role should put one back in. What this case demonstrates is how incomplete the information given in the musical text of even the best edition can sometimes be. Only by looking at the autograph or consulting the critical commentary would one notice that Mozart had acted positively to remove the prosodic appoggiatura here, in the process altering the penultimate note of the canon. The second case occurs in 'Ah guarda sorella', the Act 1 duet for the sisters. On the final occurrence of Dorabella's thrice-repeated 'che alletta', in bar 64, Mozart apparently tried both an ascending and a descending appoggiatura before finally inserting a reiterated note, despite the fact that this constitutes a clear break in the pattern. In both cases, the reason for removing the appoggiatura seems to have been the composer's desire to mark a transition between two stylistically contrasting sections with precision. Although it would be time-consuming to undertake, an analysis of such cases might throw light upon the circumstances in which he preferred the reiterated note. It would not come as a complete surprise to discover that he did sometimes think of the prosodic appoggiatura as an 'expressive tool', an 'element of word painting', and even 'a condiment to be applied ad libitum'.¹⁹

It has to be admitted that the two cases from *Così* cited here are from ensembles, in which we might well expect the composer to intervene more actively to ensure standardization. This is what happens in the case of dynamic marks, which Mozart rarely added to the vocal lines of operatic arias and duets but which are frequently encountered in larger ensembles. Moreover, what the composer might have wished and what actually happened were doubtless very different things. Crutchfield demonstrates convincingly that in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century instrumental arrangements of Mozart's operatic arias, prosodic appoggiaturas were applied routinely. And there is no doubt that that was how the composer came to 'hear' this theme. He even added in an appoggiatura to the violin part of the chamber arrangement in the fourth line of the opening stanza, which, as a line with a *tronco* ending, does not require one in the vocal line for reasons of prosody.

To return finally to Leeson's hypothesis, it is true, as he points out, that the difference between the melody of 'Non so più' and that in 'Cosa sento', at least insofar as its melodic contour is concerned, lies solely in the lack of the prosodic appoggiatura in the latter. But there is one significant additional difference: the insertion of rests, which turns the melody in the trio into three melodic cells, each of which ends with a reiterated note. So there are twelve syllables in all, rather than the ten of the aria melody: that is, one and a half lines of *ottonario* rather than one line of *decasillabo*. Prominent though Basilio's first entry is, these rests very effectively disguise the theme. They also raise the question of whether there should be a prosodic appoggiatura at the end of each of these three cells. It is interesting that Crutchfield came to the conclusion

¹⁹ Crutchfield, 'The Prosodic Appoggiatura', 270.



that short reiterated fragments involving rhythmic repetition constitute the one general case in which these appoggiaturas may not always have been added in. As an example he cites an instrumental arrangement of 'Cosa sento'.²⁰ In Edward Holmes's 1822 version, Basilio's opening theme is given 'straight', but appoggiaturas are added from the words 'cosa veggio' onwards.

20 Crutchfield, 'The Prosodic Appoggiatura', 250.