

HKDSE Music – Listening (Form 4)
Week 7 – Classical Operas and Sacred Music

Classical Opera

- **opera reform**
 - In late Baroque operas, operas became standardized into a fixed format: a series of alternating **recitatives** 宣敘調 and **arias** 詠嘆調. Actions were frequently paused to give the singers the opportunity to show off their technical brilliance. Music takes precedence over the drama.
 - **Gluck** (1714–1787) proposed that music should serve the story and reflect the drama and emotions of the characters. Drama then takes precedence over the music.
 - There was less distinction between recitatives and arias, which sometimes interleave with one another in relation to the drama.
- An **overture** 序曲 is performed before the beginning of the opera to set the scene and prepare the audience for the nature of the opera to come.
- The final scene of an act (particularly in Mozart's operas) often culminates into an **ensemble** 合唱, during which all the characters join in and sing at the same time
- Notable operas in the Classical period:
 - Gluck: *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *Alceste*, *Armide*
 - Mozart: *Idomeneo*, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, *The Magic Flute*
 - Beethoven: *Fidelio*

Opera seria (serious opera) 莊嚴歌劇

- A type of Italian opera in the eighteenth century, based on a **serious** subject but normally with a happy ending.
- The story centered on **heroes, rulers, and gods**.
- The principle male characters are undertaken by **castrati**.
- The music centers on **solo arias**.

Opera buffa (comic opera) 談諧歌劇

- A type of Italian opera was originated since the 1720s and became popular in the eighteenth century

- It is based on a **humorous** subject involving several comic characters.
- The story centered on **everyday characters** (such as servants, maids, barber, commoners).
- Comic characters are often portrayed by **bass** singers.
- Music is light-hearted and joyful (bassoons are often used to create a whimsical effect).
- Opera buffa gave more emphasis to **ensemble** singing (duets, trios, quartets).

Singspiel 德式輕歌劇

- means “singing play” in German: *singen* (sing) + *spielen* (play)
- A type of German opera that featuring **spoken dialogue** interspersed with songs, choruses, and instrumental music

Sacred Music 聖樂 in the Classical period

- Due to political factors, sacred music tended to be more conservative, encouraging simpler, more chordal settings of the liturgy.
- Some sacred works even preserved the basso continuo.
- Strict counterpoint and fugal writing are particularly common in sacred music.
- **Stile antico** (old /ancient style): the use of counterpoint to imitate the compositional style of late Renaissance music; the subject is often written in long note values and in alla breve



Gluck, *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1787)

Gluck intended to make opera seria more natural and dramatically coherent. He proposes a kind of musical style similar to the aesthetic principles of the Florentine camerata (operas by Lully and Monteverdi), in which the music should serve the words to help further the dramatic action.

Musical characteristics:

1. no da capo arias
2. no long melismas
3. a more predominantly syllabic setting of the text to make the words more intelligible
4. far less repetition of text within an aria
5. a blurring of the distinction/boundary between recitative and aria
6. accompanied rather than secco recitative
7. simpler, more flowing melodic lines
8. an overture that is linked by theme or mood to the ensuing action
9. more prominence for the chorus, giving it, in imitation of classical Greek drama, an important role commenting on the events unfolding on the stage

Act 1 – Scene 1

As the curtain rises and sad music is heard, the stage is revealed, occupied by a group of shepherds and nymphs, followers of Orpheus, who carry wreaths of flowers and garlands of myrtle; and, while some of them burn incense, place garlands on the marble tomb and scatter flowers over it, the others sing the following chorus, interrupted by the laments of Orpheus, who, stretched out on a rock, from time to time passionately repeats the name of Eurydice.

Coro

Ah! se intorno a quest'urna funesta,
Euridice, ombra bella, t'aggiri,

Orfeo

Euridice!

Coro

Odi i pianti, i lamenti, i sospiri
Che dolenti si spargon per te.

Orfeo

Euridice!

Coro

Ed ascolta il tuo sposo infelice
Che piangendo ti chiama e si lagna;

Orfeo

Euridice!

Coro

Come quando la dolce compagna
Tortorella amorosa perdé.

Coro

Ah! se intorno a quest'urna funesta,
Euridice, ombra bella, t'aggiri,

Orfeo

Euridice!

Coro

Odi i pianti, i lamenti, i sospiri
Che dolenti si spargon per te.

Orfeo

Euridice!

Coro

Ed ascolta il tuo sposo infelice
Che piangendo ti chiama e si lagna;

Orfeo

Euridice!

Coro

Come quando la dolce compagna
Tortorella amorosa perdé.

