

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Horn of Enlightenment: Mozart's Operatic Use of the Clarinet

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Abstract

In his operas, Mozart followed contemporary practice by using the clarinet to set the mood for amorous scenes, but he adapted this into a new kind of topic that dramatises his characters' changing self-knowledge and growing enlightenment. In so doing, he emphasised both their recognition of their true feelings and the political and moral implications for their subsequent actions. This is exemplified in *La clemenza di Tito*, in which a clarinet (or basset horn) serves as an important soloistic voice whose dialogue with the protagonist illuminates their inner struggles with conflicting emotional, social and political realities as they move towards new understanding.

Keywords: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; Clarinet; Operas; Enlightenment; Musical topics

for Andrei

At the end of the eighteenth century, Mozart raised the clarinet to new prominence in his operas no less than in his chamber music, symphonies and concertos. In his operas, I will argue, he used clarinets not just more prominently, but specifically to dramatisise his characters finding enlightenment – or ‘daring to know’, as Immanuel Kant put it in 1784.¹ Mozart's characters feel their immediate situation intensely, but they also find the courage to know its larger political, social and moral meaning. This knowledge influences their subsequent actions, often leading them to enlightened choices such as forgiveness, reconciliation and clemency. In this way, Mozart fundamentally changed the dramatic character of both serious and comic operas by incorporating recognition – an element of tragic drama – at the heart of key moments. This gives a depth of characterisation that grounds and humanises the Protean playfulness of Mozart's comic surface. Mozart inherited long-established musical topics of instrumental texture: oboes were associated with the pastoral, trumpets with regal or bellicose topics, and so forth.² As a new hybrid instrument, the clarinet offered the chance to shape a different kind of

¹ Immanuel Kant, ‘Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?’, *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 4/12 (1784), 481–94, at 481, taking up the Horatian maxim *Sapere aude!* (*Epodes* 1.2, 40).

² For the common topics, see Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York, 1980), 9–29, and Danuta Mirka, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* (New York, 2014).

topic that illuminated the drama of self-understanding and recognition in contrast to the relatively fixed (and unexamined) affects characterised by older topics. Although he began by following the contemporary practice of using clarinets mainly to accompany love scenes, I will argue that Mozart increasingly called on clarinets to illuminate changes in political and social awareness. In this story, individual moments of erotic awareness come to connect ever more strongly with political and social currents of the Enlightenment.

In terms of the mythical contest between Apollo as Reason (represented as playing string instruments) and Marsyas as Love (winds and horns), Mozart used the clarinet to evoke a new synthesis of enlightened feeling, blending reason with love.³ Beginning with the novel hybrid character of the clarinet, we will consider its association with amorous scenes in operas by Mozart's contemporaries, as well as the social milieu that connected him and his clarinetists with the Enlightenment. After reviewing the contemporary landscape of musical topics, we will consider Mozart's changing operatic use of the clarinet in three ways. First, in *Idomeneo* he shaped a new topic I call the 'enlightened pastoral'. Where the traditional *pastorale* evoked an unchanging idyll handed down from posterity (often using flutes or oboes), the enlightened pastoral (using clarinets) depicted recognition and changing awareness, both in political and romantic contexts.⁴ Second, Mozart increasingly used clarinets to underline scenes of recognition even outside the pastoral vein. Third, becoming ever more prominent as a solo voice, the clarinet became a sensitive interlocutor, essentially a protagonist, particularly in *La clemenza di Tito* (K621, 1791). Put provocatively, Mozart here enthroned a clarinet as the true – and enlightened – emperor of Rome. In short: those who study, perform and stage his operas may find in Mozart's use of the clarinet not only a striking orchestral colour but a voice in its own right, so strongly does it engage the protagonists' struggle to understand fidelity, betrayal and forgiveness in political no less than erotic life.

An enlightened instrument

As a newcomer to orchestras composed of long-established instruments, the clarinet was a hybrid child growing up with the Enlightenment. Johann Gottfried Walther noted in 1721 that the recently invented *clarinetto* 'from afar sounded rather similar to a trumpet'.⁵ Combining this higher 'clarino' register with the sensitive low register of its close relative, the chalumeau, the clarinet could project both brilliance and intimate sensitivity.⁶ Yet only during the eighteenth century did technical advances in the construction of the clarinet provide both its chalumeau and clarino registers with satisfactory intonation and tone quality.⁷

³ For the contrast between Apollo and Marsyas, see Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, 2001), 87, 262n48, and Pierpaolo Polzonetti, *Italian Opera in the Age of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, 2011), 64–74.

⁴ For example, the letter-writing duettino 'Che soave zeffiretto' (Act 3, no. 21) and Barberina's cavatina 'L'ho perduta' (Act 4, no. 24) from *Le nozze di Figaro*, or the end of Zerlina's seduction scene 'Là ci darem la mano' (Act 1, no. 7) at 'Andiam, andiam mio bene' (bars 50–81) in *Don Giovanni*, all identified as examples of *pastorale* by Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro & Don Giovanni* (Chicago, 1983), 146–7, 158–9, 266–7. None of these examples involve clarinets.

⁵ Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon oder Musicalische Bibliothec* (Leipzig, 1721), 168.

⁶ For the early history of the clarinet, see Albert R. Rice, *The Baroque Clarinet and Chalumeau*, 2nd edn (New York, 2020); Colin Lawson, 'Single Reeds before 1750', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Clarinet*, ed. Colin Lawson (Cambridge, 1995), 1–15; see also Albert R. Rice, *The Clarinet in the Classical Period* (Oxford, 2003); Albert R. Rice, 'The Chalumeau and Clarinet before Mozart', in *The Clarinet*, ed. Jane Ellsworth (Rochester, 2021), 38–68. Although there are mentions of the chalumeau dating to 1690 or thereabouts, its earliest mention is in an order dated 1710.

⁷ Lawson, 'Single Reeds before 1750', 1.

Originally a folk instrument, restricted to the range of a twelfth in its fundamental register, the chalumeau was an attractive novelty. In Giovanni Bononcini's Viennese carnival opera *Etearco* (1707), two comic characters, hearing the remark 'I'd like to find both bassoons and oboes', retort 'I'd like there to be chalumeaux as well'.⁸ Among composers from the German world, Georg Friedrich Handel, Christoph Willibald Gluck, and Johann Adolf Hasse all used chalumeaux in their operas.⁹ In the operas and oratorios written between 1708 and 1728 by the Viennese court Kapellmeister Johann Joseph Fux, the chalumeau served as an alternative to the oboe in pastoral or love scenes.¹⁰ Daniel Schubart's *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (written during 1784–85 but first published in 1806) noted the novelty of concert music using chalumeaux, an instrument 'previously only shepherds knew', emphasising its pastoral associations.¹¹

The newly invented clarinet was an even more attractive novelty, its inventor praised for heightening 'the great delight of all music-lovers'.¹² The clarinet came into wide use in Neapolitan opera during 1770–1800.¹³ Schubart emphasised its newness: 'much younger than the oboe, first known in Germany only forty years ago'. He particularly noted that 'its character is the melting feeling of love – the entire sound of a sensitive heart ... The sound is so sweet, so languishing, that anyone who can draw out its middle colours will certainly conquer all hearts'. And referring to ongoing improvements in its design: 'Today this instrument is always becoming more perfect.'¹⁴ Mozart followed these developments closely; although clarinets in B-flat and A were not generally known until after 1770, he was already using B-flat clarinets in his *Divertimento in E-flat* (K113, 1771).¹⁵

By this time, wind ensembles including clarinets (referred to as *Harmoniemusik* or *Harmonie*) had become popular. In 1782 Emperor Joseph II established 'my *Harmonie*', an octet of pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons and horns that played weekly for him and formed the core of the Burgtheater wind section.¹⁶ They gradually became regular members of opera orchestras in Vienna, while the Burgtheater initially only hired clarinetists as needed.

In what follows, I will focus on Mozart's solo clarinet parts, which called for highly skilled players. Although they had been in Vienna since 1773, the celebrated clarinetists

⁸ Giovanni Bononcini, *L'Etearco: drama per musica* (Vienna, 1707), 67–8.

⁹ See the list in Rice, *The Baroque Clarinet and Chalumeau*, 233–4, as well as his survey of chalumeau music at 43–79.

¹⁰ As stated by Lawson, 'Single Reeds before 1750', 8. For Fux, see Hermann Abert, W.A. Mozart, ed. Cliff Eisen, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven, 2007), 103, 835–6; for Mozart's relation to Joseph II, see Nicholas Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, Virtue and Beauty in Mozart's Operas* (New York, 1992), 1–16. See also Ingrid E. Pearson, 'Delicacy, Sentimentality and Intimacy: The Chalumeau as "Signifier"', *International Clarinet Association Archives* (1998), 1–3, <https://clarinet.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Pearson-Chalumeau.pdf> (accessed 27 March 2024).

¹¹ Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (Vienna, 1806), 326.

¹² Johann Gabriel Doppelmayr, *Historische Nachricht von den nürnbergischen Mathematicis und Künstlern* (Nuremberg, 1730), 305, describing Johann Christian Denner's invention.

¹³ See Rice, *The Baroque Clarinet and Chalumeau*, and Ingrid E. Pearson, 'The Clarinet in Opera before 1830: Instrument and Genre Come of Age', in Ellsworth, *The Clarinet*, 93–119.

¹⁴ Schubart, *Ideen*, 320.

