

## **The Music of Mozart: Representing ‘Otherness’ in Film**

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by Marie Bennett

Composers’ representation of Otherness in music is an area referenced by David Beard and Kenneth Gloag. They state that arguments have been put forward by a number of scholars suggesting ways in which composers may have portrayed or attempted to portray musically such groups as women, homosexuals, and exotics (Beard 2005, 8-11). They note, for example, the demonstration of alterity in sonata form, with the first theme regularly described as ‘masculine’ and the subsidiary, second theme as ‘feminine’. In addition, Susan McClary argues that eighteenth-century composers viewed the minor mode as weaker and, thereby, as feminine (McClary 1991, 11-12). Such examples reveal the representation of Otherness in action. It is interesting, therefore, to consider the nuanced ways in which various spheres of Otherness were portrayed musically in Mozart’s Vienna.

Matthew Head names orientalism as “one instance of Othering” (Head 2000, 3) and examines Mozart’s ‘Turkish’ music as illustrated in both *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and the purely instrumental *alla turca* third movement of the *Piano Sonata in A Major* (K.331). He mentions the “crude alternation of tonic and dominant harmonies” and the “percussive (Janissary) cymbal crashes on downbeats” (Head 2000, 112) as being typical features. Furthermore, he argues that the movement plays with the idea of disguise and masquerade, e.g., it is the

only piano sonata by the composer that ends with a theme and variations, while the opening has a “formal strangeness” in that the “first episodic section... contains three distinct themes” (Head 2000, 120). Head explains that the representation of ‘Turkish’ music of the time was actually a mix of both the style of the Janissary bands and also Hungarian dance music, particularly, as noted by Bence Szabolcsi, the *tökörös*, a masked dance performed at weddings (Head 2000, 67).

Other scholars have also explored this topic. Timothy Taylor, for example, states that the idea of presenting non-Europeans through a depiction of Turkish music stemmed from the success of the Ottoman Empire, maintaining that “‘Turkish’ music was the all-purpose ‘exotic’ music, with Turks being the default foreign Others” (Taylor 2007, 50). Taylor notes the research of Miriam K. Whaples, and explains that she identifies numerous musical signifiers to indicate Otherness/exoticism, including the minor mode within genres that are usually in major keys, e.g., marches. Whaples suggests that composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not attempt to make a distinction between different styles of non-Western music in their compositions: the representation was all-encompassing and stereotypical in nature. As she explains, “the eighteenth-century term *Türkenoper*” actually relates to “opera on any Oriental subject” (Whaples 1998, 4).

Mary Hunter, too, discusses ways in which Janissary music was represented within the instrumental music of the eighteenth century. She notes, for example, such “melodic ‘*turca*-isms” as “repeated ‘hopping’ thirds”, as well as “an abundance of *acciaccaturas*” (Hunter 1998, 46). She explains that such compositions are generally in duple time and that harmony is usually “quite static” or “eschewed altogether in favor of unison writing” (Hunter 1998, 46). Further, Hunter describes the interesting dichotomy in eighteenth-century Western Europe with regard to the *alla turca* style. On the one hand, as she explains, and in

agreement with Wheelock, “it is almost a truism... that ‘the Orient’, ‘the Other’ and ‘the feminine’ are inextricably tied up with each other,” (Hunter 1998, 55) yet on the other hand, this style was also used musically to connote “extreme masculinity” (Hunter 1998, 57) when aiming to present men as uncouth and barbaric.

Interestingly, Mozart’s own Otherness has been explored in biographies through consideration of his social skills; the topic produces polarising views. While the impact of the Miloš Forman/Peter Shaffer biopic *Amadeus* (1984) on modern conceptions of Mozart as a carousing socialite cannot be underestimated, the heritage of Mozart reception is considerably more convoluted. There is certainly evidence from his correspondence that the composer was socially busy. In a letter to his wife dated May 1789, for example, Mozart mentions some people in the city that she will know, writing that “the pleasure of being as long as possible in the company of those dear good people...has up to the present delayed my journey” (Blom 1956, 239-41). Also, some of the last letters to his wife, dated October 1791, give no indication that he is isolated – quite the contrary. In his letter of 8-9 October, for example, he explains that he “dashed off in great haste to Hofer, simply in order not to lunch alone” (Blom 1956, 261-2).<sup>1</sup>

However, notable biographer Wolfgang Hildesheimer makes some contentious comments regarding Mozart’s relationships with others, although he provides little real evidence for his claims. Indeed, he proposes it is unlikely that Mozart had any real friends in his final years, suggesting that “human ties, as we know them, were alien to him. Nor did he need them” (Hildesheimer 1983, 243). David Feldman picks up on Hildesheimer’s views,<sup>2</sup> but this leads to him putting forward a somewhat ambiguous argument. On the one hand, he proposes that Mozart was “perhaps the most social prodigy of all time” (Feldman 1994, 63),

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<sup>1</sup> Hofer was one of Mozart’s brothers-in-law.

<sup>2</sup> Although Feldman acknowledges that he is not writing as a Mozart scholar and that he has a limited knowledge of the literature, most of his references are from Hildesheimer.

whilst also suggesting that, in some ways, the composer seemed “isolated from his fellow human beings” (Feldman 1994, 58). He does not provide any actual corroborating evidence for his claims either, so in the end his proposals are unclear and unconvincing. Howard Gardner is another writer who evokes the asocial myth and simply seems to be finding ways to substantiate his hypothesis that “like other creators whom I have studied, Mozart was a prickly character” (Gardner 1994, 42).

