

# Gluck      “Resta, o cara” from *Il trionfo di Clelia*

Christoph Willibald Gluck was one of the primary figures in the reform movement of opera in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. His work was based on “the immutable foundations of beauty and truth” (his own phrase), and his reforms sought to achieve dramatic and emotional realism through making the music serve the text. This represented a conscious attempt to replace the florid vocal excesses of the late Baroque with a return to the naturalistic and poetic origins of opera; “I sought to restrict music”, he wrote, “to its true purpose of expressing the poetry, and reinforcing the dramatic situation without interrupting the action or hampering it with superfluous embellishments”.

His three great ‘reform’ operas – *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762), *Alceste* (1767) and *Paride ed Elena* (1770) – were written in collaboration with the librettist Ranieri Calzabigi (1714-1795), and date from the same period in which the young Mozart was writing his first works. They were followed by a highly successful series of French operas (including the two *Iphigénie* operas and *Armide*) written for Paris, which have maintained a fairly regular foothold in the repertoire. Gluck’s apprenticeship, though, had been an extensive one, and it comes as a surprise to many that by the time he came to write *Orfeo ed Euridice* he was already a veteran of over twenty-five operas. These were predominantly in the established Metastasian ‘opera seria’ style which his later reforms sought to replace, but the transition and development of his musical language was a gradual one, and many numbers from his early operas anticipate his later style.

*Il trionfo di Clelia* was written for the inauguration of Bologna’s Teatro Comunale on 14 May 1763. This magnificent opera house was designed by the celebrated architect Antonio Galli Bibiena; originally called the Nuovo Teatro Pubblico, it was the first opera house to be constructed with public funds and owned by the municipality. The first night was a major social and artistic event, and was deemed a great success by everyone except Gluck himself, who expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the Bologna orchestra. In spite of these misgivings the opera ran for a total of twenty-eight performances, selling more than thirty thousand tickets (more than the entire population of Bologna at the time).

The illustrious cast was headed by the soprano Antonia Maria Girelli-Aguilar as Clelia and the celebrated castrato Giovanni Manzuoli as Orazio; eight years later these two singers were to create the roles of Silvia and Ascanio respectively in Mozart’s *Ascanio in Alba* in Milan. After the success of *Il trionfo di Clelia* Manzuoli was engaged to appear at the King’s Theatre Haymarket in London for the 1764-65 season, during which he appeared in the pasticcio opera *Ezio* and the première of J. C. Bach’s *Adriano in Siria*. His stay in London coincided with that of the young Mozart, and Manzuoli is thought to have given Mozart singing lessons during this time.

The text of *Il trionfo di Clelia*, which had been written by Pietro Metastasio the previous year for a setting by Johann Adolph Hasse, is set in Rome in 508 B.C. Clelia is a Roman noblewoman engaged to the ambassador Orazio. Together – and seemingly single-handedly – they resist the treacherous schemes of Tarquinio and the invading Etruscan King Porsenna, ultimately securing peace and their own happiness as well as protecting Rome’s independence. In his opening aria, a powerful vehicle for Manzuoli to announce his vocal and dramatic gifts, Orazio urges Clelia to place the greater good of Rome above her own wishes and interests.

## ORAZIO:

Resta, o cara; e per timore  
Se tremar mai senti il core,  
Pensa a Roma e pensa a me.

È ben giusto, o mia speranza,  
Che t’inspirino costanza,  
La tua patria e la mia fè.

## HORATIUS:

Stay, my dear, and if you ever  
feel your heart tremble with fear,  
think of Rome and of me.

It is completely right, my beloved,  
that your country and my faith  
inspire loyalty in you.

# Gluck “O del mio dolce ardor” from *Paride ed Elena*

*Paride ed Elena* was the third and final collaboration between Gluck and the librettist Calzabigi. It was premièred at the Burgtheater in Vienna on 3 November 1770. Gluck did not create a subsequent French adaptation of the work (as he had done for its two predecessors), and indeed it has perhaps languished in the shadow of *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Alceste* (he himself acknowledged that it lacked the “tragic situations” of those operas), but it contains some charming and beautiful music.