¹⁵ See the helpful review by Nicholas Shackleton, 'The Development of the Clarinet', in Lawson, *The Cambridge Companion to the Clarinet*, 16–32, at 19. See also Dwight Blazin, 'The Two Versions of Mozart's *Divertimento K. 113*', *Music & Letters* 73/1 (1992), 32–47. Regarding key limitations, see Daniel N. Leeson and Robert D. Levin, 'Mozart's Deliberate Use of Incorrect Key Signatures for Clarinets', *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1998, 139–52 at 142.

¹⁶ See Pamela L. Poulin, *In the Footsteps of Mozart's Clarinetist: Anton Stadler (1753–1812) and His Basset Clarinet* (Hillsdale, NY: 2019), 16–21, at 21. Clarinets were used in Salzburg military bands by 1769 and became standard throughout Austria; see Kurt Birsak, 'Salzburg, Mozart und die Klarinette', *Mitteilungen der Internationalen Stiftung Mozart* 23 (1985), 40–7; Eugen Brixel, Gunther Martin and Gottfried Pils, *Das ist Österreichs Militärmusik: von der Türkischen Musik zu den Philharmonikern in Uniform* (Graz, 1982), 43–4, for a 1766 military order.

Anton and Johann Stadler were first engaged at the Burgtheater in 1779–80 as supplementary musicians who only became regular members in 1781–2.¹⁷ In his operas, Mozart came to use the clarinet ever more freely, facilitated, according to Albert Rice, by ‘the flexibility and virtuosity’ of the Stadler brothers and ‘their specially made basset clarinets with an extension of two notes to the lower register’.¹⁸ Indeed, Anton became the pre-eminent exponent of the basset clarinet, invented around 1788 by Theodor Lotz.¹⁹ Anton’s command of the technologically most innovative instruments came with ‘so soft, so lovely a tone that no one could resist it’, as Johann Friedrich Schink described his playing of Mozart (1785) – a sound ‘whose like I never before heard with your instrument’.²⁰

Although Schink was surprised that ‘a clarinet could imitate the human voice so closely’, this newest of instruments could evoke the oldest feelings. A London review from 1789 noted that the clarinet ‘assumes the softness of a pastoral pipe’ when played skilfully, especially its chalumeau register, which particularly contributed to the clarinet’s pastoral and amorous associations.²¹ On the other hand, a Parisian reviewer in 1786 observed that the sounds drawn from the clarinet ‘often resemble those of the glass harmonica, whose purity they have’.²² In Paris at that time, Franz Mesmer used the special tonal qualities of the glass harmonica to induce and control therapeutic crises in his patients.²³ Such comparisons with the glass harmonica therefore suggested that the clarinet could also have mesmeric power, especially through its special ‘purity’ of sound. A 1788 description of a glass harmonica examined by the Académie des Sciences likewise noted its ‘magical sounds, penetrating and pure, whose harmonious and sweet notes, which one can sustain, swell, draw out, develop & die away imperceptibly, touch, enchant, charm the soul & plunge you into the most delightful meditation’ – a description that also fits a skilfully played clarinet.²⁴ This might not have been lost on Mozart, who had since childhood been personally acquainted with Mesmer, whom he satirised in *Così fan tutte*.²⁵

The amorous clarinet

To illuminate the context within which Mozart wrote, we first consider the operatic use of the clarinet by his mentors and contemporaries Johann Christian Bach, Vicente Martín y

¹⁷ See Dexter Edge, ‘Mozart’s Viennese Orchestras’, *Early Music* 20 (1992), 64–88, at 71.

¹⁸ Rice, *The Clarinet in the Classical Period*, 183. See the extensive treatment in Harald Strebler, *Anton Stadler, Wirken und Lebensumfeld des ‘Mozart-Klarinetisten’: Fakten, Daten und Hypothesen zu seiner Biographie* (Vienna, 2016); Poulin, *In the Footsteps of Mozart’s Clarinetist*.

¹⁹ See Pamela L. Poulin, ‘The Basset Clarinet of Anton Stadler’, *College Music Symposium* 22/2 (1982), 67–82; Melanie Piddocke, ‘Theodor Lotz: A Biographical and Organological Study’ (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2011).

²⁰ Johann Friedrich Schink, *Literarische Fragmente* (Graz, 1785), 2: 286, describing a performance of the Serenade, K361, on 23 March.

²¹ From a review of a London performance by John Mahon in *Stuart’s Star and Evening Advertiser* (9 April 1789), discussed in Catherine Crisp, ‘“Transports of Delight”? Reviews of Clarinet Performance in Paris and London, c. 1770–c. 1810’, *Performance Practice Review* 22/1 (6 July 2020).

²² ‘27 December 1786’, *Journal de Paris*, 1513–14; see David Charlton, ‘Classical Clarinet Technique: Documentary Approaches’, *Early Music* 16/3 (1988), 397.

²³ See Peter Pesic, ‘Composing the Crisis: From Mesmer’s Harmonica to Charcot’s Tam-Tam’, *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 19 (2022), 7–30; Peter Pesic, *Sounding Bodies: Music and the Making of Biomedical Science* (Cambridge, MA, 2022), 189–204.

²⁴ M. Deudon, ‘Harmonica perfectionné, Examiné & approuvé par l’Académie des Sciences de Paris; le 5 Mars 1788’, in *Observations sur la physique, sur l’histoire naturelle et sur les arts*, ed. François Rozier et al., vol. 33 (1788), 183–90, at 184.

²⁵ For Mozart’s relation to Mesmer, see Pesic, *Sounding Bodies*, 193–204; for the contemporary context of the mesmerism in *Così*, see Pierpaolo Polzonetti, ‘Mesmerizing Adultery: “Così Fan Tutte” and the Kornman Scandal’, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 14 (2002), 263–96.

Soler, Giovanni Paisiello and Antonio Salieri.²⁶ Their common practice was to use clarinets to accompany love scenes, often in paired ‘*amoroso*’ textures.²⁷

Mozart considered himself a musical son of Bach, whom he met in 1764 in London, where he (at age eight) played sonatas sitting on Bach’s knees, taking over and completing a fugue Bach had started.²⁸ Seeing Bach again in Paris in 1778, Mozart wrote to his father, ‘I love him, as you know, with my whole heart’.²⁹ Thus, Mozart probably noted Bach’s use of clarinets, beginning with his first London opera, *Orione* (W.G4, 1763).³⁰ In a 1777 letter, Mozart discussed Bach’s *Lucio Silla* (W.G9, 1774), whose libretto (somewhat altered) Mozart had earlier used in his own *Lucio Silla* (K135, 1772).³¹ Bach’s aria ‘Anch’io per un’ingrata’ used two clarinets d’amore in close harmony (Example 1) to accompany Silla’s sighing and pining: they are notated on the third and fourth lines from the top, accompanying Silla’s ‘Sospiro e peno’ (‘I sigh and suffer’). This *amoroso* style (as it came to be called) is an important point of reference.³² In this example, the clarinets evoke *Empfindsamkeit*, the ‘sensitivity style’ that Bach pioneered and which was so important to Mozart.³³

Among his older contemporaries, Giovanni Paisiello became one of Mozart’s most important models.³⁴ After meeting in Italy in 1770, they later played quartets together and exchanged scores.³⁵ Paisiello initially used clarinets in scenes of Elysium or the Underworld, though he later reserved them for amorous scenes, whether serious or comic, as in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1782).³⁶ Paired clarinets, mandolin and pizzicato strings create the romantic ambience for the Conte’s serenade ‘Saper bramate’ (Act I no. 5). *Amoroso* clarinets accompany Rosina and the Conte’s duet in the finale to Act II (no. 18). Likewise, Rosina is accompanied by *amoroso* clarinets and bassoons in her pensive cavatina ‘Giusto ciel’ (no. 11); and clarinets are also featured in the wind accompaniment to her comic scene ‘Già riede primavera’ (no. 13) – a solo clarinet answers Rosina’s plaintive ‘Io piango afflitta e sola’ (at reh. 61). Mozart composed an insertion alternative for this aria in its 1789 Viennese performances in German, ‘Schon lacht der holde Frühling’ (K580); the extant fragmentary manuscript indicates that he included two clarinets and two bassoons (as had Paisiello) but it does not provide their parts.

Although Mozart remarked that Vicente Martín y Soler’s music was ‘really very pretty’, he judged that ‘in ten years’ time no one will take any more notice of it’.³⁷ Nevertheless,

²⁶ For a comparative study, see Michael Thrasher, ‘The Use of the Clarinet in Selected Viennese Operas, 1786–1791’ (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 1997).

²⁷ On the general relation of wind instruments to voice, see John Spitzer, ‘Orchestra and Voice in Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Opera*, ed. Anthony DelDonna and Pierpaolo Polzonetti (Cambridge, 2009), 112–39, at 127–9.

²⁸ Abert, *Mozart*, 40–2.

²⁹ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Mozarts Briefe*, ed. Wilhelm A. Bauer and Otto Erich Deutsch (Hamburg, 1960), no. 479, 2: 458–60 (27 August 1778).

³⁰ For J.C. Bach’s operatic use of the clarinet see Rice, *The Clarinet in the Classical Period*, 91, 94, 113–21, and Ernest Warburton, ‘J. C. Bach’s Operas’, *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 92 (1965), 95–106, especially 99–100.

³¹ *Mozarts Briefe*, no. 370, 2: 118–21 (13 November 1777). I use the Köchel numbering of the Neue Mozart Ausgabe.

³² J.C. Bach also used *amoroso* clarinets as part of the general orchestral texture of ‘Fosca nube’ (Act I scene 3) in *Temistocle* (W.G8, 1772) and in ‘Malgré nous, l’amour nous enchaîne’ (Act I scene 7) in *Amadis de Gaule* (W.G39, 1779).

³³ For this topic, see Ratner, *Classic Music*, 22, and Matthew Head, ‘Fantasia and Sensibility’, in Mirka, *Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, 259–78, at 263–76.

