

Mozart, Luigi Bassi, and ‘Fin ch’han dal vino’

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During the long reception history of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s and Lorenzo Da Ponte’s *Il dissoluto punito ossia Il Don Giovanni* (1787), critics holding that operatic characters are delineated by the music rather than by the words have often been struck by the fact that the title hero was not allotted a grand aria to give a full expression to his peculiar character.¹ In the buffo aria ‘Metà di voi qua vadano’ (No. 17), addressed to the vengeful Masetto, the disguised Don Giovanni mimes the musical style of his servant Leporello, and the canzonetta ‘Deh vieni alla finestra’ (No. 16), with which he tries to seduce Donna Elvira’s chambermaid, is generic in style. As a consequence, attention has traditionally centred on the Don’s brief Act One aria, the presto ‘Fin ch’han dal vino’ (No. 11), in which he gives Leporello his orders about the preparations for the ball:

Fin ch’han dal vino
calda la testa
una gran festa
fa’ preparar.

Go and prepare
a great party,
so that their heads become
hot from the wine.

Se trovi in piazza
qualche ragazza,
teco ancor quella
cerca menar.

If in the square you find
some girl:
try to make her
come along, too.

Senza alcun ordine
la danza sia:
chi ’l minuetto
chi la follia,
chi l’alemana
farai ballar.

Let the dancing
be without any order:
let some dance
the minuet,
some the folia,
some the allemande.

Ed io fra tanto
dall’altro canto

And in the meantime, I
for my part

1 This article is a reworking of material from my Ph.D. thesis *The Charmer and the Monument: Mozart’s Don Giovanni in the Light of Its Original Production* (Aarhus University, 2008). Some of the sources reproduced here have already been quoted, in Danish, in my *Mozart og hans venner: Om Luigi Bassi og uropførelsen af Don Giovanni* (PUFF 14; Esbjerg, 2009). See also my ‘Laughing with Casanova: Luigi Bassi and the Original Production of *Don Giovanni*’, in the proceedings from the conference *Mozart in Prague* (Prague, 2009) (forthcoming). I am grateful to Bruce Alan Brown and Ian Woodfield for their suggestions.

con questa e quella
vo' amoreggiar.

will flirt
with one after the other.

Ah la mia lista
doman mattina
d'una decina
devi aumentar.

Oh tomorrow morning
you can add
ten more
to my list.²

Just as opinions regarding Don Giovanni's character have always differed widely, so have interpretations of this little solo, which takes less than two minutes to perform. The tendency to let an overall reading of the drama and its title character influence the reading of the aria is already apparent in early nineteenth-century translations of the libretto, which were rarely marked by respect for the letter of Da Ponte's poetry. Such is the case with the singspiel adaptation of the libretto from 1801 by the music critic Johann Friedrich Rochlitz, which remained the standard German translation throughout the century,³ thus exerting influence on *Don Giovanni's* performance and reception history to a degree which has yet to be fully acknowledged. In his preface to the adaptation, Rochlitz admits that he sometimes departed entirely from the Italian text 'not only in the letter, but also in the meaning', owing to his conviction that 'it is better to extract the text from the wonderful music than from the sometimes rather nonsensical rhymes of the poem'.⁴ His translation of 'Fin ch'han dal vino' runs as follows:

DON JUAN Öffne die Keller!
Wein soll man geben!
Dann wird's ein Leben,
Herrlich und frei!

DON JUAN Open the cellars!
Wine must be served!
Then life will be
wonderful and free!

LEPORELLO (*bei der kurzen Pause in
der Komposition gesprochen.*)
Gut!

LEPORELLO (*spoken in the brief rest
in the music.*)
Good!

DON JUAN Artige Mädchen
Führst Du mir leise,
Nach deiner Weise,
Zum Tanze herbei!

DON JUAN Quietly and
according to your manner,
you will bring pretty girls
to dance with me.

Hier hat die Freundlichste
Einzig den Vorrang!

Here priority is given
only to the most amiable ones.

2 Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Il Don Giovanni, Dramma giocoso in due atti*, ed. Giovanna Gronda (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), ls. 542–63. All translations unless otherwise stated by the author.

3 Christof Bitter, *Wandlungen in den Inszenierungsformen des Don Giovanni von 1787 bis 1928: Zur Problematik des musikalischen Theaters in Deutschland* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1961), 87.

4 'Allein zu tragen habe ich aber, dass ich zuweilen von dem Italiener ganz – nicht nur in den Worten, sondern auch im Sinn, abgegangen bin. Es geschahe in der Überzeugung, es sei besser gethan, den Text aus der herrlichen Musik, als aus den zuweilen doch etwas ungereimten Reimen des Gedichts zu ziehen'; Friedrich Rochlitz, *Don Juan, Oper in zwei Akten, nach dem Italienischen des Abb. da Ponte frei bearbeitet* (n.p., 1801), 1.

LEPORELLO (<i>wie vorhin</i>) Herrlich!	LEPORELLO (<i>as before</i>) Wonderful!
DON JUAN Englisch und Steyrisch, Schwäbisch und Bayrisch, Fröhliches [<i>sic</i>] Ländern Und Menuett Tanzt ihr in buntem Gewirr' umher!	DON JUAN English and Styrian, Swabian and Bavarian, gay country dances and minuet you will dance in one colourful jumble!
LEPORELLO Exzellent!	LEPORELLO Excellent!
DON JUAN Unter dem Toben Fisch' ich im Trüben;	DON JUAN Amid the frolic I shall fish in troubled waters;
LEPORELLO Gut!	LEPORELLO Good!
DON JUAN Führe mein Liebchen, Trotz Weh und Ach, Ins Schlafgemach!	DON JUAN I shall lead my sweetheart, despite cries and protests, to the bedchamber!
LEPORELLO Herrlich!	LEPORELLO Wonderful!
DON JUAN Blond' und Brünetten, Drauf will ich wetten, Zählt mein Register Morgen noch mehr!	DON JUAN Blondes and brunettes, I will bet on that, will be added to my catalogue tomorrow!
LEPORELLO Exzellent!	LEPORELLO Excellent! ⁵

Apart from adding Leporello's spoken interpolations and listing German dances instead of the eighteenth-century standard dances, Rochlitz has changed the meaning of Da Ponte's text in significant ways: whereas the Italian original is more in the nature of a simple list, the German version tends to become more expressive of Don Juan's vital energy ('Dann wird's ein Leben, / Herrlich und frei!'), and whereas Leporello in the original is simply meant to invite female passers-by to the party, in Rochlitz he is asked downright to procure them for his master's pleasure. This adds an undertone of violence to the aria, which is made explicit when Don Juan predicts how he will lead girls to his bedchamber 'Trotz Weh und Ach'. The seducer is in danger of becoming a rapist.⁶

No less influential on the traditional performance of the aria was the poet E. T. A. Hoffmann, whose novella *Don Juan, Eine fabelhafte Begebenheit, die sich mit einem reisenden Enthusiasten zugetragen* tells the story of a composer who witnesses the ideal performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* by a mysterious Italian opera troupe. Written in 1812, the novella was first published anonymously in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1813 and then included in the first volume of Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* the following year. It is routinely quoted in the

⁵ Rochlitz, *Don Juan*, 6.