Ritornello principle: aria (with the same recurring melody) alternates with recitative

Chiatno il mio ben così
Quando si mostra il dì
Quando s'asconde!
Nia, oh vano mio dolor!
L' Idol del mio cor
Non mi risponde,

Euridice! Euridice!
Ombra cara, ove sei?
Piange il tuo sposo,
Ti domanda agli Dei
A' mortali ti chiede
E sparse a' venti
Son le lagrime sue,
I suoi lamenti!

Cerco il mio ben così
In queste, ove morì.
Funeste sponde.
Ma sola al mio dolor,
Perché conobbe amor,
L'eco risponde.

Euridice! Euridice!
Ah, questo nome
san le spiagge, e le selve
l'appresero da me!
In ogni valle
Euridice risuona:
in ogni tronco
scrise il misero Orfeo:
Orfeo infelice,
Euridice, Idol mio,
Cara Euridice!

Piango il mio ben così,
Se il sole indora il dì,
Se va nell'onde.
Pietoso al pianto mio
Va mormorando il rio
E mi risponde.

So do I call my beloved
when day appears,
when it hides itself!
But, oh, vain is my sorrow!
The Idol of my heart
answers me not,

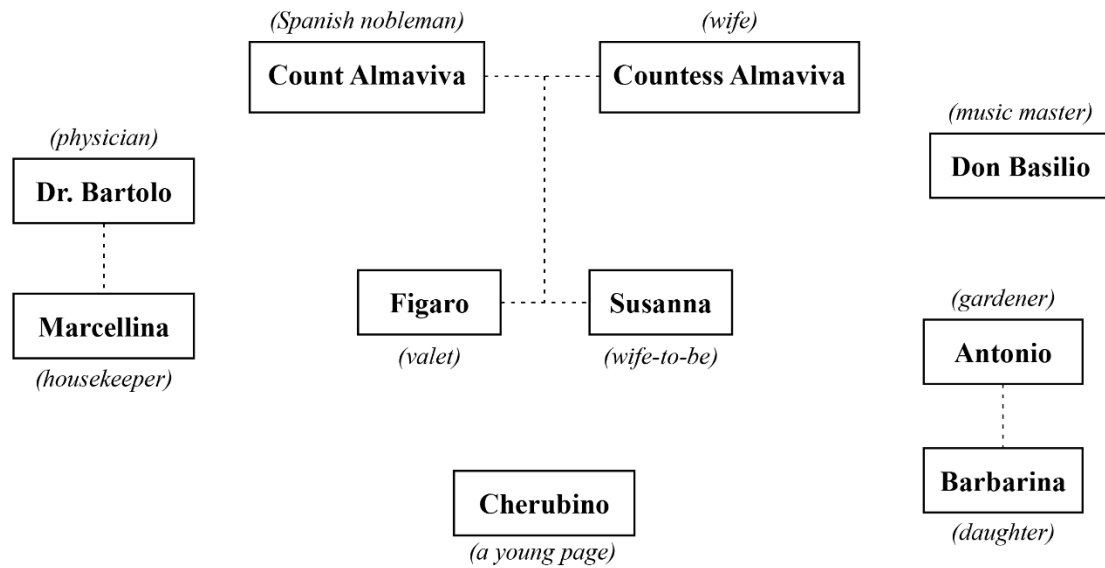
Eurydice! Eurydice!
Dear shade, where are you?
Your husband weeps,
(demands you of the Gods.
seeks you among mortals,
and scattered to the winds
are his tears,
his laments!

So I seek my beloved,
where she died, on these
sad shores,
but to my sorrow.
because she knew love,
only Echo replies.

Eurydice! Eurydice!
Ah, this name
the sea-shore knows, and the woods
learned from me!
In every valley
the name Eurydice resounds:
on every tree
wretched Orpheus has written:
Unhappy Orpheus,
Eurydice. my Idol,
dear Eurydice!

So do I weep for my beloved,
if the sun gilds the day,
if it sinks down in the sea.
Pitying my complaint
the river murmurs on
and answers me.

Mozart, *Le Nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro) (1786)



Overture

- **sonatina form**: sonata form without development

Exposition			Recapitulation			Coda
1st theme	2nd theme	Closing theme	1st theme	2nd theme	Closing theme	
D+ ... (V)	A+	A+	D+ ... (V)	D+	D+	D+

Act 1 – “Cinque... dieci... venti...” (Five... ten... twenty...)

- a duet between Figaro and Susanna
- In contrast to the outmoded da capo aria typical in Baroque operas, Mozart emphasizes the interaction between the two characters: Figaro and Susanna each sing their own melodies, then in counterpoint with one another; then Figaro picks up Susanna's melody, complementing Susanna; afterwards they engage in an intimate dialogue (call and response), concluding with both of them singing the same melody together.