However, the debate around Mozart’s social skills is not simply an issue of biography, as his reception clearly extends into the ways he is represented in popular culture, including film. The fictional narrative situation, however, is fluid and complex. Subsequently, Mozart is often the music one hears in filmic scenes where social gatherings large and small are occurring, a staple cliché of Hollywood depictions of upper-class socialising, as shown, for example, in *Major League* (1989), *G.I. Jane* (1997) and *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* (1994). But there are also examples of Mozart’s music being used in ways that appear to reinforce the social misfit myth, with his compositions featuring in situations where the filmic narrative incorporates a character who, for one reason or another, is shown to be markedly different – an Other. To illustrate this fact, I will analyse significant uses of the composer’s music in four films that depict various misfits – outsiders because they do not fit into, or are not part of, society’s ‘norms.’ Before doing so, however, it is interesting to explore how and why Mozart’s music can be used successfully in film to represent either scenario – i.e., how it is both Othered and depicted as an elite norm – by analysing the employment of the composer’s serenade, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (K.525), in the third of the films named above.

### **Mozart’s music in *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective***

The narrative of *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, which stars Jim Carrey in the titular role, centres on the kidnapping of the Miami Dolphin’s mascot, Snowflake, just

before the Superbowl final. Ace is employed to find the dolphin and, initially, he believes that the culprit could be a billionaire who collects rare fish. Ace finds out that the wealthy collector is holding a party and goes along as the date of Dolphins' employee Melissa Robinson (Courtney Cox). As we see the party venue, we hear the opening of the first movement from the Mozart serenade. (Although it is not initially clear whether the music is diegetic or non-diegetic, once the couple enter the mansion, it becomes clear that it is diegetic).

There are two particular instances in this scene where Ace draws attention to Mozart's music, such that it becomes linked to his character and his specific, eccentric behavioural traits, but is also used as background party music in the more conventional style. Firstly, when the movement reaches bar 24, Ace briefly dances along to it. This is not only an inappropriate way to behave at such a sophisticated and prestigious event, but also it is not the conduct normally expected from someone hearing a piece of classical music. Secondly, on the third beat of bar 78, Ace nudges the cellist, causing his string to twang, thereby interfering with the performance and undermining the musicians. In both these instances, Ace's actions help to bring the music to the attention of the audio-viewer.

Neil Lerner and Joseph Straus explain that one significant message coming from disability studies is that disability is something defined by particular contexts and cultures (Lerner 2006, 6). Ace's actions here provide an interesting example of this theory in practice. His behaviour is more typical of someone hearing a piece of popular music rather than that of a guest at such an elite party and is therefore deemed to be strange and unconventional. His conduct is also somewhat juvenile. What is of further interest here is that the scene provides a comic digression; it is superfluous in terms of furthering the narrative in that, if it were omitted, this would make no difference at all to the storyline. However, it

associates Mozart's music with wealth and sophistication, yet also with Ace's somewhat unusual persona.

Music from *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* is also heard later in the film. In his continuing quest to find Snowflake, Ace discovers that an ex-footballer called Ray Finkel was responsible for the Dolphins losing the Superbowl Final back in 1984. The resulting defamation and ill-treatment by fans and media alike pushed Finkel over the edge, causing him to be admitted to a sanatorium called Shady Acres Mental Institution, although he eventually managed to escape. Suspecting that Finkel may have some involvement in Snowflake's disappearance, Ace visits the hospital with Melissa. As some of Finkel's possessions are still in a storeroom there, Ace believes that he may discover some clues that will lead him to find the missing dolphin. In order for them to gain access to the hospital, Melissa pretends that she is seeking admittance for her 'brother' (Ace), a professional footballer named Larry. Although within the narrative as a whole Ace presents as somewhat immature and unconventional, his behaviour at this point becomes even more manic, and we see him acting in an exaggeratedly frenzied fashion until the point at which he pretends to knock himself out near to the storeroom. From the start of this scene to the point where Ace feigns being unconscious, the images are underscored with sections of the final two movements of *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*.

At the beginning of the scene [c.57' 04"] the depiction of the Shady Acres sign is accompanied by the opening of the serenade's third movement, the Minuet. Not only is the music thus announcing a connection between Mozart's composition and the mental institution, but also it is clearly non-diegetic; the mise-en-scène shows us the hospital from the outside with extensive gardens leading up to the main building, such that the music cannot possibly be emanating from inside. The music also provides continuity, smoothing over temporal changes within the scene – a typical and common purpose for the employment of

non-diegetic music.<sup>3</sup> The serenade is therefore clearly and deliberately being used as underscore. The third movement continues as Melissa and the hospital doctor discuss ‘Larry’s’ condition, which is, in fact, manifestly visible. At one point, for example, ‘Larry’ acts out a footballing move in slow motion, followed by an enactment of the same move in reverse, much to the bemusement of the perplexed doctor. The serenade’s third movement continues throughout this sequence more or less as written, with just some very minor cuts to the Trio section. In *Ace Ventura*, then, there is a clear connection between the music of Mozart and the idea of Otherness connected to mental health needs/instability and difference. Yet the music is also associated with elite gatherings. This film shows how music by Mozart can be associated with both central and marginal groups simultaneously.

#### **Order and Otherness in *The Truman Show* (1998)**

Jim Carrey also stars in *The Truman Show*, directed by Peter Weir. In this example, Mozart’s music is used both to indicate both harmony and disruption. The Rondo *alla turca* features in this film alongside music from the *Concerto for Horn and Orchestra in D Major* (K.412). Weir often uses both pre- and specially-composed music within his films. For example, *Gallipoli* (1981) includes music by Albinoni, while *Dead Poet’s Society* (1989) features pieces by both Beethoven and Handel.<sup>4</sup> As well as music by Mozart, *The Truman Show* has original underscore by Burkhard Dallwitz and Philip Glass, along with pre-existing music by Glass and the Polish composer Wojciech Kilar.

One of the catchphrases used for marketing purposes in the ‘reality’ television show that stars Truman Burbank (Carrey) is, “How’s it going to end?”

