

**Change and development in two contrasting operas "The Magic Flute" by Mozart and the "Iphigénie en Tauride" by Gluck with specific reference to the orchestration and in particular the writing for violin**

In this essay I will be looking at changes and development in orchestration of the overtures in two operas, by Gluck and Mozart. I am particularly interested in the role of the violin in these operas as it is my main instrument and I can see how difficult or easy the parts are to play and what significance that part has within the opera. First I will briefly describe the orchestration in earlier operas. I will then look at the orchestra in Gluck followed by the orchestration of Mozart.

In earlier operas such as Monteverdi's a small string group dominated by violins replacing the viols were placed at the front of the stage. Drums and trumpets were used for martial music and flutes or recorders for the more romantic scenes of the opera. In the baroque the oboe was the favoured wind instrument and remained so through most of the century because unlike the bassoon it is a high pitched instrument whose tone, could approach the softness of the recorder and the brilliance of the trumpet at the same time giving an edge to the violin tone. The accompaniments can be divided into 2 main categories, those for continuo alone or in which strings play only in the ritornelli. The texture may be homophonic with violins 1 & 2 mostly in thirds. Violins in unison plus continuo were in fact, a very popular accompaniment in the late Baroque. The violin passages occur much more often in the works of the Italianate Mozart than in those Germanic Haydn showing that Mozart was inspired by Italian composers like Monteverdi, who specialised in vocal music. Lully also used a similar idea of the continuo in opera and below is an example of Monteverdi,

Mozart as was fond of Monteverdi's works especially in the way his violin passages dominate the use of the continuo. Monteverdi's continuo lines are only basic with bass, viol and a few keyboard and plucked string instruments. However, the small string group isn't to accompany the voices.

Christopher Willibald Gluck has written *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *Alceste*, *Iphigénie en Aulide* and finally *Iphigénie en Tauride* which I am looking at in detail for this essay. Gluck's story for this particular score published in 1779 is based on libretto by Guillard. It is a cleverly written opera in that the main characters are strong and subtle with appropriate music, dramatic recitative, arias and chorus and continuous drama. From the score shown you can see that his opera included piccolo, flute, oboe,

clarinet in c, Fagotti, Cornet in D, Trombone in Dm Timpani in D-A, violin 1 and 2 , viola, cello and double bass. Over the page is an example of his score.

Unlike Operas before there is not such a triumphant introduction, the melody is brought in straight away whilst oboes are playing a sustained A at the start, and the rest of the orchestra remain silent making the audience feel relaxed the violins playing a tuneful, dance melody . The two violins play sixths apart and the viola plays a 3<sup>rd</sup> below the 2<sup>nds</sup> which plays a 3<sup>rd</sup> below the 1<sup>st</sup> violin which you can see. After this melody finishes a new melody begins of three quaver beats played in turn a 3<sup>rd</sup> apart each note in harmony accompanied by the flutes with a sustained A, whilst the oboe joins in with the tune. Then this is repeated with the flutes and violins playing the melody and oboes playing a 3<sup>rd</sup> apart. This shows that the oboe is still quite a favoured woodwind instrument in the orchestra but now the flute is also quite popular. This melody for the violins should be played controlled one bowing for each bar, the effect of this is to create suspense for the audience. An example is shown here.

When the allegro begins semiquavers are played by the violins the melody should be played very light and detached as it is a triumphant tune with accents especially on the

first and last beat of the bar as the other parts are accenting these notes to and the effect of this is to give it a more driving rhythm, and for it to be light and bouncy.

The other parts are contrasting with this playing crotchets or minims shown in the score below. This makes it very climatic being very repetitive using a lot of scale passages.

It is harder to play the semiquavers than the first melody as it is very fast so this needs to have good control, preferably separate bows so it is easier to fit all the notes in the bar. The double stopping semiquaver passage similar to the passage just played should be played with the upper part of the bow so it is still manageable to play the melody fast as well as playing all the notes in the chord in one semiquaver beat which could be split if there is a lot of players. The effect of this is for it to sound very busy, loud and lively contrasting to the beginning section which was rather slow. An example is shown here.

The rests are very significant as it is not just a rest for the violin part but for some of the other parts too so it is important that the rest is silent the effect of this is for it to be very dramatic and tense. When the vocal sections come in Tremolando passages are played underneath with top of the bow as the violin parts are always playing something however dominant their melodies are simultaneously in the Baroque era, this adds to the dramatic tension above making it very breathtaking. The violins will also play semiquavers inbetween the vocal lines interweaving at a counterpoint the effect of this is to sound light and to build up a crescendo at each of these scalar phrases an example of this tune is shown below.