³⁴ As stated by Abert, *Mozart*, 305–14, at 306.

³⁵ Abert, *Mozart*, 137, 440n223, 763.

³⁶ Abert, *Mozart*, 308, 308n88, citing scene 8 of *Il duello comico* and the second act finale of *I scherzi di amore* as examples of Elysium and the Underworld.

³⁷ Abert, *Mozart*, 762.

Example 1. Johann Christian Bach's aria 'Anch'io per un'ingrata' from *Lucio Silla* (WG9, Act I no. 8, bb. 31–5, 1774). Courtesy Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, Darmstadt.

he had Don Giovanni's onstage wind band play a well-known tune from Martín y Soler's *Una cosa rara* (1786), an opera in which paired clarinets give a special colour to three amorous scenes: the cavatinas of Lilla ('Ah pietà de mercè', scene 4) and the Principe ('Più bianca di giglio', scene 5), and Lilla's aria 'Dolce mi parve un dì' (scene 14).

Antonio Salieri's use of clarinets probably depended on the availability of such superb players as the Stadler in Vienna. In *Les Danaïdes* (Paris, 1781), Salieri tended to use clarinets doubling oboes, a sonority that for John A. Rice 'while attractive in itself, soon grows tiresome'.³⁸ Elsewhere, Salieri used clarinets more soloistically in new contexts. In *La grotta di Trofonio* (Vienna, 1785), Ofelia's aria 'D'un dolce amor' (Act I scene 3) features a pair of clarinets that spin an elegant melody that goes beyond simple *amoroso* style.³⁹ Even more prominently, a lovely clarinet solo forms the centrepiece of luxuriant imitations of birdsong in Artemidoro's aria 'Di questo bosco ombroso' (scene 11, [Example 2](#)), which Mozart may well have noted as he prepared his later operas. The serious Artemidoro enters holding a copy of Plato; the solo clarinet evokes a pastoral scene (perhaps the idyllic setting of Plato's *Phaedrus*) but here accompanies 'a philosophic soul' (as he calls himself) rather than an earthly lover.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the sorcerer Trofonio shortly (scene 13) transforms the meditative Artemidoro into a high-spirited lover who now repudiates Plato ('Cieli! Che fu? ... Evviva la gioia'). Meanwhile, his happy-go-lucky counterpart Plistene suddenly becomes an admirer of Plato, shocking

³⁸ John A. Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera* (Chicago, 1998), 321.

³⁹ See Rice, *Antonio Salieri*, 362–76, noting at 375 the praise accorded this aria.

⁴⁰ As Rice notes, here Salieri associated clarinets with 'philosophical seriousness', *Antonio Salieri*, 375.

Scena XI.
Artemidoro con Platone in mano.

in Eb.

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Example 2. The introduction to Artemidoro's aria 'Di questo bosco ombroso' (Act I scene 11) from Antonio Salieri, *La grotta di Trofonio* (Vienna, 1785). Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France.

his beloved by proposing platonic love. The clarinet reemerges as a solo voice in Ofelia's puzzled scene (15) 'È un piacer', which recalls the orchestration of 'D'un dolce amor'. She wonders why her serious Artemidoro has suddenly changed into a giddy hedonist, accompanied by an *amoroso* clarinet.

Salieri's *Tarare* (Paris, 1787) also used clarinets both for love scenes and more unusual contexts. In his Prologue (scene 3), they depict human souls coming to corporeal life to the words 'Quel charme inconnu nous attire'.⁴¹ In John Rice's view, Salieri generally associated clarinets with *Tarare*: *amoroso* clarinets (with bassoons and horns) accompany his love aria 'Astasie est une déesse' (Act I scene 6). Salieri carried this same orchestration over to Atar's love aria 'Soave luce di Paradiso' (Act II) in his extensive recomposition of this opera for Vienna as *Axur, re d'Ormus* (1787) – which became Joseph II's favourite opera.⁴² Rice notes that Salieri's treatment in these operas of 'barbarous' or 'Turkish'

⁴¹ As noted in Rice, *Antonio Salieri*, 393, where the whole opera is discussed at 392–400.

⁴² Discussed in Rice, *Antonio Salieri*, 403–19; Joseph's enthusiasm is treated at 418.

themes played into Joseph's political struggles with the Ottoman Empire.⁴³ Mozart surely observed how Salieri and Martín y Soler, his rivals for imperial favour, dealt with political and amorous scenes, including their use of clarinets.

The frequent use of *amoroso* clarinets to accompany love scenes reflected shared feelings about that instrument's inherent relation to women and their voices. Among Mozart's contemporaries, the extraordinary dramatist Heinrich von Kleist was for the poet Clemens Brentano 'one of the greatest virtuosi on the flute and clarinet'.⁴⁴ Even if Brentano was exaggerating, Kleist's description of clarinet technique casts an interesting light on the instrument's gendered connotations. Writing to his fiancée in 1800, Kleist expressed his desire to find a beautiful, innocent girl with 'the merest spark of soul in her' and then 'take her and finish her education in my own way' – a process he compared (rather disturbingly) to how he had prepared a clarinet mouthpiece: '[I cut] a piece for myself from a fresh reed, formed it to my own lips, shaved and scraped away with my knife until it fit my embouchure [*Mundes paßte*] exactly – and it worked superbly. I played to my heart's content'.⁴⁵ Although Kleist seems to view the clarinet as embodying the stereotype of a submissive female, Amy Emm notes that in the unfolding of his peculiar metaphor 'the notion of the woman as a musical instrument gains subversive, even empowering potential'.⁴⁶ Here, the clarinet's reed becomes an intermediate zone in which the instrument's individuality requires reshaping as it meets the player's mouth. Kleist's awareness of clarinet technique illuminates the subtleties of his 'love affair' with his instrument and, by extension, with the young woman he envisaged bending and shaping.⁴⁷ By century's end the connection of the clarinet to the female voice had become a commonplace.⁴⁸

Mozart, Stadler and the Enlightenment

Although Mozart used clarinets in all his completed operas from *Idomeneo* onwards, he may have been limited by their fluctuating availability in the imperial orchestra, where they may not have been regularly included until 1787.⁴⁹ Table 1 shows that he used clarinets more frequently in his later operas (especially the final three) and even more markedly that he increased their prominence within the orchestral texture as well as using them more soloistically. This also affected orchestral timbre, because the darker hue of

⁴³ Rice, *Antonio Salieri*, 416–18.

⁴⁴ As quoted in a sentence of Brentano's dated 10 December 1811 in Stephan Bock, *Der Klarinettenpreusse, oder, 'Nach Herzenslust': Heinrich von Kleist und die Klarinette* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 2001), 12, which also treats the clarinet's influence on Kleist's drama *Penthesilea*.

⁴⁵ Heinrich von Kleist, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Klaus Müller-Salget and Stefan Ormanns (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), 2: 549, letter to Wilhemine von Zenge of 5 September 1800, as translated in Heinrich von Kleist, *An Abyss Deep Enough: Letters of Heinrich von Kleist, with a Selection of Essays and Anecdotes*, trans. Philip B. Miller (New York, 1982), 54.

⁴⁶ Amy Emm, "'Make Music, Women, Music!': The Amazonian Power of Music in Heinrich von Kleist's *Penthesilea* (1808)", *Women in German Yearbook* 27 (2011), 31–57, at 34.

⁴⁷ For the larger biographical context for this episode, see Günter Blamberger, *Heinrich von Kleist: The Biography*, trans. Sebastian Goth and Kelly Kawar (Paderborn, 2021), 68–9.

⁴⁸ See, for instance, Franz Joseph Fröhlich, *Vollständige theoretisch-praktische Musikschule* (Bonn, 1811), part II, 7–8, 25, 27 (on the basset horn), as translated in Eugene E. Rousseau, 'Clarinet Instructional Materials from 1732 to ca. 1825' (PhD diss., State University of Iowa, 1962), 172–3, 215, 218–19. Hector Berlioz, *Treatise on Instrumentation* (New York, 1991) emphasises 'that feminine quality of tone present in the clarinets' (210).

⁴⁹ Andrew Steptoe, *The Mozart-Da Ponte Operas: The Cultural and Musical Background to Le nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte* (Oxford, 1988), 157–9. Clarinets do not appear in the extant materials for the incomplete operas *L'oca del Cairo* (K422, 1783) and *Lo sposo deludo* (K430/424a, 1783–4), nor in Mozart's contribution to *Der Stein des Weisen* (K592a, 1790), a *pasticcio Singspiel* composed with Schikaneder and others.

Table 1. Mozart's usage of clarinets in his completed operas.