⁶ For a perceptive discussion of the questions of violence and guilt in Da Ponte's libretto, see Felicity Baker, 'The figures of hell in the *Don Giovanni* libretto', in Dorothea Link and Judith Nagley (eds.), *Words About Mozart: Essays in Honour of Stanley Sadie* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 77–106.

Mozart literature of the first half of the nineteenth century and demonstrably influenced the opera's performance tradition.

Hoffmann's narrator, who also admits searching for the essence of the drama in the music rather than in the libretto, envisions the following performance of Don Giovanni's Act One aria, which seems to presuppose Rochlitz's rather than Da Ponte's text:

In the wild aria, *Fin ch'han dal vino*, Don Giovanni openly reveals his inner, lacerated character, his disdain for the little people around him who exist only to satisfy his desire to interfere with their humdrum deeds and impulses. Here his eyebrow muscles twitch more violently than before.⁷

The conception of Don Giovanni's character as lacerated and disdainful recurs frequently in modern criticism. For example, Joseph Kerman, who likewise insists that operatic characterization must be found in the score rather than in the text, describes 'Fin ch'han dal vino' as 'ferocious' and 'enraged',⁸ 'the special force, the menace of this aria' coming from 'its projection of anger with [*sic*] precedent', which 'unmotivated anger (unmotivated by the dramatic action) is anger associated with, about, at, or in sex'.⁹ Massimo Mila, on the other hand, hears 'a song of desperation, a manifestation of the *tedium vitae*, a tragic confession of impotence and an empty interior'¹⁰ below the aria's joyful surface, while Wolfgang Willaschek, who also subscribes to the viewpoint that Mozart 'mostly composed away disrespectfully in order to lay bare a meaning behind the content of the words which can only be captured in music', thinks that the composer shattered Da Ponte's text 'beyond recognition', and that the words 'founder in the maelstrom of the music, dissolve in the incomparable aura of a character who cannot be grasped, if not in the orgiastic moment'.¹¹ Taking into account the extreme disparity of these readings, one cannot but notice the general arbitrariness of interpretations that refuse to consider the text and claim to proceed exclusively from a reading of the notes, though the critics seem to read imagined performances into the score. When Joseph Kerman says that Don Giovanni 'sings at full tilt continuously, save for one two-bar rest which allows him a big gulp of air (or champagne) but which he manages to cede to the orchestra

7 E. T. A. Hoffmann, 'Don Giovanni, A Marvelous Adventure Which Befell a Traveling Enthusiast', trans. Abram Loft, *The Musical Quarterly*, 31/4 (Oct. 1945), 504–16, at 507.

8 Joseph Kerman, 'Reading *Don Giovanni*', in Jonathan Miller (ed.), *The Don Giovanni Book: Myths of Seduction and Betrayal* (London/Boston: Faber & Faber, 1990), 108–25, at 118, 120.

9 Ibid. 119.

10 '... un canto di disperazione, una manifestazione del 'tedium vitae', una tragica confessione d'impotenza e di vuoto interiore'; Massimo Mila, *Lettura del Don Giovanni di Mozart* (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), 140.

11 'Mozart, der zumeist rücksichtslos über einen Text hinwegkomponierte, um hinter dem Gehalt der Worte einen nur in Musik zu fassenden Sinn bloßzulegen, zerstückelte in der Arie "Fin ch'han dal vino calda la testa" da Pontes Vorlage bis zur Unkenntlichkeit. Natürlich sind die Worte noch zu verstehen, aber sie ... gehen im Sog der Musik unter, lösen sich in der unvergleichlichen Aura einer Figur auf, der man nicht habhaft werden kann, es sei denn im orgiastischen Augenblick'; Wolfgang Willaschek, *Mozart-Theater vom Idomeno bis zur Zauberflöte* (Stuttgart/Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 1995), 216.

almost derisively, eight bars after it was their due', and describes how the motif 'Se trovi in piazza' etc. 'is barked out ten times near the top of the baritone's tessitura',¹² he obviously has a specific performance or performance tradition in mind.

Indeed, a large part of the history of *Don Giovanni* in the twentieth century is the story of how the interpretations by Rochlitz, Hoffmann and other nineteenth-century writers have shaped modern performance practice, and of how critics, producers and singers have failed to free themselves from the impressions left by recordings and live performances. A singer like Ezio Pinza, surely the most famous Don Giovanni in the first half of the century, is characteristic in this regard: on recordings, he gives 'Fin ch'han dal vino' a sombre, menacing colour, finishing off with a sardonic laugh which has long since become convention.¹³ Considering the many later attempts to rid the opera of its romantic performance traditions, it is striking how little Rodney Gilfry on John Eliot Gardiner's authentic-instruments recording from 1994 departs from this conception: he adopts not only the concluding laugh but also Pinza's darkly ironical colouring.¹⁴ The tendency is also apparent in Joseph Losey's influential 1979 film of *Don Giovanni* in which 'Fin ch'han dal vino' has been turned into a fiercely aggressive soliloquy delivered by a demonic Ruggiero Raimondi watching from a balustrade how his numerous servants prepare the ball. No less demonic is Eugene Perry's Afro-American drug dealer in the 1990 filmed version of Peter Sellars' Spanish Harlem production, in which a particularly desperate Don Giovanni, after smashing one champagne bottle after another during his frenzied delivery of the aria, has Leporello give him a shot of heroin.

After this brief sketch of how modern criticism and performance practice seem to rely on nineteenth-century interpretations, it is time to turn to Luigi Bassi, the Italian baritone who created the role of Don Giovanni on 29 October 1787 at the National Theatre in Prague after having been coached in it by the composer himself. In fact, a great deal may be gathered from nineteenth-century sources about how Bassi performed 'Fin ch'han dal vino', and perhaps therefore also about how Mozart conceived the aria. In the following I will add to the sources already brought to light by Till Gerrit Waidelich in his important article on Bassi from 2001.¹⁵

Following Bassi's death on 13 September 1825 in Dresden, where he had been employed as the director of the Royal Italian Opera for the last ten years of his life, the lawyer, writer and translator Count Peter Wilhelm von Hohenthal, Lord of Groß-Städteln and Deuben, published an obituary in the Dresden *Nekrolog* under his pseudonym Friedrich Heinse,¹⁶ in which we learn that he had become 'faithfully and

12 Kerman, 'Reading *Don Giovanni*', 118.

13 For Ezio Pinza's 1930 recording of the aria, hear *Great Operas at the Met: Don Giovanni* (MET 511), 1991.

14 *Don Giovanni*, conducted by John Eliot Gardiner (Deutsche Grammophon 445 870-2), 1995.