According to Homer, it was the love of Paride (Paris), a Trojan, for Elena (Helen, wife of Menelaus of Sparta and allegedly the most beautiful woman in the world) which prompted the Trojan Wars. Gluck and Calzabigi’s opera, however, disregards this political framework and presents a simple love story, focusing almost exclusively on the two main protagonists. At the beginning of the opera, Paride and his followers have just landed on the shore of Sparta, and he sings of his joy at being able at last to breathe the same air as Elena.

## PARIDE:

O del mio dolce ardor bramato oggetto!  
L’aure che tu respiri, alfin respiro.  
Ovunque il guardo io giro,  
Le tue vaghe sembianze  
Amore in me dipinge,  
Il mio pensier si finge  
Le più liete speranze.  
E nel desio che così m’empie il petto  
Cerco te, chiamo te, spero e respiro!

## PARIS:

*O longed-for object of my tender passion,  
at last I breathe the air that you breathe.  
Wherever I turn my gaze,  
Love paints in my mind  
your beautiful face,  
and my imagination conjures up  
the happiest of hopes.  
And in the desire which thus fills my breast  
I seek, I call, I hope and I yearn for you!*

# Kraus Symphony in C minor

1. Larghetto – Allegro 2. Andante 3. Allegro assai

Joseph Martin Kraus was born in the town of Miltenberg am Main on 20 June 1756, and died in Stockholm on 15 December 1792. He studied at the Jesuit Grammar School in Mannheim, where he was a choirboy in the court chapel, and he subsequently studied law and philosophy at the universities of Mainz, Erfurt and Göttingen. On completion of his studies in 1778 he was persuaded by a friend to travel to Stockholm to try his luck at the distinguished and artistically fertile court of King Gustavus III.

Kraus soon decided to make his career in music, and in 1780 he was elected to be a member of the Swedish Academy of Music. The following year he became deputy Kapellmeister of the court orchestra, and Gustavus then paid for him to undertake an extensive study tour through Europe, incorporating Germany, Austria, Italy, France and England. This tour lasted from 1782 to 1787, and during its course Kraus met some of the leading musical figures of the day. Gluck, whose music most closely influenced him, said of him that “that man has great style”, and Haydn later wrote: “I own a symphony by him, which I preserve to the memory of one of the greatest geniuses I have met”.

The symphony in question was the Symphony in C minor, which was composed in Vienna in 1783; it was seemingly dedicated to Haydn, who predicted to the Swedish diplomat Fredrik Silfverstolpe that it “will be regarded as a masterpiece for centuries to come; believe me, there are few people who can compose something like that”. The work is actually a reworking of a symphony in the distant key of C sharp minor which Kraus had written in Stockholm, but the transposition to the relative terra firma of C minor doubtless made the work more playable.

The remarkable slow introduction to the first movement demonstrates Kraus’ harmonic boldness and progressive imagination, yet also harks back to the discordant Baroque suspensions of, for example, the opening of Pergolesi’s *Stabat mater* or Lotti’s *Crucifixus*. With its feverish urgency and intensity the work inhabits the same dark and turbulent world as Haydn’s own ‘Sturm und Drang’ symphonies of the 1770s, and it has also been viewed as a symphonic equivalent to Gluck’s dramatically gripping, concise and expressive later operas. Sadly, and unjustly, however, Haydn’s prediction has not been fulfilled, and the work is seldom performed today.

# Gluck “Che puro ciel” from *Orfeo ed Euridice*

*Orfeo ed Euridice* was premièred at the Burgtheater in Vienna on 5 October 1762, and the following day the six-year-old Mozart arrived in the city for the very first time. The coincidence seems curiously symbolic, and it was certainly bold of Gluck to choose for his new opera the story of mythology’s greatest musician, requiring him as it did to create music that could depict Paradise and placate the Furies.

Gluck and Calzabigi’s reforms were in fact not entirely new, and in many respects involved adopting French rather than Italian models. These included giving priority to the concept of the scene, rather than individual numbers, the rejection of the da capo arias beloved by Italian opera seria, the use of the orchestra throughout, and the rejection of empty virtuosity in the vocal writing. The one important Italian tradition which still won the day, however, was the need for a happy ending – in this version of the myth, Cupid eventually saves the day, and Orpheus and Eurydice are reunited for a second time.