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<sup>3</sup> For a description of continuity as a function of music in the classical narrative film, see Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>38</sup> The Albinoni piece is *Adagio in G Minor*. The latter film includes music from both Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9* and the *Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-Flat Major*, Op. 73; the Handel piece is the Allegro from *Water Music, Suite II in D*.

The show, and Truman's world, has been created by Christof<sup>5</sup> (Ed Harris), who made arrangements for a baby to be placed shortly after birth in an enormous TV studio that is converted into a make-believe town, Seahaven; Truman's family and everything else around him is a fiction, the other townsfolk all being actors or extras. By the time we meet (the now adult) Truman, the show has become a worldwide phenomenon, with millions tuning in to watch his every move, or, indeed, merely to observe him sleeping. Christof acknowledges that Truman's world is innately fake – 'other' than reality – but justifies his social experiment by stating that "there is nothing false about Truman himself." The make-believe society of Seahaven revolves around Truman; he is the odd one out in this unreal world, being the only person who is unaware of its artificiality.

There are five uses of Mozart's music within *The Truman Show*, namely three cues presenting part of the Rondo *alla turca*, plus two short excerpts from the first movement of the *Concerto for Horn and Orchestra in D Major*.<sup>6</sup> This latter piece is also an interesting choice in relation to the theme of Otherness. Mozart composed four Horn Concertos, three of which are written in the key of Eb major. K.412 is thus already an Other, in that it is different in key from the remaining concertos. Furthermore, it is in two movements rather than the usual three. It was originally assumed that the work was composed in 1782 as a finished piece (Eisen 2007, 476) – initially, it was given the lowest Köchel number of the four concertos and Sarah Adams states that all four were composed "during the 1780s" (Adams 2007, 86) – but extensive investigative work on watermarks and manuscript paper by Alan Tyson indicates that the piece actually dates from 1791,

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<sup>5</sup> The religious symbolism represented in the name is clearly deliberate. The God-like creator Christof talks about Truman (true man) as if he is his own son. Near the end of the film, he reveals himself to Truman only by speaking to him, his disembodied voice seeming to be coming from the sky.

<sup>6</sup> The film also includes music from the second movement (Romance – Larghetto) of Chopin's Piano Concerto in E minor, opus 11. However, this is used when Truman talks to extra Sylvia (Natascha McElhone), who tries to tell him the truth about his existence. It also plays over some of the closing titles. The music is therefore associated with the real world rather than the artificial one.



i.e., the last year of the composer's life (Tyson 1987, 246-61). Tyson explains that the autograph score was not dated by Mozart, but that it has been assumed that the composer wrote the first movement and an unfinished Rondo in 1782, going on to complete this second movement in 1787. As Tyson states, few researchers "appear to have been worried by the absence of a slow movement" (Tyson 1987, 247), or the lack of bassoons, which appear in the first movement, within the Rondo. Tyson argues that the concerto was in fact left unfinished by Mozart, the Rondo actually being completed by his pupil, Franz Süssmayr.<sup>7</sup> This indicates that Mozart was intending to return to the work to further orchestrate the Rondo and add a slow movement. It would also account for the fact that the piece is not listed in Mozart's *Verzeichniß*, i.e., his catalogue of his works. As it stands, therefore, the work has something missing from it, as indeed does Truman, who is initially incomplete because of his unawareness of the real world and the truth about his own identity.

The first use of the Rondo *alla turca* is near the beginning of the film. We see Truman at the commencement of a typical working day, leaving his house and wishing his neighbours 'good morning' before adding the mantra-like sentence, "In case I don't see ya, good afternoon, good evening and good night." Seahaven is clearly a friendly town. But as Truman is about to get into his car, a light falls down from 'the sky', landing very close to where he is standing. As Truman drives to work, the reassuring voice on the car radio of Classical Clive on Classical Drive explains in a newsflash that an aircraft was shedding parts earlier, but thankfully nobody was hurt. Clive suggests to listeners that they should "settle back and let the music calm you down" as the Rondo begins. Actually, the movement seems an unusual choice for 'calming' music; in terms of tempo and style, it would not really be a first choice of piece for relaxation. Indeed, the music quickly becomes representative of something deeper, as it turns into non-diegetic

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<sup>7</sup> Süssmayr is most famous for his involvement in the completion of the *Requiem*.

underscore, associated with Truman as the soundtrack to his pre-work routine – buying a newspaper and a magazine for his wife, meeting potential customers, and continuing on his way to his office – the music stopping in this first cue when we see Truman at his desk [4' 01" – 5' 16"]. It appears, therefore, that Mozart's music is linked here to images of convention and conformity.

Discussing this scene, Melanie Lowe suggests that, in moving speedily from diegetic to non-diegetic underscore, "Mozart's music is ultimately a passive backdrop to the film's artificially civilized world" (Lowe 2002, 113), and she argues thereby that the "elite class" (Lowe 2002, 102) of America is shown as being artificial. However, the fact that the Rondo recurs, and that another Mozart piece is also used, means one can read more into the inclusion of his compositions than at first seems evident. It is interesting, for example, that each time we hear the Rondo, the music never continues beyond the first 24 bars, almost giving the impression that it is on a loop, or unable to evolve beyond a rigid set of parameters – something that marries with Truman's life in Seahaven; schemes are in place to make sure he is unable to leave – something he discovers as the narrative progresses – while the 'residents' of the town are given the same set positions at particular times each day, with some simply driving or cycling round and round to create the illusion of Seahaven being a busy environment. Their lives, like Truman's, exhibit a rondo-like form.