Figaro

Cinque... dieci... venti... trenta...
trentasei...quarantatre

Figaro (measuring)

Five...ten...twenty...thirty...
thirty-six...forty-three.

Susanna

Ora sì ch'io son contenta;

Susanna (looking in the mirror)

Now I indeed feel content.

sembra fatto in ver per me.
Guarda un po', mio caro Figaro,
guarda adesso il mio cappello.

Figaro

Sì mio core, or è più bello,
sembra fatto in ver per te.

Susanna e Figaro

Ah, il mattino alle nozze vicino
quanto è dolce al (mio/tuo) tenero sposo.

Susanna

Cosa stai misurando, caro il mio Figaretto?

It seems like it is made for me.
Look at me, my dear Figaro,
Look at this hat of mine right now.

Figaro

Yes my love, it is very pretty.
It seems like it was truly made for you.

Susanna and Figaro

Oh, your/my tender love is so welcome on this
wedding morning.

Susanna

I made this pretty and charming little hat
all by myself!

Act 1 – “Cosa sento” (I heard it all)

- a quartet by Count Almaviva, Don Basilio, Susanna, and Cherubino
- The music is characterized by constant shift of emotions in response to the drama.

A The Count reacts to Basilio telling Susanna about Cherubino's interest in the Countess

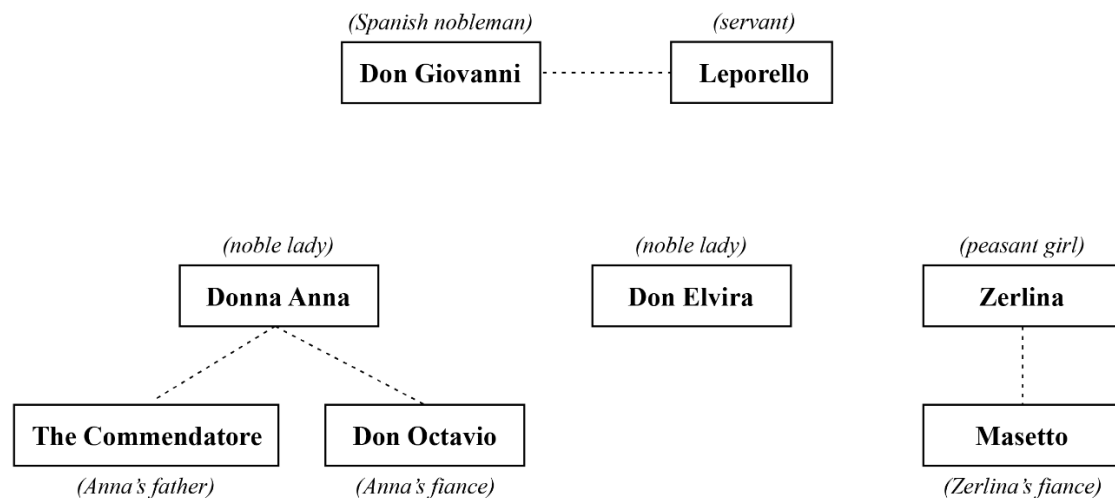
B Susanna pretends to faint to draw attention away from Cherubino

A Basilio apologizes for what he has said about Cherubino and the Countess

Count narrates the events of the day before, when he visited Barbarina and discovered
C Cherubino hiding under the table.
(*accompanied recitative*: recitative accompanied by the orchestra)

A After the Count discovers Cherubino hiding under a dress on the chair

Mozart, *Don Giovanni* (1787)



Overture

- **Part 1** (in *D minor*): slow, solemn, tragic, and foreboding → hinting at the death of the Commendatore in Act 1, and his vengeance upon Don Giovanni at the end of Act 2
- **Part 2** (in *D major*): fast (*Allegro*) and comical → depicting the comic mood of the opera

Act I – Introduction

- Don Giovanni broke into the house of Don Pedro (The Commendatore) in order to seduce his daughter, Donna Anna. Leporello, stands guard outside the residence while his master pursues his prey.
- Donna Anna's screams. Her father (The Commendatore) appears to defend his daughter. Don Giovanni duels with the Commandant and mortally wounds him. The Commendatore died. Don Giovanni escapes from the palace with Leporello.

Molto allegro
LEPORELLO

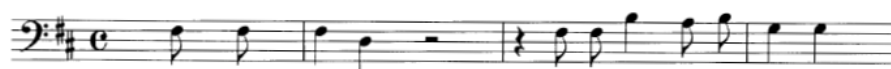
Not - te e gior - no fa - ti - car, per chi nul - la sa gra - dir;
I work hard day and night, and he never thanks me.