The role of Orfeo was created by the castrato Gaetano Guadagni (1729-1792). Thirteen years previously he had created the role of Didymus in Handel’s *Theodora*, and in addition to his “most beautiful voice” he was admired for his restrained style and his dignified acting. He was subsequently to sing the title roles in two further Gluck operas – the revised version of *Ezio* in 1763 and *Telemacco* in 1765.

“Che puro ciel” is one of the most celebrated arias in *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Having placated the Furies by the power of his music and the depth of his love for Euridice, Orfeo suddenly finds himself transported to the ineffable beauty of the Elysian fields. In keeping with Gluck’s twin objectives of clarity and simplicity the vocal line is effectively recitative, reflecting Orfeo’s stupefied wonder at the paradise he has entered, and it is left to the orchestra to portray the rapturous other-worldliness of Elysium, with a plaintive oboe solo mingling with swirling flute, cello and violins.

## ORFEO:

Che puro ciel, che chiaro sol,  
 Che nuova serena luce è questa mai!  
 Che dolce lusinghiera armonia  
 Formano insieme  
 Il cantar degli augelli,  
 Il correr de’ ruscelli,  
 Dell’aure il sussurrar!  
 Questo è il soggiorno  
 De’ fortunati Eroi!  
 Qui tutto spira un tranquillo contento,  
 Ma non per me.  
 Se l’idol mio non trovo,  
 Sperar non posso!  
 I suoi soave accenti,  
 Gli amorosi suoi sguardi, il suo bel riso,  
 Sono il mio solo, il mio diletto Eliso!  
 Ma in qual parte ei sarà?  
 Chiedasi a questo  
 Che mi viene a incontrar stuolo felice.  
 Euridice dov’è?

## CORO:

Giunge Euridice.

## ORPHEUS:

*What pure sky, what bright sun,  
 what new and serene light is this!  
 What sweet, enchanting harmony  
 is created by the mingling of  
 the singing of the birds,  
 the cascading of the streams  
 and the whispering of the breezes!  
 This is the dwelling place  
 of the blessed heroes.  
 Here everything breathes a calm contentment,  
 but not for me.  
 If I cannot find my beloved  
 there is no hope for me!  
 Her sweet words,  
 her loving glances, her beautiful smile  
 are my only, my blissful paradise!  
 But where can she be?  
 Let me ask this happy crowd  
 which comes to meet me.  
 Where is Eurydice?*

## CHORUS:

*Eurydice is approaching.*

# Gluck “Misera, dove son... Ah, non son io” from *Ezio*

During the eighteenth century it was common for composers to reuse arias from previous operas, especially when they had not previously been heard in the city where they were being performed. Gluck's exquisite setting of “Che puro ciel” was in fact the third incarnation of the music; it had originally been conceived as a tenor aria, “Se povero il ruscello”, in *Ezio*, which he had composed for the 1750 Carnival in Prague, and it was subsequently reused in *Antigono*, written for Rome in 1756. By the time he wrote *Orfeo ed Euridice*, though, it was presumably highly unlikely that his Vienna audiences would have heard this music in Prague or Rome.

Despite the composer's Bohemian origins, *Ezio* was the only opera which Gluck wrote for Prague. It was first performed by the Italian impresario Giovanni Locatelli's resident opera company, and Gluck clearly thought highly of it, for in 1763 he revised the opera for performance in Vienna. Metastasio's popular libretto had been written in 1728 for a setting by Porpora, and during its first hundred years it was to be set by over forty composers, including Hasse, Handel, Jommelli, Traetta and Paisiello. The action is set in Rome in 451 A.D. in Rome, where the Emperor Valentiniano's army, under its general Ezio, has just defeated Attila the Hun. Ezio is betrothed to Fulvia, whose father Massimo plots to assassinate the Emperor. When the attempt fails, suspicion mistakenly falls on Ezio, who is imprisoned and sentenced to death but refuses to implicate his beloved's father. Fulvia's solo scene in the final act, in which she laments and bewails her seemingly irredeemable fate, is one of Metastasio's finest – Mozart subsequently set it as a concert aria soon after completing *Idomeneo* – and Gluck's setting admirably showcases his ability to convey heightened emotional situations in music of searing intensity.