On this initial playing, we hear the first 8 bars of the Rondo with repeat, the next 16 bars with repeat, and a return to the second half of bar 8 onwards, but this time only for 8 bars before there is a return to the opening with repeat and a further playing of the next 16 bars, this time without repeat. This notable repetition of part of the movement appears to be replicating Truman's regular and recurring pre-work routine; the fact that the Rondo is heard again in two further and similar scenes seems to strengthen this idea. Fragmented across the film, the recurrences maintain a rondo-like formal principle. In addition, the musical

scoring denotes that Truman is trapped within his environment, for the web of repetitions denotes the character's incarceration – he is unable to move on. From an audience perspective, these repetitions increase our desire for Truman to get away, as musically we expect a change that will signpost his wish to escape from his stifling environment.

When we hear the Rondo for a second time, the music underscores a comparable scene [13' 53" – 14' 21"], as Truman is shown once again buying a newspaper and magazine from the same vendor on his way to work. It is a shorter usage this time, and initially seems to be merely a reminder of the earlier playing; we hear just the first 8 bars with repeat and then the next 16 bars without repeat. However, this time the music stops before Truman reaches his office because, as he walks along, he passes a tramp and thinks that he recognises him. He turns back to have a closer look and is convinced that it is his father, who it was assumed drowned many years earlier.<sup>8</sup> Before Truman has a chance to say anything to the man to confirm this, however, the tramp is swept away by passers-by and put on a bus. Mozart's music thus precedes a moment of recognition and realisation for Truman that becomes the start of a series of events whereby he begins to comprehend that he is somehow different from the other residents of Seahaven – an Other. Furthermore, the music ceases earlier than previously because the tramp's presence initiates an intermission in the use of Mozart, illustrating that the Mozartean trap of conformity that has been created is starting to disintegrate.

The next inclusion of music by Mozart is a short section from the first movement of the *Concerto for Horn and Orchestra in D* [37' 20" – 37' 44"]. Truman has been thinking about leaving Seahaven to see more of the world – something, of course, he cannot be allowed to do. His mother (Holland Taylor)

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<sup>8</sup> The actor who used to play the part of Truman's father has managed to sneak onto the set unnoticed.

and wife Meryl (Laura Linney) are shown sitting on either side of him, perusing some family photograph albums. The two women have clearly been told they must somehow persuade Truman not to try to leave by reminiscing about happy times in Seahaven. Meryl deliberately switches on the television before taking her mother-in-law home. The continuity announcer delivers a message that is clearly aimed at convincing Truman to stay in Seahaven, and the programme that follows is the aptly named 'Show Me The Way To Go Home.' Music from the concerto is then heard, such that it appears to be the programme's theme tune; home, musically speaking, is connected once again to Mozart and conformity. As Truman carries on looking through the albums on his own, however, something in one of his wedding photographs catches his eye. The camera closes in as he examines the photo with a magnifying glass. A sudden *forte* in the music is synchronised with the visual shot of the magnifying glass revealing that Meryl has her fingers crossed in the photograph. Truman's realisation that his marriage is a pretence is thus illustrated not just visually, but also aurally, via the close syncing of the visual editing to Mozart's music. This leads to Truman trusting his suspicions that he is somehow a misfit in Seahaven.

There is a return to the Rondo some thirty minutes later [1hr 08' 32" – 1hr 09' 50"]. By this time, Truman is fully aware that, for some reason, life in Seahaven revolves around him. The music starts just after he winks at his reflection in the bathroom mirror, to illustrate that he is now aware that he is being watched. The Rondo continues as there is a visual return to Truman's familiar, typical pre-work morning routine. He gives his usual greeting to his neighbours and once again meets the male twins to whom he has been trying to sell an insurance policy. This time, we hear the first 8 bars with repeat, the next 16 bars three times, the first 8 bars once again and then the next 16 bars once. The music is by now familiar enough for us to know that it is synonymous with Truman's morning routine, yet the subtle differences each time also reveal his growing

realisation of his situation – his circumstances are not exactly the same, as he is gradually piecing together the truth about his life. Indeed, this time, Truman is merely going through the motions of pretending everything is normal, when in reality he is planning his escape from Seahaven.

There is one more playing of Mozart, once again a few bars from the *Concerto for Horn and Orchestra in D*, just after Christof realises that Truman has disappeared and orders transmission to be cut for the first time in the programme's long history. Significantly, the music accompanies the still of Truman used to replace the live show [1hr 14' 30" – 1hr 14' 39"]. His image, literally trapped in a series of frames, is thus captured by Mozart's music, but the real Truman escapes – the pretence has finally come to an end. This is the final usage of music by Mozart; as it is associated with Truman toeing the line in Seahaven, it is not appropriate that it should be heard following his breakout.

Glass's 'Anthem – Part 2', originally composed for the film *Powaqqatsi* (1988), accompanies the scene (from around 29' 30") during which Truman becomes convinced he is being watched. It is also the music heard when Christof announces "Cue the sun" [1hr 17' 09"] in order to make it easier to discover Truman's whereabouts after he has escaped unseen from his house. When sailing – he assumes – away from Seahaven, Truman survives the atrocious weather programme Christof generates and eventually manages to reach a door marked 'exit', at which point Christof finally speaks to him, believing that he knows Truman so well that he can convince him not to leave the world he has created for him.<sup>9</sup> But Truman has the courage to leave and venture into the unknown, although before he does so, he tells Christof, "in case I don't see ya, good afternoon, good evening and good night." Truman's final words thus hark back to

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<sup>9</sup> This scene is accompanied by pre-existing music composed by Wojciech Kilar, from *Requiem Father Kolbe*.

his morning routine and the music used to accompany this. The question raised by those marketing the programme – “How’s it going to end?” – is finally answered.