There are some dramatic high pitched passages of this overture played on the flute which often follows the violin which has a common melody imitating around the parts, the flute part creates a very dramatic effect building up tension as this flute part is different to the other parts making it even more significant and emotionally expressive. On the next page is the score for the tune and the flute parts. The overture would have been written like this to portray the desperation and sense of power for Tamino to save the queen of the night.

The intervals of passages when playing semiquavers has an interval of an octave between each set of notes this needs to be played at the bottom of the bow with long bows so they are easier to play so to be at the middle of the bow when playing each note. The effect of this is to build up to the next scene.

To summarise Gluck was very talented in his works and was a great inspiration for Mozart because of his use of repetitive themes and melodies and double stopping and tremelando used to create great atmosphere in the overture to get the right mood from the audience.

Wolfgang amadeus Mozart has written many major works including requiem's and operas one of his most famous is *The Magic Flute* which was written in 1791 in which there's more feeling for drama, and expression that started to develop in *Gluck*. There was a mounting interest in action by emphasising morals which were made to be center of attention. The *Overture* can be interpreted as either a strikingly hesitant movement or one that highlights the important developments written. Mozart wrote his *Magic Flute* for flutes, oboes, clarinets in b and e, fagotti, Cornette, trombones for alto, tenor and bass, timpani and strings. An example of score is shown below.

At the beginning of the overture it is a very slow start opposed to the moderate tempo of *Glucks*, it is a very eerie and tentative introduction following the three solemn chords played to start of the overture. Mozart uses a very grand, triumphant entrance rather than a melodic entrance making it more obviously a work of opera. Mozart tended to write fast quavers rather than controlled semiquavers which grew more common as the

Baroque era ended. The Overture is completely instrumental, the singing not starting till the next part of the score unlike Gluck where it's overture was more of an introduction as there was voice parts included halfway through the overture. Mozarts operas have clearer phrases and don't sound as busy, there aren't always instruments playing making the audience tense and wondering how long the pause will last. He continued from Gluck with the use of rests and there's many significant passages in Mozarts where there's prolonged passages of complete silence followed by held notes. In the overture the strings are playing most of the time so when they don't play it is unusual as it is one of the most dominant parts keeping the audience involved. Below are examples of the prolonged rests.

The melodies are very repetitive but are varied on much more than in Gluck. The common themes used modulate to different pitch's not always modulating to the same note keeping the audience involved and interested. The piece of score below shows a type of modulation used. Mozart even includes exciting new dynamics and counterpoint right up to the end of the overture. The allegro themes are lively rhythmical fugues. Mozart had learned well from his study of the baroque works of Bach and Handel, adapting the contrapuntal skills he acquired with confidence

Mozart has continued to use the idea of having the stringed instruments a 3<sup>rd</sup> apart. The audience like this effect because it doesn't sound so simultaneous as there is a greater amount of instruments playing the same note would make it sound too loud at times, it is very harmonic, expressive and tuneful having these instruments varying the notes. However there's still some sections where the melodies are playing the same notes in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> violins for contrast because the melody may need to be louder at this point. Here is an example of violins a 3<sup>rd</sup> apart and an example of them playing together.

The last two pages of this section there is a great build up of tension by the use of double stopping on the violin used much more in this section than the rest of the overture making this part particularly significant especially by the high pitched notes from the 1<sup>st</sup> violins and flutes making it particularly dramatic.

The last three notes of the overture are the same rhythm for the Orchestra and is the same pitch for all three notes creating a loud finishing touch, the prolonged pause makes the audience eager, tense and curious to know how long it will be held for. Below is the last 2 bars to show this.

The overture symbolises and demonstrates the kinds of elements included in the opera so is one of the most if not the most important part of the opera as it gives the audience a feel of what they are going to be watching.

Mozart used a lot of expression in his works which was even more expressive than Gluck's which was a model for future composers such as Wagner who brought together a new form even more expressive than Mozart and Gluck. The effect of Mozart's operas was to influence composers such as Wagner who defined and changed the conventions in such operatic rules; his operas were like "music dramas." His purpose was to unite music, poetry, action and scenery into perfect productions for the lyric stage, and in this

respect his dramas will always be the model for future opera composers. Wagner's music is continuous, not divided into arias, duets, and reflects the slightest movement or change of situation on the stage. He used a poetical, not a musical, form. He gave the leading melodies to the orchestra as well as the voices. "Die Tetralogie der Ring des Nibelungen" is composed of four parts, each requiring several hours for performance ultimately Wagner produces a work of incredible complexity and shows Mozart's influence after the complexity of "The Magic Flute."

In conclusion Mozart was greatly inspired by Gluck's opera's and if it wasn't for him then Mozart's operas wouldn't have been as brilliant to inspire composers like Wagner who developed particularly his feeling for drama but many other composers liked aspects of Gluck's and Mozart's operas too.