## FULVIA:

Misera, dove son! L'aure del Tebro  
 Son queste ch'io respiro?  
 Per le strade m'aggio  
 Di Tebe e d'Argo; o dalle greche sponde  
 Di tragedie feconde  
 Le domestiche furie  
 Vennero a questi lidi  
 Della prole di Cadmo e degl'Atridi?  
 Là d'un monarca inguisto  
 L'ingrata crudeltà m'empie d'orrore;  
 D'un padre traditore  
 Qua la colpa m'agghiaccia;  
 E lo sposo innocente ho sempre in faccia.  
 Oh immagini funeste!  
 Oh memorie! Oh martiro!  
 Ed io parlo infelice, ed io respiro?

Ah, non son io che parlo,  
 È il barbaro dolore  
 Che mi divide il core,  
 Che delirar mi fa.

Non cura il Ciel tiranno  
 L'affanno in cui mi vedo;  
 Un fulmine gli chiedo  
 E un fulmine non ha.

## FULVIA:

*Wretched me, where am I? Is this  
 the air of the Tiber that I breathe?  
 Or do I roam the streets  
 of Thebes and Argos; or from those Greek shores,  
 scene of multiple tragedies,  
 have the household Furies  
 of the offspring of Cadmus and the Atreidae  
 come to these shores of ours?  
 There the cruelty of an evil monarch  
 fills my soul with horror;  
 here the deed of a treacherous father  
 makes my blood run cold;  
 and I always see before me my innocent beloved.  
 Oh dreadful imaginings!  
 Oh memories! Oh torment!  
 And I, unhappy woman, still live and breathe?*

*Alas, it is not I who speak,  
 but the barbarous grief  
 which breaks my heart in two  
 and makes me delirious.*

*Tyrannical Heaven is insensible  
 to the distress in which I find myself;  
 I beg it for a thunderbolt  
 but it has none to send.*

# Mozart “Che scompiglio, che flagello” from *La finta semplice*

“All the ladies are in love with my boy”, wrote Leopold Mozart from Vienna on 16 October 1762. The Mozart family had arrived there just ten days before, and their three-month stay was a great success. The Empress Maria Theresia on one occasion received the Mozarts at Schönbrunn Palace for three hours, and after playing the harpsichord Wolfgang “jumped up on the empress’s lap, put his arms around her neck and kissed her heartily”. It was Mozart’s miraculous ability as a performer, and especially as a sight-reader and improviser, that caused such amazement during this first visit to Vienna; not even Mozart was committing fully-worked-out compositions to paper at the age of six.

By the time he arrived for his second stay in Vienna, though, in January 1768, he had already composed numerous symphonies, chamber works, concert arias, an oratorio and even a 75-minute opera in Latin. Again they were granted an audience with Maria Theresia, this time with her son Joseph II (who had become Emperor after his father’s death in 1765), and Joseph suggested that Wolfgang compose a new opera for Vienna. Mozart excitedly started work on *La finta semplice*, and by June he had completed the 558-page score. Initial rehearsals went well, but a conspiracy among jealous rivals led to the opera’s cancellation, and the theatre manager Affligio even threatened that if a performance of the opera were insisted on, he would see to it that the reception would be completely hostile. Leopold protested to the Emperor, but after sixteen fruitless months away from home they had little choice but to return to Salzburg with the new opera still unperformed, finally leaving Vienna on 29 December 1768. When Archbishop Schrattenbach learned of Wolfgang’s travails he arranged for a performance of *La finta semplice* in Salzburg the following year, but this was to be the only performance of the work during Mozart’s lifetime.

Despite the work’s unhappy genesis, the opportunity to write a full-length opera must have greatly excited the twelve-year-old composer, and the prospect of having his music performed by the best singers and players in Vienna prompted him to write music of remarkable ambition and precocity. The libretto is based on a comedy by the celebrated Venetian playwright Carlo Goldoni, and Marco Coltellini, the court poet who was entrusted with the task of adapting the text for Mozart and his singers, had the good sense to leave most of Goldoni’s lines exactly as he found them (as well as the arrogance to pass the work off as entirely his own).

The plot concerns the efforts of Rosina, the eponymous heroine, to trick the wealthy but misogynistic brothers Cassandro and Polidoro into falling in love with her, so that they will relinquish their fear and hatred of romance and allow their sister Giacinta to marry Rosina’s brother. The opera’s title is generally translated as ‘The Pretend Simpleton’, but ‘semplice’ does not necessarily have the same negative connotations as ‘simpleton’; essentially Rosina adopts a personality of naïve simplicity and ingenuousness so as not to be threatening to the two brothers she is trying to trick, and a better title might be ‘Feigned Innocence’ or ‘Artful Artlessness’.