15 Till Gerrit Waidelich, 'Don Juan von Mozart, (für mich komponiert.): Luigi Bassi – eine Legende zu Lebzeiten, sein Nekrolog und zeitgenössische Don Giovanni-Interpretationen', *Mozart Studien*, 10, ed. Manfred Hermann Schmid (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 2001), 181–211, at 200.

16 Andreas Gottfried Schmidt, *Gallerie deutscher pseudonymer Schriftsteller vorzüglich des letzten Jahrzehnts. Ein Beitrag zur neuesten Literaturgeschichte* (Grimma: Verlags-Comptoir, 1840).

sincerely attached to [Bassi] in the later years of his life'.¹⁷ The obituary is the earliest source of the famous anecdote about Bassi's initial dissatisfaction with 'Fin ch'han dal vino', but it was not Hohenthal's last word on the subject. More details followed in the context of his review of a guest performance of *Don Giovanni* in Leipzig in June 1830 by Dresden's Royal Italian Opera. The review was first published in the *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in July, and in 1837 it was included in the first volume of Hohenthal's/Heinse's *Reise- und Lebens-Skizzen nebst dramaturgischen Blättern*.¹⁸

Hohenthal, who was too young to have seen Bassi as Don Giovanni himself, drew on the stories the singer had told him, and the review contains a number of anecdotes about the original production of the opera. He starts his discussion by swearing allegiance to Hoffmann's reading of the opera, but then touches on how Mozart's conception differed from the German poet's:

In that brilliant essay [Hoffmann's *Don Juan*], the eminent natural gifts of the scoundrel, his divided character, are emphasized and rightly located in the composer's intention rather than in the trivial words of the Italian libretto. Yet it seems to me that there is too little focus on the other point obviously lying at the root of Don Giovanni's musical characterization, i.e. on the attractive, subtle, charming seducer as he appears, above all, in the well-known duet and in the serenade. When Hoffmann in the presto of 'Fin ch'han dal vino' recognizes the blasphemer's disdain for what he considers people's contemptible humdrum deeds, then he appears to see more than intended by Mozart, who was here merely thinking of a frivolous-cheerful outburst.¹⁹

It is this disagreement with Hoffmann that prompts Hohenthal to throw in a few stories, which he owes to his acquaintance with Bassi, and which he thinks may serve as *supplementa anecdota* to Georg Nikolaus Nissen's biography of Mozart from 1828:

How little the artists of Guardasoni's²⁰ company were able to rise above the customary is best revealed by the fact that Bassi himself, when Mozart presented him with the

17 '... welcher denselben in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens treu und aufrichtig lieb gewinnen lernete'; Friedrich Heinse, 'Luigi Bassi', *Nekrolog*, 3/59 (Dresden: 1825), 955–60, quoted from Waidelich, *Don Juan von Mozart*, 200.

18 Extensive excerpts from all the sources quoted in the following are reproduced in English as well as in the original German in Schneider, *The Charmer and the Monument*.

19 'In jenem genialen Aufsätze wird auf die eminente Naturgabe des Frevlers, auf das Zerrissene seines Wesens ein Accent gelegt, und diese mit Recht in der Intention des Tondichters über die platte Unterlage des italienischen Textbuches erhoben; aber es scheint mir nur zu wenig auf das andere Moment gesehen, welches dem musikalisch charakterisirenden Don Juan offenbar eben so gut zum Grunde liegt, nämlich des reizenden feinen einschmeichelnden Verführers, welches in dem bekannten Duette und in dem Ständchen vorzugsweise hervortritt. Wenn Hoffmann in dem Presto des "Finch' han [sic] dal vino" den Hohn des Frevlers über das von ihm verachtete gemeine Treiben der Menschen erkennt, so sieht er wohl weiter, als Mozart wollte, der hier nur an einen leichtsinnig-fröhlichen Ausruf dachte'; Friedrich Heinse, 'Über die Vorstellungen der Königlich Sächsischen italienischen Operngesellschaft auf dem Stadttheater zu Leipzig: Don Giovanni von Mozart. (Dargestellt am 10. und 12. Juni)', *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 7/27 (3 July 1830), 210–14, at 211.

20 Having performed as a tenor in Prague since 1764, Domenico Guardasoni was the impresario and director of the city's Italian opera company from about 1787 until his death in 1806. He apparently directed the original productions of *Don Giovanni* (1787) and *La clemenza di Tito* (1791). Luigi Bassi was associated with the company in Prague from 1784 to 1806.

later so famous 'Fin ch'han dal vino', wanted this trifle, as he called it, replaced with a traditional aria composed according to all the rules. Mozart explained the dramatic context to him, however, and asked him to wait, quite confidently, for the success of this trifle on the evening of the first performance. The success was the ... 'ancora' of the enthusiastic audience. At this point I must add that Bassi always laughed when he heard and saw a Don Giovanni perform this jolly song (and unfortunately they all do that) with all possible kinds of pretensions, complete with mimic imitation of the dances mentioned en passant. It is, after all, according to its original text as well as to the composer's setting, a frivolous instruction to the Mephistophelian servant Leporello whom he addresses throughout the aria. Therefore Bassi always sang it calmly standing while he leaned lightly on Leporello's shoulder. The singer who leaps and gambols usually loses his breath, too, of which he is in great need. – In general, Bassi gave the judgment against all Don Giovannis whom I saw together with him that they, with their pretentious acting, seemed Madrid butchers' assistants rather than Spanish gentlemen.²¹

That Hohenthal's view of the opera was influenced by German Romanticism clearly appears from his reference to the 'divided character' of 'the scoundrel', which is located in the (German) music rather than in the (Italian) words, and from his Hoffmannesque characterization of Leporello as 'Mephistophelian'. Nevertheless, Hohenthal would probably have agreed with the audience member in Hoffmann's story who finds that the narrator's ideal Don Giovanni 'had been too sinister, much too serious, and had really not made the frivolous and fun-loving character light enough'.²² Hoffmann was clearly reacting against an existing interpretation of the opera – an interpretation that seems to have been closer to Luigi Bassi's, and hence probably to Mozart's, conception.