Opera	Bars with clarinets	Proportion of bars with clarinets in which clarinets are prominent
<i>Idomeneo</i> (K366, 1781)	18%	28%
<i>Die Entführung aus dem Serail</i> (K384, 1782)	27%	21%
<i>Der Schauspieldirektor</i> (K486, 1786)	50%	11%
<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i> (K492, 1786)	25%	21%
<i>Don Giovanni</i> (K527, 1787)	36%	10%
<i>Così fan tutte</i> (K588, 1790)	35%	35%
<i>Die Zauberflöte</i> (K620, 1791)	21%	36%
<i>La clemenza di Tito</i> (K621, 1791)	26%	48%

clarinets was in the opinion of Vienna-based Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, writing in 1790, 'far richer in tone than [oboes] and most wind instruments'; in fact, he thought that basset horns were 'the most richly toned of all wind instruments'.⁵⁰ Lotz's Viennese clarinets (favoured by the Stadlers) had particularly dark sound qualities.⁵¹ Thus, we might conclude that the greater prominence of clarinets in Mozart's orchestration in the later operas led to a darkening of orchestral timbre, especially when oboes were not included.⁵²

Mozart's orchestrations changed during a period in which Masonic music prominently featured clarinets, which thereby associated the instrument with the Brotherhood's progressive attitudes. Mozart learned of the Enlightenment from his father and others in his Salzburg milieu, such as the Firmian brothers, who had founded a reading society at the university that espoused 'free scientific tendencies'.⁵³ Mozart's later association with the Freemasons showed his sympathy with their advocacy of human brotherhood and knowledge.⁵⁴ This put him in contact with Ignaz von Born, an eminent natural scientist, mineralogist and leader of the Illuminati, as well as the master of the Masonic lodge Mozart and his father attended.⁵⁵

Probably through Mozart's efforts, Anton Stadler joined that lodge in 1785, where he likely played in such Masonic compositions as *Die Maurerfreude* (K471), which honoured Born's discoveries in extracting metals through amalgamation.⁵⁶ The close friendship of Mozart and Anton Stadler revolved around the clarinet as well as their brotherhood's enlightened attitudes.⁵⁷ In 1800, Stadler drew up a 'Musick Plan' for a new music school in which 'whoever wants to understand music must know the whole of worldly wisdom and mathematics, poetry, elocution, art and many languages', showing his sympathy with Enlightenment ideals.⁵⁸ He noted that 'education, therefore, and literature are

⁵⁰ Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, *Gründliche Anweisung zur Composition* (Leipzig, 1790), 424, 426.

⁵¹ As noted by Eric Hoepfich, *The Clarinet* (New Haven, 2008), 72.

⁵² This confirms the qualitative assertion of this darkening noted by Simon P. Keefe, *Mozart in Vienna: The Final Decade* (Cambridge, 2017), 425.

⁵³ See Maynard Solomon, *Mozart: A Life* (New York, 1995), 31, 111.

⁵⁴ Solomon, *Mozart*, 321–35, and H.C. Robbins Landon, *Mozart and the Masons* (New York, 1991).

⁵⁵ See Alfred Schutz, 'Mozart and the Philosophers', *Social Research* 23/2 (1956), 219–42, who also notes that Mozart's protector in Paris, Baron Grimm, was a close friend of Diderot and Rousseau.

⁵⁶ Abert, *Mozart*, 780–1.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Colin Lawson, 'The Basset Clarinet Revived', *Early Music* 15/4 (1987), 487–502, at 489.

⁵⁸ For this 'Plan', see Poulin, *In the Footsteps of Mozart's Clarinetist*, 96–119, at 102.

necessary for the true musician, if he wants to become great, because if he is entirely without all other knowledge he becomes a half thing'. This implies that he considered Mozart, whom he greatly admired, to have such broad qualities of enlightened learning.

With this context in mind, we will consider how Mozart depicted the protagonists of his operas reaching enlightenment in the sense of *daring to know*, a sentiment he knew from his Masonic milieu even if he had not read Kant's text.⁵⁹ In that spirit, Mozart's characters first recognise and express what they are feeling and then find the courage to know its larger moral and political implications, which inform their subsequent actions. In so doing, I suggest that Mozart sought ways to illuminate and dramatise the *process* whereby his characters reached those new levels of awareness.⁶⁰ To depict such emergent realisations, Mozart had at his disposal a new kind of instrument, invented in his own century, the product of enlightened human design, which thereby distinguished itself from the families of instruments bequeathed by tradition. Having inherited a strong basic association between clarinets and feelings of love, he developed this relationship to encompass realisations of larger political and social consequence. The clarinet became a striking newcomer among Mozart's 'instrumental personae' as dramatic agent and interlocutor, and thereby expanded the universe of topics to a new kind of textural topic.⁶¹

A new kind of topic

Let us consider the meaning of 'topic'. In his letters, Mozart discussed the effect of what he called 'Turkish music', thereby showing his awareness of some of the 'characteristic figures' that scholars, following Leonard Ratner, came to call 'topics'.⁶² Since then, the repertoire of what Ratner initially divided into 'types' and 'styles' has grown markedly; Kofi Agawu listed twenty-seven members of 'the Universe of Topic', while Wye J. Allbrook's 'provisional list' reached 110, with the proviso that the 'topical cosmos ... is amenable to infinite extension', including 'topical modulation', which means 'transforming one affective stance' or topic into another.⁶³ Trying to summarise prevalent usage, Danuta Mirka defined topics as 'musical styles and genres taken out of

⁵⁹ Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment*; Charles Ford, *Music, Sexuality and the Enlightenment in Mozart's Figaro*, Don Giovanni and Così fan tutte (Farnham, 2012); and Stephen C. Rumph, *Mozart and Enlightenment Semiotics* (Berkeley, 2012). For the immediate dynastic context, see John A. Rice, 'Leopold II, Mozart, and the Return to a Golden Age', in *Opera and the Enlightenment*, ed. Thomas Bauman and Marita Petzold McClymonds (Cambridge, 1995), 271–96. For the connection with the American Revolution, see the wonderful discussion by Polzonetti, *Italian Opera in the Age of the American Revolution*, 308–30.

⁶⁰ According to Jessica Waldoff, such moments of enlightenment often involve crucial recognitions, in which something is repeated, remembered, and brought to full awareness; *Recognition in Mozart's Operas* (Oxford, 2006), 6.

⁶¹ This phrase comes from Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley, 1974), 35. James Webster emphasises the concertante role of instruments to comment and become important interlocutors in 'The Analysis of Mozart's Arias', in *Mozart Studies*, ed. Cliff Eisen (Oxford, 1991), 101–99, at 124. Webster argues for the term 'agent' rather than 'persona' in 'Cone's "Personae" and the Analysis of Opera', *College Music Symposium* 29 (1989), 50–65. See in that same volume Fred Everett Maus, 'Agency in Instrumental Music and Song', 31–42, and Edward T. Cone, 'Responses', 77–9. See also Viktor Zuckermandl, 'Prinzipien und Methoden der Instrumentation in Mozarts dramatischen Werken' (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1927).

⁶² For rhythmic topics, see especially Allbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*; for topics of orchestral texture, see Emily I. Dolan, *The Orchestral Revolution: Haydn and the Technologies of Timbre* (Cambridge, 2013).

⁶³ V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton, NJ, 1991), 30; Wye Jamison Allbrook, *The Secular Commedia: Comic Mimesis in Late Eighteenth-Century Music*, ed. Mary Ann Smart and Richard Taruskin (Berkeley, 2014), 109–11. For topical modulation, see Wye Jamison Allbrook, 'Two Threads Through the Labyrinth: Topic and Process in the First Movements of K. 332 and 333', in *Convention in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music: Essays in Honor of Leonard G. Ratner*, ed. Wye Jamison Allbrook, Janet M. Levy and William P. Mahrt (Stuyvesant, NY, 1992), 125–72, at 143–5.

their proper context and used in another one'.⁶⁴ I will, however, also use 'topic' in the older sense of a 'place' (*topos*) of discourse, chosen for its rhetorical aptness and effect.⁶⁵ As long as rhetoricians could establish a topic they and their audience could experience together, it need not necessarily be one long established by tradition. Indeed, an uncommon topic might have the advantages of freshness and novelty.

Mozart's dramatic imagination went beyond the level of external action to a profound interest in the changing feelings of his characters, their internal struggles and their realisations. Whether or not he had read the *Poetics*, he was steeped in a long theatrical tradition that shared Aristotle's admiration of plots built around 'recognition' (*anagnōrisis*, sometimes translated as 'discovery'), a term which came into German as *Erkennung*.⁶⁶ Aristotle used this term to describe 'a change from ignorance to knowledge [*Erkenntnis*], and thus to either love or hate, in the personages marked for good or evil fortune'.⁶⁷ Although recognition or discovery begins with an epistemic 'change from ignorance to knowledge', for Aristotle that change does not remain dispassionate because it leads 'to either love or hate [*Liebe oder Haß*]'.⁶⁸ In other words, knowledge lies at the centre of tragic recognition, which is not just a series of disjunct affects – love and hate following each other disconnectedly – but an intelligible causal sequence. Mozart brought the dramatic power of such knowledge from tragedy into his operas, though they are fundamentally comic, each ending in felicity rather than woe: he used the clarinet to mark how characters begin by *feeling*, then seek *knowing* that informs *acting*.⁶⁹

The enlightened pastoral: *Idomeneo*

Mozart first used clarinets in the orchestra of *Idomeneo* (K366, 1781), both in traditional *amoroso* passages and in new contexts that go beyond romance to register awareness of larger political significance. Although two clarinets are present from the overture onwards, Mozart's use of them is noticeably limited. They are silent for most of the opera and, when they do appear, they generally form part of the *Harmoniemusik*, blending their distinctive sonority with other winds.⁷⁰ For instance, in Idamante's first aria 'Non ho colpa' (no. 2), clarinets are mainly part of the larger orchestral texture. A clarinet emerges momentarily as a solo instrument (bars 32–8, 103–9) to accompany Idamante's offer to pierce his own breast to prove the love that Ilia doubts, and an *amoroso* pair underlines his declaration that he adores her (79–81). Likewise, Mozart's insertion rondo for no. 10b 'Non temer, amato bene' (K490, 1789) uses *amoroso* clarinets alongside an elaborate violin obbligato.

Clarinets enter more noticeably in the orchestral texture of no. 6 (especially bars 12–15, 59, 81), in which Idomeneo begins to struggle with his oath to sacrifice the life of whomever he sees next – his own son Idamante. Clarinets also appear in no. 26, in which Idomeneo prays to Neptune to pacify his fury and mitigate his harshness

⁶⁴ Mirka, *Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, 2; original in italics.