The inclusion of music by Mozart in *The Truman Show* is linked directly to the character of Truman, namely someone who gradually comes to realise that he is an outsider within his environment and that all his social relationships have been fake. Truman is an Other in Seahaven, the soloist in an endlessly repeating orchestration of his broadcasted life as, even though he himself is genuine, he is the only person who is unaware of the fact that his whole life is based on deceit. Unbeknown to him, initially at least, the people purporting to be his parents are merely actors, his life-long buddy’s friendship with him is a sham, and his wife is simply putting on a performance. At the start of the film, Truman is a naïve and innocent person in this deception, but he gradually realises that he is being cruelly exploited. Mozart’s music tracks his life of regularity, but, ultimately, Truman realises that the make-believe society of Seahaven is enslaving his difference and, indeed, his individuality. What is also interesting in this case is the fact that Truman is Other because he is *real*. The filmic audience therefore sympathises with him as the story progresses and is rooting for him to become a free man, in charge of his own destiny at last.<sup>10</sup>

### **Social Oddities**

Considering Hunter’s interpretations mentioned above, it is particularly pertinent that Mozart’s Rondo *alla turca*, from his eleventh Piano Sonata, is heard almost in its entirety in the film *Wuthering Heights* (1939),<sup>11</sup> because the storyline focuses on Heathcliff (Laurence Olivier), a character who is seen by many as coarse and

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<sup>10</sup> The Rondo also features, albeit very briefly this time, in *Mr Bean’s Holiday* (2007), which stars Rowan Atkinson. The character is well-known from his TV series as being an oddball, with strange and eccentric mannerisms.

<sup>11</sup> Practically the whole of the third movement is played (although without the repeats). The only omissions are from the second half of bar 64 (the recapitulation of the main theme) to midway through bar 80, plus one bar near the start of the Coda.

ill-mannered and as being, thereby, someone who does not belong. He also personifies the “extreme masculinity” (Hunter 1998, 57) that Hunter depicts. When the *alla turca* is heard, Heathcliff is no longer the stable hand he was when he left the moors and is newly returned to the area having made his fortune overseas. Yet he is still treated with suspicion. For example, he is described by Cathy’s brother, Hindley (Hugh Williams), as “a rotten gypsy beggar” – i.e., the type of character ‘Othered’ by musical representations of the Oriental – just before the scene that features the Rondo. In that scene, invented for the film, there is a strange interlude during a ball given by Cathy and Edgar Linton (Merle Oberon and David Niven). Although they do not invite Heathcliff to the event, Edgar’s sister Isabella (Geraldine Fitzgerald), who is smitten by Heathcliff, asks him to come as her personal guest. Greeting him on arrival, she tells him that ‘Madame Ehlers is going to play the harpsichord’. During the performance, Heathcliff stands behind Isabella and, while Madame Ehlers plays the *alla turca* movement [1hr 08’ 14” – 1hr 10’ 12”], he stares continuously at his soulmate, Cathy, who is sitting across the room.

When we first see Cathy, she is smiling and looking around happily at her guests, but she is then drawn as if mesmerised towards Heathcliff’s constant gaze. Her expression changes and she tries to avoid looking at him, but she is pulled back to this ‘exotic’ man like a magnet. But what is the source of his power? His exoticism is a cocktail of Cathy’s knowledge of his past, his swarthy appearance, and Mozart. We are then shown Isabella looking behind her to share her happiness with Heathcliff, but he does not reciprocate, instead continuing to keep Cathy in his sights. Cathy is shown looking from Heathcliff to Isabella and back again, after which she sighs, looking down and away. She doesn’t need to say anything, as her thoughts are clear; having chosen the option of a comfortable life with the reliable Edgar, she has rejected the feral misfit, Heathcliff, but cannot help still being attracted to him. This shot is followed by a close-up of the

hands of Madame Ehlers, a character with no purpose in the filmic narrative other than to play the Rondo in this scene. She is reaching the end of the performance when the camera focuses particularly on her left (and thus ‘sinister’) hand pounding the final chords of the movement, but the camera is canted at an odd angle that is uncharacteristic of this style of film.<sup>12</sup> The angle reinforces the suggestion that the piece is representing the presence of an Other in the room, i.e., Heathcliff, someone who stands at an odd angle within that society.

What is most noticeable when listening to the Mozart piece in this scene is the speed at which the movement is played. Marked *allegretto*, one hardly expects the performer to dawdle, but Madame Ehlers plays at approximately crotchet = 160 and even faster at times. As a comparison, in two CD recordings of the piece, one by Klára Würtz, and the other by Murray Perahia, the speed of the movement is around crotchet = 135. The excessively fast tempo makes the playing of Madame Ehlers sound wild and frenetic. The hectic speed of the *alla turca* therefore intensifies the film’s evocation of the untamed character of Heathcliff.

The scene’s audio contrasts markedly with the visuals: there is little movement at this point, not just because the guests are listening to the performance but also because of the contained exchange of looks between the two protagonists. The musical turmoil instead represents emotion behind the social masks, as the music is also marking Cathy’s dilemma, for, although she has chosen not to be with Heathcliff, she is still attracted to the ‘exotic’, as shown by the fact that she cannot help but look at him while the music is playing. This evokes Edward Said’s observation of the East as “an idealized object of desire” – desire personified here by Heathcliff and revealed by the music of Mozart (Taylor 2007, x). One can also suggest a link to Head’s proposal that the movement plays on the topic of disguise. Heathcliff’s elegant clothes are really a

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<sup>12</sup> David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson state that such framing is ‘relatively rare’, though used extensively in a few films, giving as examples two thrillers that star Orson Welles, namely *The Third Man* (1949) and *Mr. Arkadin* (1955) (Bordwell 2001, 218).



costume, enabling him to play the role of someone he is not. The music is thus doubly fitting at this point in the film's narrative, as the two main characters are also engaged here in acts of masking: the music unmasking what the film depicts as the primitive urges churning beneath their social decorum.