More details about Luigi Bassi and 'Fin ch'han dal vino' were added by the poet and music critic Johann Peter Lyser, though what seems to have been an almost obsessive inclination to mix up fact with fiction, to dramatize and elaborate and, not least, to pass off second-hand accounts as first-hand accounts, impedes a critical discussion of his anecdotes. It is indisputable, however, that several of his stories tally with those recorded by others, while little he says contradicts them, and it is striking that Lyser, whose wor-

21 'Wie wenig auch die Künstler der damaligen Guardasonischen Gesellschaft sich über das Herkömmliche haben erheben können, das beweist wohl am besten der Umstand, daß Bassi selbst, als Mozart ihm das nachher so berühmte "Finch' han [sic] dal vino" vorlegte, diese Bagatelle, wie er es nannte, gegen eine in allen Regeln ausgeführte Arie, auf die er sich gespitzt hatte, vertauscht wünschte. Mozart aber erklärte ihm den dramatischen Zusammenhang, und bat ihn, nur ganz getrost den Erfolg dieser Bagatelle am ersten Abend der öffentlichen Darstellung abzuwarten. Dieser Erfolg war das ... "Ancora" des begeisterten Publicums. Bei dieser Gelegenheit muß ich beifügen, daß Bassi allemal lachte, wenn er einen Darsteller des Don Juan (und leider thun dies ja alle) dieses Frohsinns Lied mit aller Nachahmung des Tanzes, von dem en passant die Rede ist, vortragen hört' und sah. Es ist ja, dem Urtexte nach und auch nach der Behandlung des Componisten, eine leichtsinnige Instruction für den mephistophelischen Diener Leporello, welcher dabei beständig angeredet wird. Bassi hat es daher stets ruhig stehend und leicht auf die Schulter Leporello's gelehnt, gesungen; wer hier springt und hüpfet, verliert auch in der Regel den Athem, den er äußerst nothwendig braucht. – Überhaupt gab Bassi über alle Don Juans, welche ich mit ihm habe spielen sehen, das Urtheil, daß sie in ihrer prärentiösen Darstellung wohl eher Madrider Fleischergesellen, als spanische Cavaliere lieferten'; Heinse, 'Über die Vorstellungen', 212.

22 Hoffmann, 'Don Giovanni', 511.

ship of E. T. A. Hoffmann was only rivalled by his worship of Mozart, evokes a production of *Don Giovanni* at obvious variance with the former's romantic interpretation.

In his biography of Lyser, Friedrich Hirth discusses how the writer claimed to have met both Hoffmann and Goethe shortly before their deaths in 1822 and 1832, respectively, his writings being scattered with anecdotes related to invented encounters.²³ Though Lyser never actually met Hoffmann, Hirth points out that not all he relates is fantasy, however, that he in fact had heard most of the anecdotes from the actor Ludwig Devrient, who had known the poet personally, and that Lyser only began to pass off Devrient's reminiscences as his own after the actor's death in 1832. It appears that Lyser's use of the Bassi anecdotes follows a similar pattern. It was probably when he moved to Leipzig in 1831 that he first heard about Luigi Bassi, who had died in Dresden a few years previously: in Leipzig he became close friends with the director of the Dresden Court Theatre, Ludwig Pauli, who seems to have introduced him to the Court Kapellmeister Joseph Rastrelli, three of whose operas had been produced at the Royal Italian Opera when Bassi was still its director.²⁴ After fifteen years of competition with the German Opera, the Italian Opera was finally closed in 1832, and it was agreed that Lyser should write the libretto and Rastrelli the music for the first German-language opera to be premiered in the city after this event. Towards the end of 1831 Lyser visited Dresden in order to work on their opera *Salvator Rosa, oder Zwey Nächte in Rom*, which was premiered on 22 July 1832,²⁵ and it was probably during these months that he began collecting information about Bassi, for which there would have been rich opportunity. Not only must Rastrelli, as a composer and former violinist of the Italian company since 1820, have known Bassi both personally and professionally, but Lyser may also have made the acquaintance of the other Italian Kapellmeister in the city, Francesco Morlacchi, who in 1815 had brought Bassi to Dresden and in whose *Barbieri di Siviglia* the singer had created the role of Bartolo in 1816.²⁶ Besides, Lyser almost certainly heard about Bassi from some of the singer's colleagues, including, as I will show, the baritone and singing teacher Johann Aloys Mieksch.

Significantly, Lyser's first discussion of Bassi was written immediately after his first stay in Dresden. In 1831 he had planned the publication of a musical almanac for the following year, which was to include contributions by some of the most prominent contemporary musicians and music critics of the day. The publication was postponed one year, however, probably because only one contributor came forward, and Lyser himself had to write almost everything. This may have made it tempting to elaborate on some of the anecdotes which he had heard in Dresden. *Cäcilia, Ein Taschenbuch für Freunde der Tonkunst*, which appeared in 1833, includes three short essays on operatic subjects with the collective title 'Leuchtkugeln', allegedly written by 'an old music director'. Miming the style of an elderly, Dresden-based opera connoisseur of pre-romantic tastes who looks back on the theatrical

23 Friedrich Hirth, *Johann Peter Lyser: Der Dichter, Maler, Musiker* (Munich/Leipzig: Georg Müller, 1911).

24 Cf. Andrea Lanzi, 'Joseph Rastrelli', in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

25 Hirth, *Johann Peter Lyser*, 367.

26 Waidelich, 'Don Juan von Mozart', 206n.

highlights of his life, the first essay, 'Don Juan', is a fake first-hand account of Bassi's Don Giovanni, which seems to reproduce anecdotes gathered from one or more of Lyser's Dresden connections. His discussion of 'Fin ch'han dal vino' (called the Champagne Aria in Germany due to an eighteenth-century German translation of its first line as 'Treibt der Champagner') opens, like Hohenthal's, with a corrective to Hoffmann's reading:

I once read – I no longer recall where – that 'Hoffmann drew his Fantasy Piece after one of Bassi's performances'. I find that most improbable, unless Hoffmann's mischievous devil played him yet another vicious trick, for there is all the difference in the world between Hoffmann's and Bassi's views of the character.

Hoffmann's Don Giovanni is more like the northern Faust; his is a sinister night-piece, in which life's invisible demonic powers appear to our vision, sometimes distorted into a horrible mockery (just see how he depicts Leporello, that roguish, good-natured, pleasure-loving and pleasurable fool).

Bassi, however, although his basic idea was deeply tragic too, was full of southern glow, southern humour, southern dignity. – A grace and lightness, which cannot be described in words, characterized every glance, every movement and every note. Without leaping back and forth like a wagtail in the famous Champagne Aria, everything was scent and champagne.²⁷

In a footnote Lyser adds:

Bassi only changed his position a little during the aria. In accordance with the original text, most of his words were addressed to Leporello, and only at 'Ah la mia lista' etc. did he exult to himself alone. Yet anyone who has had the opportunity to observe the lively gestures and eloquent eyes of Italians in real life, especially in Naples, will have an idea of the infinitely rich and delightful expression which Bassi commanded. – But one had to see and hear it in order to fully believe it.²⁸

27 'Ich las einmal: – wo? entsinne ich mich nicht mehr – "Hoffmann habe sein Fantasiestück nach einer Darstellung Bassi's entworfen." Das scheint mir höchst unwahrscheinlich, wenn ich nicht annehmen soll: Hoffmanns neckender Teufel habe ihm da wieder einmal einen bösen Streich gespielt, denn himmelweit ist Hoffmann's Auffassung des Charakters von der des Bassi verschieden.

Hoffmann's Don Juan hat mehr vom nordischen Faust, es ist ein düstres Nachtstück, das unsichtbar Dämonische im jeglichem Leben tritt uns hier sichtbar, oft zur entsetzlichen Fratze verzerrt, entgegen (man sehe nur, wie er den Leporello schildert, diesen gutmüthigen, genußsüchtigen und genußfähigen Schalks-Tropf.)