⁶⁵ As discussed by Allanbrook, *The Secular Commedia*, 92.

⁶⁶ As rendered in *Aristoteles Dichtkunst*, trans. Michael Conrad Curtius (Hanover, 1753), 34.

⁶⁷ *Poetics* 1452a30–31; Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, 1984), 2: 2324.

⁶⁸ As rendered in *Aristoteles Dichtkunst*, 23.

⁶⁹ See the brilliant discussion of tragic unity in Allanbrook, *The Secular Commedia*, 30–40.

⁷⁰ They are specified as clarinets in A (except as noted here) and are used only in the overture and nos. 2, 6 (in C), 14 (in C), 15, 19, 21 (in B-flat), 26 (in C), 30 (in B-flat) and 31 (in B-flat). Note also the subdued use of the clarinets in the additional *scena* Mozart added for Ilia and Idamante in 1786 (K490, 'Non più tutto ascoltai, tutto compresi ... Non temer, amato bene') at the beginning of Act II, whose orchestration is dominated by the violin *concertato*.

(‘Accogli, o rè del mar’).⁷¹ As if reverting to their traditional association with love scenes, the clarinets in Ilia’s aria ‘Zeffiretti lusinghieri’ (no. 19) join the *Harmoniemusik*, with brief solos as she describes how she adores Idamante (bars 43–4, 107–8). In the quartet (no. 21), clarinets in canon underline the final repetition of the group’s realisation that ‘such grief is worse than death’ (‘Peggio è di morte sì gran dolore’, bars 142–7); and *pianissimo* clarinets hover over the quartet’s final bars (164–6), underlining their realisation that ‘no one has ever suffered a harsher fate or greater punishment’. For the first time in Mozart’s operas, the clarinets underline a scene of recognition that goes beyond romantic love to evoke the larger problems raised by Idomeneo’s oath.

Clarinets appear even more prominently as solo instruments in the final scene (no. 30) as Idomeneo renounces his kingdom in favour of Idamante and Ilia. By so doing, he agrees to the enlightened solution provided by the voice of the god Neptune, who ended the barbarous ancient practice of a father sacrificing his son. Clarinets are the only woodwinds in the texture, often the highest sounding voice, contrasting with a pair of horns and the strings in a texture I call ‘enlightened pastoral’. In Idomeneo’s valedictory recitative, Mozart couples martial with tranquil instruments, as if to draw our attention to their peaceful coexistence.⁷² At first, the clarinets begin by answering the horns in contrary motion (bar 5), inverting a characteristic horn arpeggio that had begun in canonic statement within the strings. Then the horns recede into the background of the clarinet’s idiomatically graceful statement of sighing thirds in *amoroso* texture (bars 7–8, 42). Finally, the initial canonic statement returns in condensed form, rising through the instruments so that in the end the clarinets and horns repeat the same material, no longer inverted (bar 52). Idomeneo’s succeeding aria (no. 30a) continues the same texture, adding only bassoons (a common pairing in *Harmoniemusik*). Here, the horns recede into the role of accompaniment and punctuation, as Mozart emphasises the dialogue between clarinets and bassoons, which at times speak together, at times in response to each other. This gentle texture underlines the pastoral quality of the aria, in which Idomeneo turns towards peace, comparing himself to an old tree that blooms again in his children (‘Torna la pace al core’).⁷³

Although Mozart could have woven such a pastoral texture with other instruments, by reserving the clarinet’s special timbre for this moment he adds an additional element to the traditional topic of pastoral, which Johann Georg Sulzer described in terms of ‘innocence, naturalness and placid tenderness’.⁷⁴ To this long-established Arcadian vision, Mozart added the clarinet to underline enlightenment breaking through from traditional limitations. Beyond all expectation, Neptune freely abjured his ancient right to hold mortals to their promises, now recognising situations that call for rational reconsideration. The god thereby renounced a literal and strict interpretation in favour of a broader, more reasonable understanding, allowing the abdication of the father to substitute for the promised death of the son. Mozart’s ‘enlightened pastoral’ underlines this act, which goes beyond romantic love to encompass larger acts of clemency and enlightened political behaviour.

⁷¹ In no. 26, note the brief use of the clarinets in bars 16, 26, 45. Here, the clarinets echo the parallel statements given by the other winds, as part of a series of similar statements in which the role of the clarinets is subordinated to the material they share with the others and state *seriatim*.

⁷² The combination of clarinets and horns was not uncommon after Thomas Arne’s *Thomas and Sally* (1760).

⁷³ This aria (K366/30a) was inserted by Mozart for the first performances in Munich; regarding the pastoral associations of its B-flat major tonality, see Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, 2nd edn (Rochester, NY, 2002), 287–91.

⁷⁴ Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, new expanded 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1792), 2: 279. For the pastoral topic, see Raymond Monelle, *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military and Pastoral* (Bloomington, 2006), 237–42; Andrew Haringer, ‘Hunt, Military, and Pastoral Topics’, in Mirka, *Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, 204–8.

Enlightened feelings: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*

In his next operas, Mozart continued to use clarinets to underline moments of recognition, as well as adding them to more traditional *amoroso* textures.⁷⁵ *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (K384, 1782) includes clarinets in many orchestral tutti and as part of *Harmoniemusik* but only gives the clarinet prominent solos in Belmonte's aria 'Ich baue ganz auf deine Stärke' (no. 17, bars 5–6, 44–50, 135–40). Here, Belmonte's feelings of love for Konstanze animate his larger recognition of the power of love set against the adversity of imprisonment. Rather than simply evoking the 'pastoral', in the 'exalted march' of this aria the clarinet seems to emphasise his recognition at several important moments. Indeed, a clarinet first presents a new triplet figuration (148–52) that Belmonte immediately takes up in his climactic *fioriture* (153–7).⁷⁶ Overcoming the anxiety he had confessed in the preceding recitative, he has now summoned the courage to act. In other passages of this aria and additional numbers that highlight love, the clarinets appear paired, often in *amoroso* textures.⁷⁷ At those moments, the clarinets underline the natural beauty of the lovers Konstanze and Belmonte, contrasting them with Osmin in his mock-triumphal aria 'O, wie will ich triumphiren' (no. 19, bars 50–64, 105–11), which exemplifies the preposterous and unenlightened conventions of the seraglio.⁷⁸

Stages of enlightenment in *Le nozze di Figaro*

Le nozze di Figaro (K492, 1786) uses clarinets even more prominently to delineate the changing stages of emotional realisation. Paired clarinets and bassoons accompany the Countess in 'Porgi amor' (no. 10) to underline her changing awareness, progressing from her initial unhappiness through confused reflection to a new understanding of her dilemma: 'Either restore my treasure to me, or else let me die'.⁷⁹ Responding to the slow march of the opening bars, the clarinets initiate the *amoroso* topic, to which the bassoons then sympathetically respond (bars 8–10, 15–16, 26–8, 30–2, 49–51); note especially how the clarinets by themselves (without bassoons) first answer the Countess's initial statement at bars 26–8 (Example 3).⁸⁰

Because the Countess explicitly addresses Amor (Cupid), the *amoroso* clarinets could be heard as the voice of the god responding to her prayer for relief ('ristoro') by reminding Amor of her love. Nor is the role of the clarinets limited to a recollection of days past, merely soothing or nostalgic. Immediately after bar 32, when the Countess first

⁷⁵ These separate arias or ensembles that use clarinets either in the *Harmoniemusik* or in 'amorous' texture include K479 ('Dite almeno, in che mancai', 1785), K480 ('Mandine amabile', 1785), K505 ('Non temer, amato bene', 1786, from a version of *Idomeneo*). The fragmentary K435 ('Müßt ich auch durch tausend Drachen', 1783) and K580 ('Schon lacht der holde Frühling', 1789) do not include the clarinet parts called for in the orchestration.

⁷⁶ This triplet figuration was added by Mozart in his final version; see the draft of bars 79ff included in the appendix to *Neue Mozart Ausgabe II/5/12: zu KV 384/17*.

⁷⁷ See Belmonte's arias 'Hier soll ich dich denn sehen, Konstanze!' (no. 1, bars 42–55), 'Wenn der Freude Tränen fließen' (no. 15, bars 34–6, 72–3, 84–95, 107–9, 158–62), 'Ich baue ganz auf deine Stärke' (no. 17, 32–4, 73–7, 87–98, 121–7), as well as his duet with Konstanze 'Meinetwegen sollst du sterben' (no. 20, bars 50–1). Bassoon horns add *Liebenschmerz* to Konstanze's aria 'Traurigkeit' (no. 10, especially bars 62–6, 121–2) and clarinets provide *amoroso* touches to 'Martern aller Arten' (no. 11, bars 26–7, 30, 80–3, 95–6, 99, 199–200).

⁷⁸ There may be a precedent for the pastoral use of the clarinet in Gluck. Consider, for instance, his use of the chalumeau in the echo-ensemble answering Orfeo's laments (nos. 8–11) in *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762); see Alfred Einstein, *Gluck* (New York, 1964), 73.

⁷⁹ As admirably delineated in Webster, 'The Analysis of Mozart's Arias', 151–69, at 165. Mary Hunter notes that the clarinets here appear prominently for the first time in this opera, 'Rousseau, the Countess, and the Female Domain', in *Mozart Studies 2*, ed. Cliff Eisen (Oxford, 1997), 1–26, at 10.

⁸⁰ See Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture*, 101–4, which emphasises the alternation of these two topics.

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Clar. (in Sib)

Cor. (in Mi)

V. I

V. II

Va.

La C.