The music of *La finta semplice* is astonishingly accomplished for a twelve-year-old to have written, and the young Mozart already seems to have an innate and infallible understanding of what music was required for each dramatic situation. Giacinta’s final aria is an authentic ‘Sturm und Drang’ number, plunging us straight from the deft high-jinks of Goldonian comedy into the anguished tension and vehemence of C minor as the sister expresses her fear of what her brother Cassandro will do to her if her deceit and trickery are exposed.

## GIACINTA:

Che scompiglio, che flagello,  
Se mi vede mio fratello;  
Ah mi scanna addirittura,  
No, per me non v’è pietà.  
Tremo tutta di paura,  
Non mi reggo, non ho fiato,  
Sento il sangue ch’è gelato,  
Sento l’alma che sen va.

## GIACINTA:

*What uproar, what punishment  
there’ll be if my brother sees me!  
He’ll cut my throat right away...  
no, for me there’ll be no pity!  
I’m trembling all over with fear;  
I can’t stand up, I can’t breathe!  
I feel my blood turning to ice,  
I feel my soul departing from me!*

# Mozart “Dunque sperar... Il tenero momento” from *Lucio Silla*

*Lucio Silla* is the last of the three operas which Mozart wrote for Milan. Its première, which took place at the Teatro Regio Ducale on 26 December 1772, started two hours late and did not finish until two o'clock in the morning, but despite such inauspicious beginnings it proved to be an even greater success than his first Milan opera – *Mitridate, re di Ponto* – running for a total of twenty-six performances.

Its popularity owed much to the two main singers, Anna Lucia De Amicis as Giunia and the castrato Rauzzini as Cecilio. Mozart's father described how at the première De Amicis was furiously jealous, “for as soon as Rauzzini came on stage the Archduchess applauded him. This was a ruse on the part of the castrato, who had led the Archduchess to believe that he would not be able to sing due to nerves; in this way he ensured that the court gave him plenty of encouragement and applause”. It was, he wrote, “a typical castrato's trick”.

Venanzio Rauzzini was baptised in 1746, and made his début in Piccinni's *Il finto astrologo* in Rome in 1765. He subsequently appeared in Munich and Vienna, before returning to Italy in 1772. In 1774 he moved to England, where he remained for the rest of his life, eventually settling in Bath (following his death in 1810 he was buried in Bath Abbey). He became renowned not only as a singer but also as a composer and a teacher – the best known of his operas was *Piramo e Tisbe*, which was premièred in Munich in 1769 and revived in London in 1775, and his students included Nancy Storace and Michael Kelly, who both sang in the première of *Le nozze di Figaro* in 1786.

B.C. The dictator Lucio Silla has banished the senator Cecilio, and hopes to win Cecilio's bride Giunia for himself, but Cecilio has secretly returned from exile. In his opening aria he eagerly anticipates being reunited with his beloved.

## CECILIO:

Dunque sperar poss'io  
Di pascer gli occhi miei  
Nel dolce idolo mio? Già mi figuro  
La sua sorpresa, il suo piacer. Già sento  
Suonarmi intorno i nomi:  
Di mio sposo, mia vita. Il cor nel seno  
Col palpitar mi parla  
De'teneri trasporti, e mi predice...

Oh ciel sol fra me stesso  
Quì di gioja deliro, e non m'affretto  
La sposa ad abbracciar? Ah forse adesso  
Sul morir mio delusa  
Priva d'ogni speranza, e di consiglio  
Lagrime di dolor versa dal ciglio!

Il tenero momento  
Premio di tanto amore  
Già mi dipinge il core  
Fra i dolci suoi pensier.

E qual sarà il contento,  
Ch'al fianco suo m'aspetta,  
Se tanto ora m'alletta  
L'idea del mio piacer?