Bassi dagegen, obgleich ebenfalls der Grundidee nach hochtragisch, war voll von südlicher Gluth, südlicher *Laune*, südlichem Anstand. – Eine mit Worten nicht zu beschreibende Anmuth und Leichtigkeit charakterisirte jeden Blick, jede Bewegung, jeden Ton. Ohne bei der berühmten Champagner-arie wie eine Bachstelze hin und her zu hüpfen, war Alles Duft und Champagner'; 'Leuchtkugeln, von einem alten Musikdirector: II. Don Juan', in Johann Peter Lyser (ed.), *Cäcilia: Ein Taschenbuch für Freunde der Tonkunst*, 1 (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1833), 124–30, at 126 f.

28 'Bassi veränderte während der Arie seine Stelle nur wenig; dem Original-Text gemäß waren seine Worte größtentheils an den Leporello gerichtet; nur bei dem: "Ah la mia lista" etc. jubelte er für sich auf. Wer aber je Gelegenheit hatte, die Lebendigkeit des Händspiels und der Augensprache der Italiener im gewöhnlichen Leben, vorzüglich in Neapel, zu beobachten, der wird sich einen Begriff machen können, welch' eines unendlich reichen und reizenden Ausdrucks ein Meister, wie Bassi fähig war. – Aber man mußte es sehen und hören, um wirklich daran zu glauben'; Lyser, 'Don Juan', 127n.

Lyser's description shares several features with Hohenthal's: both reject the sinister rendition of the aria in Hoffmann's story, both emphasize the lightness, gaiety and dignity of Bassi's performance, and both call attention to the fact that the aria is addressed to Leporello and that Don Giovanni therefore must remain standing on the same spot – features toned down considerably in Rochlitz's translation, which would have been the reference point of their readers.²⁹

In 1837 Lyser added more details about Bassi and 'Fin ch'han dal vino'. Included in the second volume of his *Neue Kunst-Novellen* we find the art novella 'Don Juan' about Mozart's second sojourn in Prague. The story draws heavily on biographical material recorded by František Xaver Němeček, Jan Nepomuk Štěpánek and Georg Nicolaus Nissen, but some of the details appear to have come from Bassi by way of Lyser's Dresden connections. In the third chapter we hear about Bassi's encounter with 'Fin ch'han dal vino':

... Mozart ... was even persuaded to show [Bassi] the draft of his part, of which his three arias were already complete.³⁰ 'Quite good, Maestro Amadeo,' Bassi said, 'but these arias seem a little too *insignificant* for me –'

'How?' asked Mozart, looking at him with laughter in his eyes.

'I mean,' Bassi replied, 'that there are no difficulties in them at all. Everything is too easy.'

'You think so?'

'Yes, they are so brief and to the point, right, Maestro? Write me a grand, difficult aria, or give me one you have written already, right? You should do that!'

'No,' Mozart replied with a peculiar smile, 'no, my good Bassi! I should *not* do that.' – Bassi's face fell perceptibly, but Mozart continued good-naturedly: 'Look, my friend, that these arias are not *long* is *true*, but they are *exactly as long* as they *should* be, neither too long nor too short. – As for the great – only too great *easiness* about which you complain, these things have nothing to do with each other! I am certain you will have plenty to do if you sing them *the way they must* be sung.'

'Indeed?' – Bassi drawled.

'For example – sing this aria once: 'Fin ch'han dal vino'!' –

He went to the clavier, and Bassi followed him somewhat annoyed. Barely looking at the notes, he began to sing, rapidly and with a not exactly delicate expression.

29 That Lyser knew Hohenthal's review seems unlikely since he appears unaware of Bassi's performance of Don Giovanni's encounter with the Stone Guest described in the same review. For a discussion of Bassi's performance of this scene, see Schneider, *The Charmer and the Monument*, 146, and 'Laughing with Casanova'. Since Lyser certainly knew about Bassi's performance of 'Fin ch'han dal vino' from at least one other source, it is more likely that he drew on his Dresden connections here as well.

30 In fact, only 'Fin ch'han dal vino' is written on Vienna paper. Don Giovanni's two other solos were committed to paper in Prague, cf. Alan Tyson, 'Some Features of the Autograph Score of *Don Giovanni*: the contributions that they may perhaps make to our understanding of the order in which Mozart wrote much of it, and occasionally revised it', *Israel Studies in Musicology*, 5 (1990), 7–26. Owing to his discovery of a fifth male member of Guardasoni's company, Gioachino Costa, Ian Woodfield has recently suggested that Luigi Bassi was not cast as Don Giovanni until Mozart arrived in Prague for the rehearsals. This may explain why so much of Don Giovanni's music is written on Prague paper; Ian Woodfield, 'New Light on the Bondini-Guardasoni Troupe: Mozart's Operas in Prague and Leipzig' (forthcoming).

'Softly, softly,' Mozart called out laughing, breaking off already after the first bars; 'don't tear along con furia like that! Can't you wait till my music is over? – When I have written presto, must you sing prestissimo and not care a damn about forte and piano? Who is then singing, I ask? Is it a *porter* who is already dead drunk, or a lascivious Spanish *gentleman* who is thinking more of a fine *sweetheart* than of the *wine*, which is only there to help him win his sweetheart, and who, in order to *double* his pleasure, visualizes it with exuberant *imagination*? – I pray you: drink a glass of champagne, think of your sweetheart, and then notice how your ears begin to buzz in the lightest, jolliest tempo, piano-piano! – Crescendo-forte-piano! Until everything resounds in the craziest, loudest exultation – *that* is what I meant.'³¹

As in Hohenthal's version of the story, we hear Bassi asking for 'a traditional aria composed according to all the rules' instead of 'Fin ch'han dal vino', and Mozart explaining 'the dramatic context' to him. Lyser's story may tell us something about what that 'dramatic context' might have been: while the mention of champagne and buzzing ears is surely a later addition due to the aria having been dubbed the Champagne Aria, the contrasting of the 'porter who is already dead drunk' and the 'lascivious Spanish gentleman' clearly echoes Bassi's contrasting of 'Madrid butchers' assistants' and 'Spanish gentlemen' in Hohenthal's review, implying that *spanischer Cavalier* was indeed the term used by the singer when telling the story. As for the in-

31 '... Mozart ... ließ sich sogar bewegen, ihm den Entwurf seiner Parthie zu zeigen, wovon die drei Arien schon vollendet vorlagen. "Ganz gut, Maestro Amadeo!" sagte Bassi – "aber diese Arien sind doch wohl ein wenig *unbedeutend* für mich –"

"Wie?" fragte Mozart, und blickte ihn mit lachenden Augen an. – "Ich meine," versetzte Bassi, "es sind sogar keine Schwierigkeiten drin, es ist Alles zu leicht."

"Meinst du? –"

"Ja, und so kurz und gut! – nicht wahr, Maestro? Sie schreiben mir noch eine recht große, schwierige Arie, oder geben mir eine, welche Sie schon fertig haben, nicht wahr? das thun Sie!"