Vc. e B.

miei so - spir. O mi

Example 3. Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*, 'Porgi amor', bb. 24–8. *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, series 2, group 5, volume 16, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1973). NMA Online (<http://dme.mozarteum.at/nma/>), published by the Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg in collaboration with the Packard Humanities Institute, 2006ff. Musical examples reproduced with kind permission of the Mozarteum Salzburg [12 April 2024].

prays 'at least let me die', the clarinets respond by initiating the boldly rising melodic line, which the Countess joins. It then overshoots the crucial structural pitch g'' , reaching a surprising pause on high $a\text{-flat}''$ (bars 34–6, [Example 4](#)).⁸¹ The intervention of the clarinets underlines her self-awareness, to which the bassoon responds with its sensitive solo $g\text{-flat}'$ (bar 8), as if it too acknowledges her grief. The Countess's turn towards forgiveness (achieved at the end of the opera) seems to begin with her recognitions in this aria.

Andrew Steptoe wondered why similar dramatic material in 'Dove sono' and 'Sull'aria' does not call for a comparable use of the clarinets. Perhaps by withholding them in those arias, Mozart meant to suggest a certain quality of wilful fantasy, of escape from painful awareness into ardent delusion.⁸² In the wake of 'Porgi amor', a single clarinet initiates the theme of Cherubino's 'Voi che sapete' (no. 11), a literal request for enlightenment about the nature of love.⁸³ Clarinets also come to the fore in no. 26 ('Tutto è disposto') to underline Figaro's sarcastic call for men to 'open your eyes a little' ('Aprite un po' quegli occhi', bar 27) to the perfidy of women (bars 34–5).

⁸¹ Webster, 'The Analysis of Mozart's Arias', 162, 166, 168; Siegmund Levarie, *Mozart's Le nozze di Figaro* (New York, 1977), 78–80; Hunter, 'Rousseau, the Countess, the Female Domain', 5n7. Till considers the Countess 'deluded' by 'romantic notions of love', *Mozart and the Enlightenment*, 156.

⁸² Steptoe, *The Mozart–Da Ponte Operas*, 157n41.

⁸³ Abert notes that 'the winds tell the listener what is going on in the heart': the 'swelling clarinet theme' in 'Porgi amor' 'sounds like a memory of happier days', while the 'sensually swelling tones of the clarinet' accompanying Cherubino gives a 'picture of this infatuated boy's soul'; *Mozart*, 950–1. After the overture, the clarinets first become more prominent in Cherubino's 'Non so più, cosa son' (no. 6). For the pastoral character of F major, see Steblin, *History of Key Characteristics*, 258–62.

underlining that one has the feeling that Susanna is covertly reminding Figaro of their promises and their love, which he seems on the verge of forgetting. In so doing, the basset horns become reminders of their shared understanding, which Figaro's jealousy threatens to erase. Here, the instruments speak directly even when Susanna herself cannot. Likewise, in the ensuing allegro, arresting arpeggios in the chalumeau register of the basset horns underline her most direct, though still veiled, declaration in bars 57–66 and again (after her cadenza) in bars 77–84: 'May those who know the feelings of love / Sympathise with my suffering' ('Chi d'amor gli affetti intende, / Compatisca il mio penar'). Mozart's use of the basset horns illuminates a new facet of enlightenment: maintaining understanding in the face of confusion and jealousy requires no less insight than reaching it in the first place.

Enlightenment and ambiguity: *Don Giovanni*

As befits its darker character, *Don Giovanni* (K527, 1787) used clarinets to underline more ambiguous moments of enlightenment. In the quartet 'Non ti fidar' (no. 9), clarinets accompany Donna Anna and Don Ottavio's realisation that Donna Elvira is noble, even as Giovanni insists that she is mad ('Cieli, che aspetto nobile', bar 10). They also underline Elvira's full realisation of Giovanni's betrayal (inserted in 1788 as K540c, no. 21b, 'Mi tradi quell'alma ingrata', bar 38). Finally, paired clarinets accompany Donna Anna's attempt to dispel Ottavio's misunderstanding of her true state of mind as love, not cruelty (no. 23, 'Crudele? ... Non mi dir', bar 36).

At the same time, Mozart continued to associate clarinets with love in arias beyond his own operas. In 1787, for example, he composed the bass aria 'Mentre ti lascio, oh figlia' (K513) to a text also used by Paisiello, here using *amoroso* clarinets to dramatise a father's painful parting from his daughter, thereby extending this textural use from romantic to paternal love. In 1789, Mozart wrote two insertion arias for a revival of Martín y Soler's *Il burbero de buon core*, first presented in Vienna in 1786. Both arias have texts about love and both rely on skilful soloistic clarinets. 'Chi sà, chi sà, qual sia' (K582, for Act I scene 14) fits into a passage that Martín y Soler set in recitative, as does 'Vado, ma dove? oh Dei!' (K583, for Act II scene 5). In his original version, Martín y Soler used clarinets only occasionally to double oboes, even directing the clarinets (early in Act I) to remain outside the theatre, clearly because they were not needed until the next act.⁸⁵ By calling for solo clarinets, Mozart set his own stamp on these arias and implicitly commented on Martín y Soler's orchestration.

Enlightenment and disillusion: *Così fan tutte*

Così fan tutte (K588, 1789) also includes clarinets as harbingers of enlightenment but (in comparison with *Figaro*) now uses them to create subtle ironies, indicating that disillusionment may be a further stage of recognition. A pair of *amoroso* clarinets accompanies the sisters' first duet (no. 4, 'Ah guarda, sorella') examining the portraits of their beloveds, foreshadowing ironically their imminent interchange (compare with no. 21, discussed below). These clarinets soon enough imitate outright laughter in their accompanying figurations to the mock parting scene between the couples (No. 6, 'Sento, o Dio', bars 19, 21) and also accompanying Don Alfonso (in No. 10, 'Soave sia il vento', bars 28–31), whose participation in this tender farewell scene is especially freighted with irony, given that he himself arranged their parting.⁸⁶ Note here that Mozart accompanies the lovers

⁸⁵ According to a pencilled indication 'i Clarinetti restano fuori' on p. 86 (no. 3) of the manuscript at the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (SLUB).

⁸⁶ Regarding the clarinets here (and in 'Per pietà'), see Colin Lawson and Ingrid Pearson, "'Così fan tutte" and the Character of E-Major: Timbre of the Clarinet', *Acta Mozartiana* 59/1 (2012), 36–44.

with strings (bars 1–27), reserving for Alfonso the *amoroso* clarinets, thus sharpening the contrast and hence also the irony of his participation in the scene. The same principle may illuminate why, as the sisters first spurn the ‘Albanian’ suitors, Mozart chose oboes to accompany them (no. 13, ‘Alla bella Despinetta’, bars 56–80 and following passages), but uses a clarinet to double the scheming Despina, Guglielmo and Ferrando (bars 81–102).

Something of this ambiguity may also inform Mozart’s orchestration of Fiordiligi’s heroic aria ‘Come scoglio’ (no. 14): the alternation between clarinets (bars 15–18) and oboes (bar 22 and following) may reflect her faltering resolve to resist her new suitor. The heavy irony of the ‘dead’ Albanians returning to life under Doctor Despina’s mesmeric cure is underlined by a pair of clarinets, in limping *alla zoppa* rhythms (Act I finale, ‘Dove son! che loco è questo!’).⁸⁷ After the sisters have succumbed to the ‘Albanians’, their mock-betrothal scene (no. 21) unfolds to *amoroso* clarinets, clearly harking back to their initial ‘portrait’ duet (no. 4), heightened further by a solo clarinet (bars 16–20), a texture not used at any previous point in the score and saved to highlight this moment. Likewise, the clarinets illustrate the ‘beating’ hearts of the newly affianced lovers (no. 23, ‘Il core vi dono’, bars 28–38, 86–93, 110–17), underlined by a solo clarinet postlude (bars 117–20).⁸⁸

At such dramatic moments of incipient enlightenment, Mozart did not use clarinets exclusively; his choice of instrumental combinations calls for subtle assessment, as do his topical allusions. The obbligato horns in Fiordiligi’s great *rondò* ‘Per pietà, ben mio, perdona’ (no. 25) may invoke the noble associations of that instrument to indicate her essential nobility, rather than simply refer to the age-old symbol of cuckoldry, as some writers have suggested.⁸⁹ Beside these often-noted horns, the solo clarinet is no less important (bars 13–15) in the orchestral texture.⁹⁰ In particular, note how horn *fioriture* (bars 23, 56–8, 86–7) are echoed and even amplified by the answering clarinet (26, 60–2), especially accompanying Fiordiligi’s climactic cadential trill (124). This careful orchestration enables and illuminates her reaching a recognition that, though clouded by denial, later leads to her acknowledgment of her love for Ferrando.⁹¹

This also prepares us to hear the irony of the clarinets replying in the major to Ferrando’s angry accusations of betrayal in the minor (no. 27, ‘Tradito, schernito’, bars 7–11). Likewise, a solo clarinet doubles Despina’s cynical praise of love (no. 28, ‘È amore un ladroncello’). In the finale to Act II, Mozart uses a wind chorus led by clarinets to underline both the ‘bogus’ wedding feast (bars 89–93) with the ‘Albanians’ and the ‘real’ wedding (from 40 bars before the work’s end), thus casting ironic doubt on both.

⁸⁷ For the social, political and mesmeric context, see Polzonetti, ‘Mesmerizing Adultery’, 263–96.