Act I – “Madamina” (Catalogue Aria)

- Donna Elvira is heartbroken and outraged because Don Giovanni has abandoned her. She hopes that her faithless lover will return to her, but she will avenge him if he refuses.
- Don Giovanni and Leporello approach Donna Elvira. Don Giovanni recognizes her and flees, leaving Leporello behind to console her. Leporello explains to her the number of his

master's romantic conquests: 640 in Italy, 231 in Germany, 100 in France, 91 in Turkey, and 1003 in Spain.

Allegro
LEPORELLO



Ma - da - mi - na! Il ca - ta - lo - go è questo,
Dear little lady! This is the catalog,

Act I – “La ci darem la mano”

- Don Giovanni saw a peasant girl (Zerlina) during her marriage celebration. He asks Leporello to lure her fiancé (Masetto) away. Don Giovanni tries to seduce her by promising to marry her.

Andante
DON GIOVANNI



Là ci da - rem la ma - no, là mi di - rai di sì,
There, we'll take each other's hand, and there, you will say yes.

Act II – Finale

- Someone knocks at the door. Don Giovanni opens the door; before him stands the Statue of the Commandant.
- The Statue refuses Don Giovanni's offer to dine with him. He grasps Don Giovanni's hand and urges him to mend his ways and repent. Don Giovanni refuses to repent.
- Flames erupt around the hall. Don Giovanni is swallowed up by the engulfing fires of Hell.

Mozart, Requiem in D minor, K. 626 (1791)

The work was commissioned by Count Franz von Walsegg in July 1791, who wished to dedicate the work to the memory of his recently departed young wife.

In November, Mozart fell ill of rheumatic illness. By the time of his death, he completed and orchestrated only the *Introitus*, and finished the detail drafts of the *Kyrie*, *Sequentia*, and up to the eighth bar of the *Lacrymosa*. The second half of the work was completed by his students after Mozart's death.

Introitus (for chorus & soprano solo)

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion,
et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem;
Exaudi orationem meam,
ad te omnis caro veniet.
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord:
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
A hymn, O God, becomes you in Sion,
and a vow shall be paid to you in Jerusalem.
Hear my prayer: to you all flesh shall come.
Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.

- The opening section drew on the opening chorus from Handel's Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline.
- In "Te decet hymnus" Mozart introduces a Gregorian chant—the Ninth Psalm Tone—in the soprano.

Lacrymosa (for chorus)

Lacrimosa dies illa,
qua resurget ex favilla
judicandus homo reus.
Huic ergo parce Deus,
pie Jesu Domine,
dona eis requiem! Amen!

Tearful, that day
on which shall rise from the ashes
guilty man, to be judged.
Therefore, O God, spare this man.
O merciful Lord Jesus,
grant them rest. Amen.

- The slurred two-note figure in the violin depicts the gesture of sobbing and sighing.
- **Word painting:** "resurget" (arise) is emphasized by an ascending melodic motion

Haydn, *Die Schöpfung* (The Creation), Hob. XXI No. 2 (1797–8)

After returning from London, Haydn composed two oratorios, *The Creation* and *The Seasons*.

Haydn's oratorio style is heavily influenced by Handel's, whose music he had heard during his stay in London. The libretto was based on elements taken from Genesis and the Psalms.

The Creation was premiered at Vienna on 19th March 1799.

Three soloists take up the roles of different characters: Gabriel and Eva (soprano), Uriel (tenor), Raphael and Adam (bass).

No. 1 – *Die Vorstellung des Chaos* (The Representation of the Chaos)

Raphael - Im Anfange schuf Gott
Himmel und Erde,
und die Erde war ohne Form und leer;
und Finsternis war auf der Fläche der Tiefe.

Chor - Und der Geist Gottes schwebte
auf der Fläche der Wasser,
und Gott sprach: «Es werde Licht!»
und es ward Licht.

Uriel - Und Gott sah das Licht, dass es gut war,
und Gott schied das Licht von der Finsternis.

Raphael - In the beginning God created the
heaven and the earth,
and the earth was without form and void;
and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

Chorus - And the Spirit of God
moved upon the face of the waters,
and God said, "Let there be light!"
and there was light.

Uriel - And God saw the light, that it was good
and God divided the light from the darkness.

- The work begins with a unison C across multiple octaves → a cosmic big bang
- Harmonies seems to hover aimlessly without grounding itself in the home key of C minor.
- Raphael describes the state of the primordial world: without form, empty, and dark.
- The choir announces the words of God: "Let there be light!". The orchestra blasted in full force a C-major chord in *fortissimo*.
- This movement demonstrates how Haydn uses different compositional devices for dramatic purposes: contrasts in dynamics, textures, orchestration, harmony, and meter.