"Nein!" versetzte Mozart mit einem eignen Lächeln, "nein, mein guter Bassi! *das* thu' ich *nicht*." – Bassi's Gesicht verlängerte sich merklich, Mozart aber fuhr gutmüthig fort: "Sieh, Schatz! daß die Arien nicht *lang* sind, ist die *Wahrheit*, sie sind aber *grade so lang*, wie sie sein *müssen*, und keine zu viel noch zu wenig. – Was aber die große – allzu große *Leichtigkeit* betrifft, worüber du klagst, so hat es damit nichts zu bedeuten! ich bin gewiß, daß du vollauf zu thun hast, wenn du sie *so* singen, wie sie gesungen werden *müssen*."]

"So?" – dehnte Bassi.

"Zum Exempel – singe einmal diese Arie: Fin chan dal vino!" –

Er trat ans Clavier, etwas ärgerlich folgte ihm Bassi; kaum auf die Noten blickend, begann er eilig und mit nicht eben allzu zartem Vortrage.

"Sachte, sachte!" rief Mozart lachend, schon nach den ersten Tacten das Spiel unterbrechend; "nicht so con furio über Stock und Stein! kannst du's etwa nicht erwarten, mit meiner Musik zu Ende zu kommen? – Wenn ich Presto geschrieben habe, mußt du da Prestissimo singen, und dich den Henker um Forte und Piano kümmern? He! wer singt denn da? ein schon vollgesoffener *Hausmeister* oder ein lüsterner spanischer *Cavalier*, der mehr an ein feines *Liebchen*, als an den *Wein* denkt, der ihn nur dazu verhelfen soll, seines Liebchen zu gewinnen? der, um den Genuß zu *verdoppeln*, mit üppiger Phantasie ihn vorher sich *ausmalt*? – Ich bitt' dich: trink' ein Glas Champagner! denk' an dein Liebchen, und nun merk' auf: wie's dir in den Ohren zu summen anfängt, im leichtesten, lustigsten Tempo, piano-piano! – crescendo-forte-piano! bis endlich Alles im tollsten lautesten Jubel zusammenklingt – *so* meint' ich's?" Johann Peter Lyser, 'Don Juan,' *Neue Kunst-Novellen*, 2 (Frankfurt a.M.: Johann David Sauerländer, 1837), 19–54, at 26–28.

dication of tempo, Waidelich quotes an interesting parallel anecdote found in some handwritten notes containing *Gespräche und Unterhaltungen mit verschiedenen Persönlichkeiten*, which were left by one Karl Näke, a nineteenth-century singing teacher at the Royal Institute for the Blind in Dresden. On 13 January 1855 Näke reported a conversation with a grandson of Johann Aloys Mieksch, a mutual acquaintance of Bassi and Lyser:

Apparently, as it was said, Bassi, the local baritone, had once complained to Mozart that he could not do much with the so-called Champagne Aria. Mozart apparently said: ‘You sing it too fast; when I wrote presto, then it’s not prestissimo; one must always understand the words. All the while, you have to talk to Leporello, as you are giving him an order’. This was what Bassi told Mijsch. I add that one must simply read the text with intelligence – and the original too – and then it will be clear that this is no drinking song, but a comical song.³²

Lyser seems to have based the said episode in his novella on an anecdote told him by Mieksch.³³ Like Hohenthal and Lyser, Näke claimed that ‘Fin ch’han dal vino’ was a comical song and should be delivered as an order to Leporello, implying a corrective to Rochlitz’s translation, but no less striking is the contrasting of presto and prestissimo, which had appeared in Lyser’s art novella eighteen years previously. Not only must this wording have been part of Mieksch’s and Bassi’s way of telling the story, but it even appears to have been quite typical of Mozart, who once, describing a private performance of one of his keyboard concertos by the Mannheim composer Georg Joseph Vogler, complained that the latter took ‘the first movement *prestissimo*, the Andante *allegro* and the Rondo, believe it or not, *prestississimo*’.³⁴

In 1847 Lyser published the essay ‘Der alte Bassi: Aus den Erinnerungen eines wandernden Enthusiasten’ – the subtitle ironically referring to the subtitle of Hoffmann’s *Don Juan* – in which he claims to have been personally acquainted with Luigi Bassi, probably since there were now few people left who could have exposed him as an impostor: Morlacchi and Pauli had died in 1841, Rastrelli in 1842, and Mieksch in 1845. In an intriguing mixture of fact and fabrication, Lyser protests that Bassi *himself* had rejected Hoffmann’s novella as an incorrect reading of *Don Giovanni*, and he quotes the singer in a long diatribe against the tragic interpretation of Mozart’s opera.³⁵ The essay contains two brief references to ‘Fin ch’han dal

32 ‘Danach habe, wie es dort heißt, Bassi, der Baritonist hier, einst Mozart geklagt, daß er mit der sogenannten Champagner-Arie nicht viel mache. Mozart habe gesagt: “Du singst sie zu schnell, wenn ich presto geschrieben habe, so ist es nicht prestissimo; die Worte muß man immer noch verstehen. Währenddem hast Du mit Leporello zu sprechen, indem du ihm den Auftrag erteilst.” Dies hat Bassi Mijsch erzählt. Ich füge hinzu, man muß den Text nur mit Verstand durchlesen, und auch das Original, dann wird man wohl sehen, daß dies kein Trinklied, sondern ein schelmisches Lied ist’; quoted from Waidelich, ‘Don Juan von Mozart’, 191–92.

33 That Lyser was intimately acquainted with Mieksch, appears from the fact that he wrote his obituary: ‘Nekrolog: Johannes Mieksch’, *Die Gegenwart. Politisch-literarisches Tagsblatt*, 1/29 (4 Nov. 1845), 138.

34 Letter to his father of 17 Jan. 1778, quoted from *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, ed. Emily Anderson (London *et al.*: Macmillan/St Martins’ Press, 1966).

35 For an English translation of this passage, see Schneider, ‘Laughing with Casanova’.

vino': it was meant to be expressive of Don Giovanni's 'joy and rejoicing',³⁶ and at the premiere in 1787 Mozart had 'rushed neither in the Champagne Song nor at the beginning of the second finale, as is the case nowadays'.³⁷

Lyser's last reference to Bassi and 'Fin ch'han dal vino' followed in his *Mozart-Album* from 1856, which includes an art novella, 'Don Giovanni', introduced by the editor Johann Friedrich Kayser as a reprint of the story from 1837, though it is in fact an entirely new creation. The new novella omits the rehearsal scene but includes a variant of the story about Bassi's initial rejection of 'Fin ch'han dal vino', which in this version has been moved to the first encounter between composer and singer:

'By heaven!' cried Bassi, 'I am anxious to see your opera and my part! Does it include a grand aria for me?'