It is also interesting that no words are spoken during the playing of the movement. The film therefore narrates at this point through the choice of piece, the manner in which it is played, and the music's interaction with the accompanying visuals. In his essay on instrumental works entitled "Can One Speak of Narrativity in Music?," Jean-Jacques Nattiez states that "the notion of narrative is in the first place bound up with verbal practices" (Nattiez 1990, 241). With regard to instrumental concert music, he suggests that a narrative "is not *in* the music, but *in the plot imagined and constructed by the listeners*" (Nattiez 1990, 249, original emphasis). I would argue that this clip exemplifies music and visuals being used to make a film both denote and connote plot and subtext without the need for verbal exchange, for, during the playing of the Mozart movement, much is communicated despite the absence of verbal language. Indeed, the lack of dialogue at this point draws us as audience members to listen much more closely to the piece of music while we watch the screen. The music reminds us that Heathcliff, despite his outward manifestation, is still an Other. He does not truly belong. However, the score also narrates something about Mozart, unmasking as simplistic some of the more familiar, film-mediated tales of his sociable nature.

### **'Hearing' Mozart**

The use of Mozart's music in the film *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1968) is briefly discussed by Irene Kahn Atkins, who explains that a filmic character plays a record of a Mozart symphony to someone who can neither speak nor hear. She suggests that "it is really the audience, rather than he, that reacts to the *sound* of

the music, although he does have a definite response” (Kahn Atkins 1983, 25, original emphasis). She explains that the same piece is heard later in the film, when the character attends a concert and argues that, on this occasion, the response from the character is different, as he “no longer has the protective one-to-one relationship that he enjoyed when the music was played at home” because he is now one amongst a large group of people, which “reinforces his own sense of alienation and isolation” (Kahn Atkins 1983, 25-6). It is interesting that Kahn Atkins articulates a familiar trope about Mozart here as much as describing the character in the film, i.e., that of social outcast, someone who does not belong – an Other. Even though she does not specifically associate this fact with the composer, she links the Mozart piece to the deaf and mute character, and his feeling of Otherness.

Kahn Atkins’s account of the order of what happens in this film and her recollection of the narrative is somewhat muddled, however. In fact, the first hearing of a Mozart piece in the film occurs when schoolgirl Mick (Sondra Locke) is sitting outside the house of one of her (much wealthier) peers, Delores (Sherri Vise), who is playing the piano off screen [c. 18’ 42” – 19’ 22”]. Mick has clearly been listening there for a little while as, when Delores comes out, Mick says she liked the pieces, particularly the last one, and asks what it was. The conversation continues as follows:

Delores – ‘The Rondo from Mozart’s Piano Sonata in C Major.’

Mick – ‘Mozart?’

Delores – ‘He’s the man who wrote it.’

Mick – ‘Oh.’<sup>13</sup>

During the short, subsequent discussion between the two schoolgirls, it becomes clear that Mick is not particularly popular, as she has not been invited to a party taking place that evening. Mick later asks her parents if she can have a piano.

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<sup>13</sup> Mozart composed four Piano Sonatas in the key of C major. This is the Rondo from Sonata No. 16, (K.545) and the music played is roughly from bar 29 to 60.

However, they are in no position financially to afford one and have rented out one of their rooms to John Singer (Alan Arkin) in order to try and make ends meet.

Singer is the deaf mute to whom Kahn Atkins refers. A little later in the narrative, Singer sees Mick outside a concert hall at which the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra is playing. She is sitting on some stairs, listening to the music, transfixed and still. He doesn't disturb her, but takes a look at the concert programme on the poster outside the hall. The camera closes in on the piece listed after the intermission, Mozart's *Symphony No. 41 in C Major* (K.551). Mick has clearly been inspired to listen to more Mozart after hearing the movement from the piano sonata. Singer writes down the name of the work. The music seamlessly continues into the next scene, in which Mick is seen coming home from school, only to hear the symphony emanating from her house. Singer has bought the record and has put it on the record player while he sits playing chess. At first, Mick listens outside his room but, on hearing the needle sticking when the record has finished [c. 42' 40" – 46 ' 07"], she asks if she can turn the record over and stay to listen. Singer again becomes aware of the positive affect the music has on Mick [c. 46' 56" – 47' 58"] and there is a glimpse of a smile on his face.

The scene that Kahn Atkins references, in which Mick plays the record to Singer, actually takes place after the concert hall scene.<sup>14</sup> Here, the connection between these characters and Mozart as social outcast becomes even stronger. When Singer returns home one evening, he finds Mick in his room, listening to his record. Concerned that she is in the way, she leaves, but then sees that Singer is distressed and returns. She tells him that she now realises he is lonely, but had never thought about anyone else other than herself being lonely before. She explains that listening to music helps make her loneliness go. Putting the record back on, she tries to describe the music to Singer and then starts to 'conduct' what

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<sup>14</sup> Neither Mick nor Singer is actually in the concert hall, as intimated by Kahn Atkins. Mick clearly would not be able to afford a ticket, while there would be no benefit to Singer in attending a concert due to his inability to hear.

she hears. He copies her and there is a very poignant moment when he is still waving his hands, eyes shut, even though the music has stopped. Mozart's music creates a bond between Mick and Singer, who are both presented as outsiders due to their (individual) differences. In seeing how Mick is transformed on listening to the music, Singer buys a record of the Mozart symphony; in listening to the symphony, Mick becomes aware of Singer's lonely isolation and tries to help him by describing the music to him. Both characters are clearly Others within the community, Mick because of her poor background and Singer because he is unable to hear or speak. The Mozart depicts this, but it also plays a central role in their transformation and friendship.

