

Area of Study 1: The Operas of Mozart

Marriage of Figaro characters in Act 1	
Count Almaviva	Bass
Countess Rosina	Soprano
Figaro – the Count’s valet	Baritone
Susanna – the Countess’s maid	Soprano
Cherubino – the Count’s page	Mezzo-soprano
Dr Bartolo – wanted to marry the Countess	Bass
Marcellina – Dr Bartolo’s housekeeper	Soprano
Don Basilio – a music teacher	Tenor

Key Musical Terms			
Abridged sonata form	Short version of Sonata form, but with a short linking passage in the place of the development section.	Opera buffa	Comic opera in Italian, with a plot about ordinary people.
Aria	A solo song. Usually the character sings about their situation at that moment in the plot: the opera’s narrative is not usually advanced by an aria.	Periodic phrasing	Balanced phrases of equal length, usually in antecedent (question) and consequent (answer) pairs.
Cavatina	Literally a ‘little song’ – a simple aria.	Recapitulation	In sonata form, the third main section, where the first and second subjects are repeated, both in the tonic key.
Coda	The final section of a piece.	Recitative	Sung narrative using speech rhythms, with minimal accompaniment and no repetition of text.
Codetta	The ending of a section within a piece of music. A small coda.	Ritornello	The repeating section (‘A’ section) in a rondo.
Continuo	The combination of a continuous bassline and chords, usually played by cello and fortepiano or harpsichord. Used to accompany recitative.	Rondo	ABACA etc. In order words – A section repeats like a chorus.
Episode	Contrasting sections within rondo form.	Sonata Form	Music in 3 sections: exposition – development - recapitulation
Exposition	The first section of sonata form, comprising the first subject (in the tonic key) and the second subject (in the dominant or relative major/minor).	Trouser role	Where a (usually young) male character is played by a female actress.
Melody-dominated homophony	Melody + accompaniment texture.		

Set number from Figaro	Story	Musical features
Overture	Sets the mood for the story to follow. Mozart composed this in a few hours before the first performance. No themes from actual opera used = unusual.	Abridged sonata form in D major, demonstrating masterful use of diatonic harmony (with chromatic moments) and orchestration . Second subject in dominant key (A major) . A codetta links the end of the second subject to the start of the recapitulation , where both subjects are heard in the tonic key .
No. 1 Duetto ‘Cinque, dieci, venti’ (Figaro and Susanna, including following recitative)	Figaro and Susanna prepare for their marriage: Figaro is measuring the room, and Susanna is ‘prettifying herself’. Susanna tells Figaro that the Count is trying to seduce her.	Actually an abridged sonata form , with plenty of characterisation happening through separate themes for Figaro and Susanna . There is harmonic freedom in the recitative as Susanna breaks the news to Figaro about the Count’s intentions. Use of melodic augmentation to show Figaro measuring. The couple start off singing completely separate tunes, but eventually Figaro gives in to Susanna, singing her melody in 3rds .
No. 3 Cavatina ‘Se vuol ballare signor contino’ (Figaro, including preceding recitative)	Figaro imagines that he is confronting the Count. “If you want to dance, then I’ll dance” = metaphor for don’t mess with me because I will deal with you!	The preceding recitative is again harmonically adventurous to keep up the pace of the action. The cavatina has an ABCA structure . The A section uses primary, diatonic harmonies while the B section becomes more chromatic as Figaro describes the Count’s plans. Horns important to orchestration = connotations of hunting.
No. 4 Aria ‘La vendetta’ (Bartolo)	Bartolo wants revenge on Figaro: Bartolo wanted to marry the Countess, but Figaro facilitated her marriage to the Count. Bartolo reels off a list of how he will get his revenge on Figaro.	Abridged sonata form , in D major which allows the trumpets and timpani to play. Bartolo’s rage is communicated through wide leaps and dynamic contrasts. Second violins play scurrying semiquavers . Use of diminished 7th chord on the word “outrage/oltraggi”. Dominant pedal for words “cowardice evermore/è ognor vilta”, with chromatic sf on weak beats. ‘Il fatto è serio’ (the matter is serious) is accompanied by sf Italian augmented 6th chord in full orchestra . Timpani rolls , repeated three times. Long line of fast triplet quavers = Bartolo talking about reading the whole legal code.
No. 5 Duetto ‘Via resti servita’ (Susanna and Marcellina)	Susanna and Marcellina trade insults while maintaining a veneer of politeness. Susanna wins (l’eta = age) and Marcellina storms off stage.	In 3 clear sections – A B C . Politeness is shown in the elegant melodies , while the underlying tension is communicated by triplet quavers in the accompaniment. Use of antiphony to show dialogue between Marcellina & Susanna. When pleasantries turn to insults: fp dynamics, melodic augmentation in violin , repeated perfect cadences . Marcellina is then furious: full orchestra (tutti) plus repeated triplet chords on subdominant at b. 34 . Susanna wins the battle: higher in pitch than Marcellina and melismatic writing = laughing on words <i>da rider</i> .
No. 6 Aria ‘Non so più cosa son’ (Cherubino)	Cherubino sings about his infatuation with women.	Breathless feeling is provided by the rests and quavers in the accompaniment pattern, with a repeating quaver-quaver-crotchet rhythm in the vocal melody. Clarinets used extensively in accompaniment = youthful? Two sections: the first can be seen as ternary form, while the second has an AA¹ structure . Cherubino sings using melodic augmentation , quickening harmonic rhythm & disjunct intervals = emotion.
No. 7 Terzetto ‘Cosa sento!’ (Susanna, Basilio, Count)	Basilio gossips about Cherubino’s flirting with the Countess. The Count (who is hidden) reveals himself, and eventually uncovers Cherubino (also hidden). Basilio and Susanna try to calm the Count, who is enraged with Cherubino.	Fast-paced action with lots of musical characterisation within a rapid but full sonata form . Music changes depending on character: Count = angry (dotted rhythms, semiquavers, unison melody); Don Basilio = pleading (descending sequence, chromatic chords); Susanna = scared/snappy (melodic leaps, chromatic melody b. 24); Don Basilio and count = light/relaxed (sing in 3rds, move to major).
No. 9 Aria ‘Non più andrai’ (Figaro)	Figaro packs Cherubino off for military service, and teases him about the hardships of a soldier’s life.	The best-known melody from the opera is the ritornello section of the rondo, ABACA . The rondo melody includes dotted rhythms and a triadic melody . At the end, there is a trumpet fanfare using arpeggios and triplet quavers accompanied by timpani = military-like. Bold, C major key .