Mozart smiled his peculiar smile, which nearly always remained imperceptible, and replied slowly and drawingly in an almost singing tone of voice: 'No, my dear signor Bassi, you will *not* find a so-called grand aria in my opera, because such a laudable grand aria would be entirely contrary to the hero's character! But you have solos which, on my word, will give you enough to do, as they will have to be acted and not just sung, and each of them differently from the other'.³⁸

Mozart's reply is a variation on his reply in the 1837 novella, in which he predicted that the singer would 'have plenty to do if you sing [the solos] the way they must be sung', but it also recalls Hohenthal's anecdote about Mozart explaining 'the dramatic context' of 'Fin ch'han dal vino' to Bassi. Lyser implies that the very brevity of Don Giovanni's Act One aria was part of his dramatic characterization, but also that his three solos were meant to be performed in contrasting moods, probably exuberant joy in 'Fin ch'han dal vino', subtle charm in 'Deh vieni alla finestra', and joking imitation of Leporello in 'Metà di voi qua vadano'.³⁹

To Hohenthal's, Mieksch's and Lyser's anecdotes about 'Fin ch'han dal vino' we may add a few Danish sources, as the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen had a *Don Giovanni* performance tradition which appears to have been indirectly related to the original production in Prague, owing to the appointment of the Italian tenor Giuseppe Siboni as director of the Royal Singing School in 1819. From 1800 to 1805

36 '... welche Lust und Freudigkeit in Don Giovannis Arie'; Johann Peter Lyser, 'Der alte Bassi: Aus den Erinnerungen eines wandernden Enthusiasten', in Siegmund Engländer (ed.), *Der Salon*, 3 (1847), 94–98, at 96.

37 '... dagegen ließ er weder beim Champagnerliede noch zu Anfang des zweiten Finales *jagen*, wie es jetzt geschieht'; Lyser, 'Der alte Bassi', 96–97.

38 "Beim Himmel!" rief Bassi, "ich bin begierig auf Ihre Oper und auf meinen Part! Ist eine große Arie für mich darin?"

Mozart lächelte auf eigene Weise, wie man sie sonst ganz und gar nie an ihm wahrnahm und entgegnete langsam und gedehnt im fast singenden Tone: "Nein, mein theurer Signor Bassi, eine sogenannte große Arie ist in meiner Oper *nicht* vorhanden, weil eine solche, vielbelobte große Arie dem Charakter des Helden durchaus widerspräche! Aber Sie haben Solostücke, die Ihnen – mein Wort darauf – genug zu schaffen machen werden, denn sie wollen nicht nur gesungen, sondern auch gespielt sein und zwar jedes auf ganz andere Weise als das Andere." Johann Peter Lyser, 'Mozartiana V: Don Giovanni', in Johann Friedrich Kayser (ed.), *Mozart-Album. Festgabe zu Mozart's hundertjährigem Geburts-Tage, am 27. Januar 1856*, vol. 1 (Hamburg: J. F. Kayser, 1856), 22–28.

39 Cf. Schneider, *The Charmer and the Monument*, 171–73, 185–87.

Siboni had been the first tenor of the Italian opera company in Prague, and, like Luigi Bassi and many other young singers, he seems to have been trained theatrically by the manager and director Domenico Guardasoni who in 1787 had staged the original production of *Don Giovanni*. The twenty-two-year-old Siboni presumably sang Don Ottavio to Bassi's *Don Giovanni* in 1802;⁴⁰ from 1810 to 1814 they sang together again at Vienna's Kärntnertheater, and from two affectionate letters which Bassi wrote to Siboni in August 1823 (now preserved in Copenhagen's Royal Library)⁴¹ it appears that the two singers were close friends.

In Copenhagen, Siboni's obligations consisted primarily in casting and coaching opera singers and in giving singing lessons to the soloists of the Royal Theatre, including lessons in facial expression and theatrical gesticulation.⁴² For twenty years he exerted crucial influence on Danish operatic life, apparently working hard to have Mozart's operas performed the way he found correct. Thus on 18 May 1822 the Copenhageners witnessed a performance of *Don Juan* (until 1845 the opera was performed in a free Danish singspiel adaptation by Laurids Kruse)⁴³ in which all the roles, except Don Ottavio and Masetto, had been recast mainly with Siboni's students.⁴⁴ *Don Giovanni* was sung by the baritone Giovanni Battista Cetti, who, despite his Italian name, had been brought up in Denmark, where he had made his debut as an actor in 1814 at Copenhagen's small Court Theatre. In the same year he left the country because the Royal Theatre refused to let him sing *Don Giovanni*, but in 1817 he returned to make his debut at the theatre in another role, and with Siboni's arrival he became the leading baritone of the Royal Theatre for two decades, his most famous role being *Don Giovanni*, which he sang the last time on 1 April 1837.⁴⁵ When coaching Cetti in the role, Siboni is likely to have drawn on his knowledge of Bassi's performance, and a review from 1827 of the production indeed reveals striking similarities to the descriptions of the famous creator:

Herr *Cetti* possesses almost everything one demands from a good *Don Giovanni*, which is certainly not little: a beautiful voice, good expression, grace, lightness, life and ardour (his execution of the splendid aria '*Cool grapes* [Fin ch'han dal vino]') is a

40 Cf. Waidelech, '*Don Juan von Mozart*', 194.

41 *DK-Kk*, Collin's collection, XXIV B, Nos. 59–60.

42 Gerhard Schepelern, *Giuseppe Siboni. Sangeren – Syngemesteren. Et Afsnit af Operaens Historie ude og hjemme hovedsagelig paa Grundlag af hidtil ubenyttede trykte og utrykte Kilder*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Amadeus, 1989), 150. Details regarding Siboni's biography are taken from this exhaustive study.

43 On the first Danish production of *Don Giovanni*, see Heinrich W. Schwab, 'Zur Erstaufführung von Mozarts *Don Giovanni* in Kopenhagen (1807)', in Niels Martin Jensen and Franco Piperno (eds.), *The Opera Orchestra in 18th- and 19th-Century Europe II: The Orchestra in the Theatre – Composers, Works, and Performance* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2008), 67–114. On the Danish Mozart reception, cf. Carsten E. Hatting, *Mozart og Danmark* (Copenhagen: Engstrøm & Sødring, 1991).

44 For dates and names of the Danish performances, I draw on Arthur Aumont and Edgar Collin (eds.), *Det danske Nationalteater 1748-1889: en statistisk Fremstilling af Det kongelige Teaters Historie fra Skuepladsens Aabning paa Kongens Nytorv 18. December 1748 til Udgangen af Sæsonen 1888-89* (Copenhagen, 1896–1900).