### **Otherness of nationality and class**

Michael Newton notes that film critics are in general agreement about the gentle 1949 black comedy *Kind Hearts and Coronets* being the best of the group of films known as the Ealing Comedies (Newton 2003, 25).<sup>15</sup> This early film employs an aria from *Don Giovanni*, 'Il mio tesoro intanto', both non-diegetically and diegetically, incorporating the music as an integral and important part of the narrative. Before the start of the film proper, we are alerted in three different ways to the fact that this music is going to be significant to the storyline. First, an instrumental version of part of the aria accompanies the opening credits. Second, the name of the aria and the opera from which it comes are shown on screen. Finally, the context of the aria within *Don Giovanni* provides a clue to the subject matter of the film's narrative: revenge.

'Il mio tesoro intanto' is sung in the opera by Don Ottavio and comprises two sections that contrast with each other both musically and lyrically. The first part consists of an expressive and flowing melody. At times, the first clarinet and

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<sup>15</sup> He states that the Ealing Comedies start with *Hue and Cry* (1947) and finish with *The Ladykillers* (1955); see page 24.

bassoon play the same notes as those being sung, giving added warmth to the kind words being vocalised. The violins and violas are marked *con sordino* and often have a fluid Alberti bass pattern, whilst the lower strings are instructed to play *pizzicato*, giving a lightness and delicacy of timbre. All these factors complement the overall message of the words in this half: “Meantime go and console my dearest one, and seek to dry the tears from her lovely eyes” (Batista 2012, np). Don Ottavio is referring here to his fiancée, Donna Anna, who is tricked by Don Giovanni at the opera’s commencement. Don Giovanni then murders her father, the Commendatore, when he comes to her defence.

The second section of the aria has a very different tone. The lyrics state: “Tell her that I have gone to avenge her wrongs and will return only as the messenger of punishment and death” (Batista 2012, np). Here, Don Ottavio is vowing to bring Don Giovanni to justice for his heinous crime. In line with the meaning of the words, the overall effect of the accompanying music is much more dramatic and anxious. The upper strings are now marked *senza sordino*, lower strings are bowed, and there are numerous passages of repeated quavers and semiquavers played by the upper strings. In part, the first violins play the four notes of a dominant seventh chord, but inverted, descending and rising again in rapid semiquavers, adding a sense of urgency to the words they accompany. Don Ottavio, an important, but minor character in *Don Giovanni*, sings “Il mio tesoro intanto” in the opera’s second act, by which time he has become aware that it is Don Giovanni who was responsible for the Commendatore’s murder and thus wants to seek revenge.

The theme of revenge is key to the storyline of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. The film tells the tale of Louis Mazzini (Dennis Price), who is due to be hanged the following day for the murder of Lionel Holland (John Penrose). The bulk of the narrative is told to us through Louis’s voiceover as he writes his memoirs in his prison cell. Louis explains that his mother was a member of the D’Ascoyne

family and resident of Chalfont Castle. However, after marrying an Italian tenor named Mr Mazzini – i.e., an Other, due both to his nationality and social class – her family disowned her. The couple was very happy, but when Louis was born, the shock killed Mr Mazzini. Mrs Mazzini (Audrey Fildes) contacted her family to seek financial support to help her bring up the child, but they ignored her. Conscious of her proper social status, she only allowed Louis to mix with a doctor's two children, siblings Sibella and Graham. Once Louis reached adulthood, Mrs Mazzini again contacted a relative, this time to try and secure suitable employment for her son in a private bank, only to be rejected once more. Mrs Mazzini's dying wish was to be buried at Chalfont. When this was declined, Louis vowed to take revenge for the indignities his mother was forced to endure by systematically murdering any members of the D'Ascoyne family who stood in the way of his Dukedom. However, the murder for which he is due to be hanged was one that, ironically, he did not commit, as Lionel – Sibella's husband – actually took his own life.

“Il mio tesoro intanto” is heard in one form or another on seven separate occasions.<sup>16</sup> Some of these episodes are instrumental and the others have at least some text. Leaving aside the first hearing, which takes place before the narrative proper begins, all the other uses of the music are in one way or another linked to Mr Mazzini. Firstly, we see and hear Mrs Mazzini playing part of the aria on the piano, while she is talking to Louis as a young child. He stands at the side of the piano, upon which is a heart-shaped frame containing two photos, one of each of his parents. This segment leads directly to a scene showing his parents' first meeting. Mr Mazzini is performing “Il mio tesoro intanto” at Chalfont Castle and we hear him sing the first verse of the aria from bar 15; his vocal leads on directly

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<sup>16</sup> Kate Daubney states that the aria is the underscore used in the church for Henry's funeral. However, this is a different melody and is marked on the film's music cue sheet as “based on Mozart”. (Daubney 2006, 67).

from what we have heard played on the piano. Ms D'Ascoyne as was, sitting in the audience, catches his eye and he starts to direct his performance to her personally.

The next use of the music shows the two at home as a happily married couple. Mrs Mazzini is washing up and her husband is assisting by drying the dishes, singing a little of the first verse as he does so. The remaining uses are non-diegetic. Part of the aria is next heard with a harp playing the melody and a heavenly choir in accompaniment, along with a short burst of the text from the disembodied singing voice of Mr Mazzini. The visuals at this point show Mrs Mazzini, dressed in black in mourning for her husband's death and pushing baby Louis in his pram. The final uses come in quick succession and include brief pauses where there is speech. First, Louis is again at his mother's side, but now it is the adult Louis and his mother is dying. Mrs Mazzini is holding in her right hand the same photo frame that was seen earlier on the piano. Just before she dies, she asks to be buried at Chalfont in the family vault. This scene links to Louis and a minister standing over Mrs Mazzini's grave, the underscore again pausing at times for effect. The family has refused her last request and Louis' voiceover proclaims that, "standing by mamma's little grave in that hideous suburban cemetery, I made an oath that I would avenge the wrongs her family had done her." [c. 13' 29" – 13' 38"]