⁸⁸ The solo clarinet, seconded by a bassoon, periodically accompanies Ferrando’s declarations in no. 24, ‘Ah lo veggio quell’anima bella’, bars 42–55, 70–2, 80–2. Colin Lawson, *Mozart: Clarinet Concerto* (Cambridge, 1996), 26, has pointed out that the second clarinet part for this aria has numerous low Ds, which would not be found on a B-flat soprano clarinet but would be on a basset clarinet. This suggests that Stadler played this and many other works on basset clarinets.

⁸⁹ For example, Edmund J. Goehring, *Three Modes of Perception in Mozart: The Philosophical, Pastoral, and Comic in Così fan tutte* (Cambridge, 2004), 238–40, reads these horns in terms of cuckoldry. For a more searching reading of this aria and its use of horn calls, see Waldoff, *Recognition in Mozart’s Operas*, 243–4, which makes a useful comparison with Vitellia’s ‘No più di fiori’ (249). In such passages, it may help to distinguish military and hunt figures – as discussed in Ratner, *Classic Music*, 18–19 – from other, quite distinct horn writing, such as here in ‘Per pietà’.

⁹⁰ Charles Ford notices the obbligato clarinet, though he seems to interpret it in terms of male vs. female orgasms: *Così? Sexual Politics in Mozart’s Operas* (Manchester, 1991), 207. See also Ford, *Music, Sexuality and the Enlightenment*, 92–95.

⁹¹ As noted by Waldoff, *Recognition*, 249–250; see also Don Neville, ‘The “Rondò” in Mozart’s Late Operas’, *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1994, 141–55.

Magic and knowledge: *Die Zauberflöte*

Mozart's use of the flute as an emblem of music's magic power in *Die Zauberflöte* (K620, 1791) does not prevent him from using the clarinet to underline important moments of enlightenment, the explicit concern of much of the opera.⁹² Mozart may intend us to remark on the distinction between the flute and its specifically magical powers (as when Tamino's flute enchants the animals in no. 8 or quells the dangerous waters during the ordeal in no. 21) and the rational, non-magical kind of enlightenment indicated by the clarinet. When Tamino realises the object of his love through contemplating her image in 'Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön' (no. 3), a pair of clarinets accompany his growing awareness of his feelings (bars 15–17); later, they adorn Pamina and Papageno's praise of love, 'Bei Männern' (no. 7, bars 32–41).⁹³

Mozart also uses clarinets in many contexts that go beyond romantic love. The March of the Priests (no. 9) uses the dark texture of doubled basset horns, bassoons and trombones, as does Sarastro's succeeding aria 'O Isis und Osiris' (no. 10), the most explicit statement of the enlightened ideals of his order. Clarinets accompany the first mention (no. 5, bars 214–25) of the three boys, who will advise Tamino and Papageno to be 'constant, patient and discreet' (no. 8, bars 15–18, 24–7, 'Sei standhaft, duldsam, und verschwiegen!'), nowhere referring to love. In the 'learned style' of enchained suspensions, clarinets and bassoons also accompany the boys in their other appearance in Act II (finale, no. 21, bars 1–45).⁹⁴ The clarinets fall silent when the distraught, suicidal Pamina arrives but resume when the boys reason with her.

When Tamino avows that he seeks 'that which belongs to love and virtue' (Act I no. 8, bars 88–90, 'Der Lieb' und Tugend Eigentum'), the manuscript shows that Mozart crossed out his original orchestration for flute (used just previously in this scene) and rescored this passage for clarinets, which had been silent for forty-nine bars (Figure 1).⁹⁵ This seems to confirm his choice of clarinets to underline the theme of enlightenment ('Tugend') here, which the three boys had adjured Tamino to pursue only a few bars before. By connecting love with virtue at this point, Mozart identifies them both as objects of rational choice, in contrast to Pamina's irrational distress.

The clarinet as interlocutor and protagonist: *La clemenza di Tito*

We have already noted cases in which Mozart used a clarinet as an interlocutor, accompanying his characters along the arc of recognition. In two arias in *La clemenza di Tito*, this interlocutor becomes so vivid as to become virtually a protagonist its own right. Indeed, these arias can best be understood as a pair, for they both feature a virtuosic clarinet obbligato. In Act I, Sesto sings 'Parto, parto ... Guardami, e tutto oblio' (no. 9) to persuade the vengeful Vitellia that he 'will be what you would most have me be, do whatever you wish' ('Sarò qual più ti piace, / Quel che vorrai farò'). On the surface, this great aria seems to depict not enlightenment but the depths of self-willed delusion: Sesto seems ready to

⁹² Abert notes that the *amoroso* clarinets 'express what the singer is unable to articulate' in *Mozart*, 1266. For this opera's connection to the Enlightenment, see Rachel Cowgill, 'New Light and the Man of Might: Revisiting Early Interpretations of *Die Zauberflöte*', in *Art and Ideology in European Opera: Essays in Honour of Julian Rushton*, ed. Rachel Cowgill, David Cooper and Clive Brown (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2010), 194–221.

⁹³ The excellent discussion of these passages in Marianne Tettlebaum, 'Whose Magic Flute?', *representations* 102/1 (2008), 76–93, especially 81–3, emphasises the importance of the clarinet. See also Peter Branscombe, *W. A. Mozart: Die Zauberflöte* (Cambridge, 1991), 135–6, who thinks that 'the use of the clarinets indicates a subject of special importance, not specifically Masonic, in fact usually that of love'.

⁹⁴ Branscombe, *W. A. Mozart: Die Zauberflöte*. For the 'learned style', see Ratner, *Classic Music*, 23–4.

⁹⁵ Branscombe also notes this passage in *W. A. Mozart: Die Zauberflöte*, 135–6.



Figure 1. The manuscript of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Act I no. 8, bb. 88–92. Courtesy Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (D-B): Mus.ms.autogr. Mozart, W.A. 620.

kill Tito, his friend and sovereign, to satisfy Vitellia's jealous demands. What is the clarinet doing here? I would suggest that it evokes the inner dialogue that speaks behind and through Sesto's desperate assertions, as if the clarinet were a kind of inner confidant, even a voice of conscience, which does not double Sesto's line (as if to indicate acquiescence) but comments in a more complex way. Indeed, we have known from the opening recitative of Act I that Sesto's inner state is deeply conflicted.

In 'Parto, parto', Mozart unfolds a carefully staged progression, beginning with the arched and embellished lines with which the clarinet initially responds to Sesto, each of which represents not just an echo but a deepening of Sesto's initial melodic idea, as if the clarinet were, through its benign instrumentality, inspiring him to heighten and purify his thoughts. Compare, for instance, Sesto's initial melodic gestures, straightforward and largely triadic (bars 4–12), with the sinuous reply of the solo clarinet (13–15), which, though recognisably emergent from Sesto's antecedent phrase, is much more complex and beautiful (Example 5).

Note especially how Sesto's cadence (bars 11–13) contrasts with the far greater rhythmic complexity of the clarinet's semiquaver and demisemiquaver *fioritura* (bars 13–14), which, in an understated but unmistakable way, juxtaposes new possibilities of expressive flexibility with Sesto's comparative rigidity. He in turn seems to recognise this newly beautiful turn (literally and figuratively) by his expressive rising sixth on 'sarò' (bars 14–15, his first use of this interval) and his subsequent ornament. The clarinet takes his rising sixth literally a step further, to a rising seventh (bars 15–16), though the instrument (characteristically) smooths the melodic arch in its own rather more suave way towards an unstressed termination (bar 17). After Sesto echoes this rising

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Nº 9 Aria
Adagio

Oboe I, II
Clarinetto solo
in Sib/B[♭]
Fagotto I, II
Corno I, II
in Sib alto/B[♭]hoch
Violino I
Violino II
Viola I, II
SESTO
Violoncello
e Basso

Par-to, par-to, ma tu ben mi -

8

o, me-co ri-tor-na in pa-ce, me-co ri-tor-na in pa-ce;

*) Bassettklarinetten: vgl. Vorwort.

Example 5. Mozart, *La clemenza di Tito*, 'Parto, parto', bb. 1–21. *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, series 2, group 5, volume 20, ed. Franz Giegling (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1970).

seventh (bars 16–17), the clarinet responds with a perfect octave that dissolves into the most complex (and most rhapsodic) *fioritura* yet, once again seeming to show Sesto how things *ought* to be done, though always sympathetic to the voice. The instrument that began as an echo has become a leader and guide. Hearing the authority with

sa - rò qual più ti pia - ce, sa - rò qual più ti

18

pia - ce, quel che vor - rai fa - rò, vor - rai fa - rò.

Example 5. Continued.

which it has moved to the dramatic centre of this scene, one might speak playfully but truthfully of the clarinet that became emperor of Rome, or at least of Sesto's heart. We feel the comparison between Tito's clement rule and the clarinet's no less enlightened sway.

The clarinet's flexible commentary advances to a new level of influence when Sesto returns to his dogged reassertion that he will be what Vitellia wants ('Quel che vorrai

farò'), seconded by the heroic neo-Baroque conventionalities of dotted French rhythms in the strings, *forte* (bar 20). All this the clarinet quietly ignores without comment, merely resuming its gorgeous melodic line, taking up where it last left off, now adding an even more ravishing downward arpeggio into the chalumeau register (bars 22–3). Indeed, much of this dramatic impact depends on the extended low range of the B-flat basset clarinet. Although Sesto now resumes his initial words, 'Parto', his growing ornamentation eats away at the stolidity of his initial melodic style, as if his attention were now increasingly on the clarinet's transcendent example. From this point until the end of the introductory Adagio, the clarinet scarcely ceases its inventive elaboration, ever more complex and beautiful, exploring registers (down to its lowest B-flat) and delicate rhythmic textures far beyond Sesto's – or any human's – range. In the process, Sesto's line acquires new degrees of melodic flexibility and continuity; it is hard to avoid the impression that, rather than the clarinet 'accompanying' him, he is accompanying it.