45 For Cetti's biography, see Carl Frederik Bricka (ed.), *Dansk biografisk Lexikon* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1887–1905).

model in all these respects); all this Hr. Cetti has to a high degree. Nor does he neglect the dignity and nobility which the role demands.⁴⁶

It appears that Siboni taught Cetti to observe both the 'grace, lightness, life and ardour' and the 'dignity and nobility', which were absent from Rochlitz's and Hoffmann's readings but apparently characterized Bassi's rendition of Don Giovanni in general, and of 'Fin ch'han dal vino' in particular. This is of special significance since Cetti has gone down in operatic history as the Don Giovanni whom Søren Kierkegaard heard and who served as an indirect source of inspiration for the philosopher's 1842 essay on *Don Giovanni*, 'The Immediate Erotic Stages or the Musical Erotic'. In Kierkegaard's famous characterization of 'Fin ch'han dal vino', we may therefore hear not only an echo of Cetti's performance – Kierkegaard, who did not read music, had to rely on what he heard in the theatre – but even a faint echo of Bassi's. The philosopher's interpretation is strikingly different from those of Rochlitz and E. T. A. Hoffmann and aspects of it correspond not only with the 1827 review of Cetti's performance, but also with the anecdotes about 'Fin ch'han dal vino' recorded by Johann Peter Lyser:

This has been called the champagne aria, and that is undeniably very apt. But what is especially to be noted is that it stands in no accidental relation to Don Giovanni. This is his life, foaming like champagne. And just as the bubbles in this wine, while it seethes in inner heat, sonorous in its own melody, rise and continue to rise, so the desire for enjoyment resounds in the elemental boiling that is his life.⁴⁷

Not only does Kierkegaard's comparison of the aria to champagne recall Lyser's 1837 novella, but the bubbles that 'rise and continue to rise' even recall the musical crescendo suggested by Lyser both here and in the fake firsthand account of Bassi's Don Giovanni from 1833.

We may conclude that 'Fin ch'han dal vino' according to the historical sources was meant to be expressive of Don Giovanni's exuberant joy and humour rather than of cruelty, anger or desperation, as many interpreters, modern as well as romantic, have argued. In addition to Mozart's apparent insistence that the aria should not be sung prestissimo, the mention of dynamic contrasts found in Lyser's 1837 novella may hold a key to the way Bassi and Cetti performed it. Nåde implies that the proper performance proceeds from reading the text 'with intelligence', so the words should probably be the starting point for the application of colour and dynamics. Indeed, Mozart and his contemporaries rarely notated dynamics, but left them to the taste and imagination of the singers, who were thus granted a great deal of flexibility, though expected to respect the style and expression of the music. In Lyser's fake first-hand account it

46 'Herr Cetti besidder næsten alt hvad der udfordres til en god Don Juan, og det er sandelig ikke lidt: En smuk Stemme, et godt Foredrag, Gratie, Lethed, Liv og Ild (hans Udførelse af den briljante Arie: *Kjølige Druer* er et Mønster i alle disse Henseender), alt dette har Hr. Cetti i høi Grad. Men ogsaa den Anstand, den Noblesse, som Rollen udfordrer, overseer han ikke'; 'Theatret: Don Juan', *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, 79 (1827).

47 Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, trans. Alastair Hannay (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), 135.

is mentioned that only at 'Ah la mia lista' was Bassi heard to 'exult to himself alone', while the novella offers what might be read as detailed dynamic directions: 'piano-piano! – Crescendo-forte-piano! Until everything resounds in the craziest, loudest exultation'. In fact, these five indications (piano-piano-crescendo-forte-piano) seem to fit the five stanzas of the aria, assuming that the singer's dynamics follow the texture of the orchestra, or rather of the wind instruments, since the strings accompany throughout. The first stanza, in which Don Giovanni tells his servant to prepare a party, is accompanied by strings and solo flute only, which would allow the performer to sing piano. In the second stanza, in which he tells Leporello to invite female passers-by, first the clarinets and then the bassoons join the flute for the last two lines, but this, too, could be sung piano. The first statement of the third stanza, in which Don Giovanni tells Leporello to arrange the bands for dancing, is accompanied by orchestral sforzandi that evoke the booming and bustling of the dance floor, while a flute, a clarinet and a bassoon double the vocal line for the repetition of the last four lines: this might prompt Don Giovanni to sing crescendo. The first dynamic climax is then reached in the fourth stanza, in which he looks forward to flirting with all the women: here he is accompanied by a flute, an oboe, the clarinets, bassoons and horns, which would require him to sing forte. Then there is a sudden drop in the accompaniment for the fifth stanza, in which he mentions his secret list of conquests: the music returns to the tune and the accompaniment of the first stanza, apparently calling for a return to piano as well. During the remainder of the aria, in which Bassi's Don Giovanni would 'exult to himself alone' – since Leporello has already been given all his orders – repetitions of the second and third stanzas (now, for the first time, accompanied by an orchestral tutti excepting only trumpets and timpani, and hence sung forte) alternate with repetitions of the fifth stanza (always with flute and strings only, and hence sung piano, the tutti only accompanying the last two lines of the stanza for their final 'exultant' statement, the concluding repetitions of 'devi aumentar' returning to flute and strings only).

The performance resulting from such a reading of the score would be a far throw from the demonic expression of sexual menace, delivered with ferocious speed and force and ending in a disdainful sneer, which has been promoted by critics, directors and singers from Friedrich Rochlitz and E.T.A. Hoffmann to Joseph Kerman and Massimo Mila, Joseph Losey and Peter Sellars, Ezio Pinza and Rodney Gilfry. If the baritone sings the aria calmly and standing while he leans lightly on Leporello's shoulder, if the tempo is not rushed, if the orchestra respects the dynamics of the singer, and if the phrasing and colouring follow the words, it should be possible to create the impression of one long crescendo as Don Giovanni evokes first the assembling of the girls, then the beginning of the dance, and finally the party's pleasurable conclusion. Only then will 'Fin ch'han dal vino' become the 'frivolous-cheerful outburst' suggested by Hohenthal, the 'comical song' suggested by Näke, the model of 'grace, lightness, life and ardour' suggested by the anonymous Copenhagen critic, everything being 'scent and champagne', as suggested by Lyser, while 'the desire for enjoyment resounds in the elemental boiling' that is Don Giovanni's life, as suggested by Kierkegaard.

SUMMARY

The article focuses on the performance of the aria 'Fin ch'han dal vino' from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787) by the original leading baritone, Luigi Bassi (1766–1825). While no first-hand accounts of Bassi's performance are extant, a number of hitherto unknown or disregarded second-hand accounts and anecdotes were committed to paper in the nineteenth century. Examining these in detail, the article argues that both Mozart and Bassi favoured a charming, light-hearted, dynamically varied, not too rapid and basically comical performance of the aria. Perhaps due to the influence of Friedrich Rochlitz's adaptation of the opera (1801) as well as to E. T. A. Hoffmann's literary interpretation (1812), however, it was quickly reinterpreted on romantic premises by scholars as well as performers. This interpretation forms the basis of the modern conventional performance of the number, which favours extreme speed and an expression verging on the demonic or violent. Finally, the article compares the descriptions of Bassi's performance to Søren Kierkegaard's characterization of the aria (1842), arguing that the latter reflects a Danish performance tradition ultimately descended, through a series of influences, from Bassi.