## CECILIO:

*So, can I still hope  
to feast my eyes  
on my sweet beloved? Already I can see  
her surprise and her delight. Already I can hear  
the words sounding in my ear:  
my betrothed, my life! My heart  
beats within my breast  
with tender excitement, and tells me...*

*Oh heavens, here I am alone  
in a transport of joy, and do I not hasten  
to embrace my betrothed? Ah, perhaps already,  
deceived about my death,  
deprived of all hope and without comfort,  
the tears are flowing from her eyes.*

*My heart already shows me  
in its loving thoughts  
the tender moment,  
the prize of so much love.*

*And what joy there will be  
awaiting me by her side,  
if the prospect of my pleasure  
already delights me.*

# J. C. Bach      Symphony in G minor, Op.6, no.6

1. Allegro    2. Andante più tosto adagio    3. Allegro molto

Johann Christian Bach, the youngest son of the great Johann Sebastian, was born in Leipzig on 5 September 1735 and died in London on 1 January 1782. When his father died in 1750 he lived in Berlin with his half-brother Carl Philipp Emanuel, with whom he studied, but it was his time in Italy (1755-1762) that introduced him to Italian opera in Milan and Naples and transformed his musical outlook. The first three of his eleven operas were written in Italy, and their success led to an invitation to write two works for the King's Theatre in London.

He arrived in the English capital in the summer of 1762 as “Mr John Bach, a Saxon Master of Musick”, and spent the majority of his remaining years here. His first London opera, *Orione*, was premièred on 19 February 1763, and his second, *Zanaida*, on 7 May of the same year. Both were resounding successes, and later that year he was appointed music master to George III and Queen Charlotte. His next and arguably greatest opera, *Adriano in Siria*, was first performed in January 1765, and Mozart almost certainly attended a performance.

In London Bach met his compatriot Karl Friedrich Abel (1723-1787), who had arrived in the English capital in 1759, and in 1765 the two composers set up the famous Bach-Abel concert series at Carlisle House, Soho Square. These concerts featured numerous works by both composers – not only symphonies but also *sinfonia concertantes*, concertos and chamber works – and they also brought much new music by Italian, French and German composers to England for the first time. The concerts transferred to Almack's Assembly Rooms in King Street in 1768, and then to the Hanover Square Rooms in 1775. The six symphonies, Op. 6, which would all have been premiered at these concerts, were published in 1770. The G minor symphony which concludes the set is one of Bach's greatest, and his only one written in a minor key. In its scale it is similar to Bach's other symphonies, its three short movements reminding us that the symphony as a form originally derived from the Italian opera overture, but the work's content and originality mark it out as one of the most significant, as well as one of the earliest, in the remarkable sequence of G minor symphonies emanating from this period.

The opening *allegro* hurls us headlong into the wild energy and vigour of the ‘Sturm und Drang’, full of jagged unisons, wide leaps and rapid repetitions, while the second movement is also set in a minor key, C minor; it is dominated by a sombre unison figure reminiscent of those which open Mozart and Beethoven's subsequent piano concertos in the same key. The finale returns to the febrile tension of the first movement, again dominated by tremolos, leaps and dynamic extremes, before the storm subsides as abruptly as it had begun, suddenly decaying into silence.

# Mozart “Se l’augellin sen fugge” from *La finta giardiniera*

With the death in 1771 of Archbishop Schrattenbach of Salzburg and the succession of Archbishop Hieronymus Colloredo, opportunities for Mozart and his father to travel were significantly reduced. Schrattenbach had been very supportive of the young Mozart, and had recognised his importance and usefulness as an ambassador for Salzburg. The new Archbishop’s attitude, however, was quite different – Mozart and his father were his employees (Wolfgang was promoted to the position of Konzertmeister in August 1772), and as such they were required to carry out their respective duties as court musicians. Mozart was begrudgingly allowed to go on his third and final visit to Italy to fulfil the commission of *Lucio Silla* for Milan, but apart from this he was obliged to settle down to a humdrum existence in Salzburg, where during the next couple of years he wrote numerous symphonies and ecclesiastical and chamber works to order.

In late 1774, though, he received an invitation on behalf of the Elector Maximilian III to compose a new opera for the 1775 Carnival in Munich. This was an important event, to which numerous dignitaries from across Europe were invited – among them Archbishop Colloredo himself, which made it rather hard for him to refuse Mozart permission to fulfil the commission (in the event Colloredo travelled to Munich but rather peevishly failed to attend the opera). *La finta giardiniera* was first performed on Friday 13 January – Mozart urged his mother not to worry about the date’s ominous portents – and received two further performances, one of which was shortened due to the illness of one of the singers. The work was subsequently revived in German translation in Augsburg in 1780, and various German revivals continued until 1797, after which it was not performed again until a revival in Vienna in 1891. The source material for the first act of the Italian original was thought to have been lost until it was rediscovered in the 1970s, enabling the first modern revival of the opera as premièred in Munich to take place in 1979.