No surprise, then, that the succeeding Allegro begins with the clarinet's solo voice (Example 6), rather than Sesto's, announcing a beguilingly ornamented riposte to the strings' initial triadic gambit (bars 44–6). Sesto does not even try to match the clarinet's subtle grace, though his continuation of the strings' triadic material shows a commendable awareness of the clarinet's leadership; Sesto here shows himself accommodating the clarinet rather than placating Vitellia.

In truth, the clarinet shows itself to be a far more admirable mistress than Vitellia. Consider the evidence of the clarinet's wonderful *dolce* invention (bars 57–9 ff.), which we can only stand back and admire (as does Sesto at 'A questo sguardo solo', Example 7, bars 59–61). The ensuing growing animation of the Allegro assai, and the aria as a whole, can best be understood as leading towards its final, climactic words: 'Ah, what power, O gods, you have given beauty!' ('Ah, qual poter, oh Dei! donaste alla beltà'). These words are given in triplets, which the clarinet first introduces in its chalumeau register (its accompaniment figures at 104–11), and are taken up immediately by the voice to ornament the word 'beltà', then handed back and forth between voice and clarinet ever more virtuosically until the aria's end.

In this extended and remarkable passage, the clarinet seems to illuminate the nature of the beauty that is driving Sesto to commit himself to actions he himself questions and ultimately regrets. However misguided and even treasonable the actions are that he here swears to perform, the voice of the clarinet highlights the place beauty has in his motivation, for this superlative beauty is very real, even if his momentary decisions are flawed. The radiant tone of this aria has everything to do with the lover's awareness of the beauty that draws him on, even while he avoids contemplating what his actions mean. There is scarcely any precedent in Mozart's operas for the soloistic virtuosity he here requires of the clarinet, which thus acts to underscore not only 'beltà' but virtue (*virtù*), here manifest in its correlate, virtuosity.

Through a fortunate turn of circumstance, Sesto does not murder Titus, as he had sworn to do. Sesto's fidelity to her mad demands moves Vitellia to confess her own role to Titus and to beg for mercy. She reflects on her situation in the *rondo* 'Non più di fiori' (no. 23), accompanied by a basset horn in F that emerges progressively from an initially accompanimental role (along with other winds) to become an obbligato. In this, as in other respects, this aria is a companion to Sesto's 'Parto'. Where the clarinet had directed Sesto's thoughts towards a gentler beauty than Vitellia's fierce vengeance, now the basset horn helps her overcome her despair by sympathetically underlining her self-realisation and indicating to her the way in which she may find mercy in Tito's eyes. The choice of the lower-pitched basset horn (compared to Sesto's clarinet companion) is interesting. Vitellia's notable passages in her lowest register may mandate this choice: this gentle-sounding instrument seems an especially appropriate foil for her intensity.

44 Allegro *a 2*

Guar - da-mi, e tut - to o-bli-o, e a ven - di-car-ti io vo - lo, e a

Example 6. Mozart, *La clemenza di Tito*, 'Parto, parto', bb. 44–54. *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, series 2, group 5, volume 20, ed. Franz Giegling (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1970).

As with Sesto's aria, the progression of 'Non più di fiori' is gradual and carefully judged. The initial *Larghetto* is so pastoral and calm as to belie her grim words: 'No more shall Hymen descend to weave fair garlands of flowers'. The utter calm of its F major harmonies evokes the paradise she feels she has lost in a tranquil melody the basset horn shadows with subtle doubling, another example of the 'enlightened pastoral'. Only at the very end of this section does the basset horn come forward as an audible solo voice, though in accompanimental arpeggios, which anticipate its full (and sudden) soloistic emergence

55

dolce

f

p

tr

ven - di - car - ti io vo - lo; a

60

p

p

p

que - sto sguar - do so - lo da me si pen - se - rà, da

p

Example 7. Mozart, *La clemenza di Tito*, 'Parto, parto', bb. 55–65. *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, series 2, group 5, volume 20, ed. Franz Giegling (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1970).

at the beginning of the following Allegro, asserting the parallel minor (bar 44 and following, [Example 8](#)). Here the basset horn gives voice to Vitellia's melancholy, as if encouraging her to explore her feelings directly: 'O wretched me! How horrible! Ah, what will be said of me?' ('Infelice! qual orrore! Ah, di me che si dirà?').⁹⁶ The agitation mounts

⁹⁶ As noted by Waldoff, *Recognition*, 281–2, whose discussion of this whole *scena* is extremely insightful (275–88). See also John A. Rice, *W. A. Mozart: La clemenza di Tito* (Cambridge, 1991), 49–51, 59–60, 99–100.

41 Allegro

di - scen-da I - me - ne ad - in - trec - ciar. In - - - fe -

47

li - ce! qual or - ro - re! Ah - - - di me che

Example 8. Mozart, *La clemenza di Tito*, 'Non più di fiori', bb. 41–52. *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, series 2, group 5, volume 20, ed. Franz Giegling (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1970).

in the broken orchestral texture, rapidly alternating *forte* and *piano* with intense syncopations (bars 50–5). As Jessica Waldoff notes, this Allegro presents the psychological process of Vitellia's self-discovery.⁹⁷

Having disclosed this inner realm of pain, the basset horn now also initiates a gentle chromatic melody in the major (Example 9, bars 56–60), to which

⁹⁷ Waldoff, *Recognition*, 282.

53

si di - rà, che si di - rà?

59

Chi ve - des - se il mio do - lo - re, pur a - vria di me pie - tà.

Example 9. Mozart, *La clemenza di Tito*, 'Non più di fiori', bb. 53–70. *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, series 2, group 5, volume 20, ed. Franz Giegling (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1970).

Vitellia sings 'Chi vedesse il mio dolore, pur avria di me pietà' ('Yet he who could see my distress would have pity on me', [Example 10](#), 60–4). This phrase fascinatingly blends scalar simplicity with chromatic subtlety, as if to illuminate the expressive sympathy involved in pity. This delicately balanced mood draws Vitellia from her self-absorbed state into increasingly responsive and animated dialogue with the basset horn, which proposes a characteristically instrumental elaboration ([Example 9](#), bars 68–70). Vitellia later uses this *passaggio* verbatim in her peroration ([Example 10](#), 154–60).

65

Chi ve - des-se il mio do - lo-re, pur a -

Example 9. Continued

Mozart has Vitellia appropriate this distinctive phrase as a way of preparing and approaching her climactic passage of *Treffsicherheit* (162–5). This technical term, denoting virtuosic feats of vocal accuracy in large leaps, literally means ‘unerring aim’, a kind of moral certainty appropriate to the state of clear resolution she has reached.⁹⁸ Thanks to the basset horn’s tutelage, she reaches her moral decision and self-realisation with a kind of joy.⁹⁹

Conclusion

By using clarinets in these new ways, Mozart changed and deepened the fundamental dramatic character of his operas, especially at crucial moments in the arc of a character’s development. He brought a tragic element of recognition and enlightenment to what remained essentially comic works. To mark and set those moments apart, he used clarinets, whose subtly contrasting sonority distinguished them from the other winds. By implicitly writing for Anton Stadler (or someone of comparable skill), he enlisted an intimate friend to collaborate in setting these all-important scenes, a friend who shared his interest in enlightenment and whose playing (like Mozart’s composition) was always bent on evoking the nuances by which recognition comes to life. Indeed, the clarinet’s deep associations with the pastoral helped sooth the protagonists’ emotional turmoil as well as the audience’s sympathetic reaction, so that they could listen and follow these subtle dramatic evolutions with the necessary attention and receptivity.

If indeed Mozart increasingly used the clarinet in his operas to underline the process of personal enlightenment, we may hear with new ears the Clarinet Quintet (K588, 1789) and Clarinet Concerto (K622), which Mozart wrote just before and after his lightning composition

⁹⁸ Mozart was fascinated with this kind of vocal accuracy and wrote a series of solfeggio exercises (K393, 1781–5) for his wife Constanze (‘per la mia cara Costanza’) to help her practise this technique, including material based on the melody of the ‘Christe eleison’ she sang in the Mass in C Minor (K427).

⁹⁹ James Parakilas reads this aria as ‘Mozart’s Mad Scene’, *Soundings* 10 (1983), 3–17; the attractive aspects of this comparison must be weighed against the sanity that Vitellia’s dialogue with the basset horn seems to bring.

153.

vria di me pic-tà, pie-tà, di me pic-

Example 10. Mozart, *La clemenza di Tito*, 'Non più di fiori', bb. 153–7. *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, series 2, group 5, volume 20, ed. Franz Giegling (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1970).

of *La clemenza di Tito*. These purely instrumental works show that he felt drawn to the clarinet as a solo voice, not only as an obbligato companion for an onstage character. We may also understand Mozart as presenting us with the voice of the clarinet so that we might now more directly engage with its special interlocutory power. Just as the clarinet and basset horn were the confidants who helped Sesto and Vitellia through their troubled thoughts, in this concerto Mozart allows the clarinet to address, help and console us in turn by bringing into concord knowledge and feeling, reason and love. Perhaps we may also understand his prominent use of basset horns in the *Requiem* as expressing his belief that death may be the final enlightenment, as Mozart wrote in the final letter to his father – 'the true final purpose of our lives ... the key to our true happiness'.¹⁰⁰ Along with so many of his operatic characters, we may owe our finest moments of recognition to the voice of a clarinet.

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¹⁰⁰ *Mozarts Briefe*, no. 1044, 4:4 0–4 (4 April 1787).

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