The role of the knight Ramiro was written for the castrato Tommaso Consoli, who was a regular member of the Munich opera from 1773 to 1778; he subsequently returned to Italy, appearing in Venice and Turin before ending his career as a papal singer at the Sistine Chapel in Rome. In his first aria, tormented by unrequited love for the beautiful Arminda, Ramiro dismisses the recommendation that he find another girl on whom to focus his romantic desires. Despite being scored for strings only, the aria is beguilingly vivacious, the text’s ornithological reference prompting music of buoyant playfulness and flighty charm.

**RAMIRO:**

Se l’augellin sen fugge  
Dalla prigione un giorno,  
Al cacciatore intorno  
Non più scherzando va.  
Libero uscito appena  
Da un amoroso impaccio,  
L’idea d’un altro laccio  
Ah che tremar mi fa.

**RAMIRO:**

*If one day the little bird  
escapes from its prison,  
it will no longer fly  
playfully around the hunter.  
Having just gained my freedom  
from an amorous entanglement,  
the idea of another snare,  
ah, it makes me tremble!*

# Mozart “Deh per questo istante solo” from *La clemenza di Tito*

*La clemenza di Tito* was written to celebrate the coronation of Emperor Leopold II as King of Bohemia – the commission was originally offered to Antonio Salieri, who was too busy to accept. Metastasio’s libretto had previously been set by such composers as Caldara, Hasse, Gluck and Jommelli, and although the popularity of his texts was waning by 1791, the story of a Roman Emperor whose benign generosity inspired trust, loyalty and love from his subjects was of course ideally suited to the political context of Leopold’s coronation. The libretto was shortened by about a third by the Italian poet Caterino Mazzolà, and Mozart allegedly wrote the opera in eighteen days, delegating the secco recitatives to his student Franz Xaver Süssmayr. The opera was performed in front of Leopold II on the evening of the coronation day – 6 September 1791 – at the Gräfflich Nostitzsches (Estates) Theatre in Prague, the same theatre which three and a half years earlier had witnessed the triumphant première of *Don Giovanni*. The performance, however, was not well received, and the work did not receive its Vienna première until three years after Mozart’s death, when the soprano Aloisia Weber rather surprisingly sang the role of Sesto. The work did establish a degree of popularity at the start of the nineteenth century – indeed, in 1806 it became the first of Mozart’s operas to be produced in London – but it soon declined into neglect again, and it is really only in recent years that it has come to be appreciated and recognised as a masterpiece worthy of comparison with Mozart’s other mature operas.

This role of Sesto was probably sung in Prague by the castrato Domenico Bedini – he certainly took part in the première, but there is some debate as to whether he played Sesto or Annio. Spurred on by his infatuation with the spurned Vitellia, Sesto has attempted to murder the Emperor, and his old friend, Tito. As he prepares to go to his execution, he bids Tito a stoical but tender farewell, asking him to suspend judgement and recall their former friendship.

SESTO:

Deh, per questo istante solo  
Ti ricorda il primo amor.  
Che morir mi fa di duolo  
Il tuo sdegno, il tuo rigor.

Di pietade indegno è vero,  
Sol spirar io deggio orror.  
Pur saresti men severo,  
Se vedessi questo cor.

Disperato vado a morte;  
Ma il morir non mi spaventa.  
Il pensiero mi tormenta  
Che fui teco un traditor!

(Tanto affanno soffre un core,  
Nè si more di dolor!)

SESTO:

*Ah, for this single moment  
remember our former love.  
For your anger and severity  
make me die of grief.*

*Unworthy of pity, it is true  
that I should inspire only horror.  
And yet you would be less severe  
if you could read my heart.*

*In despair I go to my death;  
but dying does not make me afraid.  
The thought which torments me  
is that I was a traitor to you!*

*(How can a heart endure so much anguish  
and yet not die of grief!)*