It is appropriate for the first verse of the aria to be linked with Mrs Mazzini, who, in marrying an Other – a poor, non-titled foreigner – becomes disinherited, disowned and discarded by her extended family. She is thus a woman in need of consolation, all the more so when her husband's sudden death leaves her in the position of having to bring up her young son on her own. The vow that Louis makes in the cemetery represents the second verse of the aria, in which Don Ottavio similarly promises to seek vengeance for Don Giovanni's transgressions. Although this part of the aria is not heard within the film, its inclusion would be

superfluous, as it quickly becomes clear that Louis has been true to his word in taking on the role of avenger. In fact, he goes far beyond restoring what would have been the status quo had his parents' marriage been recognised by the D'Ascoyne family, for even if his mother had not been abandoned, Louis would never have become Duke of Chalfont, being so far down the line of inheritance. Just as Don Giovanni's antics are accepted under the guise of comic opera, so we accept Louis methodically murdering his relatives one by one within this black comedy. Part of the reason we tolerate this is because, with the exception of Mrs Mazzini, the D'Ascoyne family are all played by the same actor, Alec Guinness. They thus become a collective rather than individuals, and we don't see them as real people, but more as caricatures. As Newton suggests, "the multiplying of Guinness into all the D'Ascoyne family subtly diminishes the possibility of pity or outrage around the murders" (Newton 2003, 59). Even some of their names are duplicated, with two family members called Henry and two called Ascoyne, multiplying this idea of duplication.

The other actor who has more than one role is Dennis Price, who plays both Louis and Louis' father. This in itself is amusing, but the joke is exacerbated by the fact that the presentation of the elder Mazzini is very tongue-in-cheek. His appearances are brief; we don't learn his first name, neither do we ever hear him speak. We only hear him sing, and then it is always the same aria, as if that is all he does, thereby reinforcing his status as an Other who does not belong. Furthermore, despite Don Ottavio being very much an *opera seria* character in *Don Giovanni*, Mr Mazzini's performances of the aria are comical. When we first hear him sing in Chalfont Castle, it is visually obvious that Dennis Price is lip-synching to someone else's voice. The mannerisms and gestures he uses are exaggerated – partly to impress the coy Ms D'Ascoyne. For example, he sways about at times, with his arms flailing in seemingly random fashion, with no attempt to convey the true meaning of the song's words, instead using it as a



means of courtship. The second time we hear him, he is engaged in a household chore and the final time we don't see him at all, but just hear his voice. It is for no more than a few bars, and, in true comic style, Mr Mazzini literally goes out on a high. As he gets to the word *consolar*, reinforcing one last time the fact that his wife, who is still on earth, needs consoling, he reassures us that he will be going to heaven through ending his singing with a little flourish and by taking the music up an octave.

Through using the aria to woo Ms D'Ascoyne, Mr Mazzini unwittingly becomes the reason for her alienation from her family and, thereby, the social position to which she has been accustomed. Kate Daubney discusses the music's association with class in the film. She points out that the aristocratic D'Ascoynes show their high position in society through employing Mr Mazzini to perform an operatic aria at Chalfont, but argues that, because when we next hear him singing it he is in a "suburban kitchen while drying the dishes... the music and the social status it represents are both subverted from the outset" (Daubney, 2006, 67). Thus, although they welcome an opera singer into their house as an employee, the D'Ascoynes are not so keen to welcome him as a relative, as he does not belong within their social circle.

Certainly, class is a topic of note within the narrative; social position and wealth are to the fore as part of the film's storyline. Despite her new, lowly financial situation, Mrs Mazzini makes sure that Louis is brought up to be aware of his ancestry and to behave as a gentleman.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, in contrast to his father, Louis has no problems mixing with the upper class members of the D'Ascoyne family, because he understands the importance of style and looking the part. His manners are perfect; he becomes the master of sartorial elegance and he is, externally at least, the last person you would expect to be responsible for a series

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<sup>17</sup> Jerry Palmer states that "Louis has the soul of an aristocrat as well as half the blood" (Palmer 1989, 150).

of murders. Yet in addition to all the killings, Louis has no qualms about having an affair with the married Sibella (Joan Greenwood) and indeed continuing the relationship once he is engaged to the widowed Edith. It is as if Louis is Don Ottavio on the outside – the character of whom Julian Rushton says, “his behaviour, throughout, is exemplary” (Rushton 1981, 61) and David Cairns that he is “a true *opera seria* nobleman” (Cairns 2006, 157) – yet on the inside, he behaves with the amorality connected with Don Giovanni.

However, much of Louis’ success in his scheme to become the Duke is due to this ability to present himself as something other than he is. To accomplish his first murder, for example, he spends all his money on clothing suitable for a gentleman of leisure, so that he can stay at a hotel where he knows the priggish Ascoyne D’Ascoyne junior will be spending the weekend with a young woman. With his second victim, the younger of the Henry D’Ascoynes, Louis pretends that he is a keen amateur photographer, as he knows this is one of Henry’s hobbies. Spurred on by his successes and spurned by his first love, Sibella, Louis later woos Henry’s widow, Edith, whom he believes will make a suitable Duchess of Chalfont, by strategically choosing both his timing and his words in order to impress her and thereby achieve his goal. Similarly, one of the major characteristics of the protagonist of *Don Giovanni* is his ability to pretend to be someone he is not. For example, he tricks Donna Elvira by promising to marry her despite having absolutely no intention of doing so, and also plans to seduce her maid disguised as his own servant, Leporello. Therefore, just as deception and disguise are important themes in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, so are they also integral to the opera from which ‘Il mio tesoro intanto’ is taken. The idea of Otherness thus appears to be inherited by Louis, albeit in a different form, accentuated through the fact that both Louis and his father are played in the film by the same person.

Even when used as underscore to the opening credits of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, the music without its text still conveys meaning. There is a double irony in many ways in hearing just the music, firstly because the words are in a foreign language which most of the filmic audience would not understand anyway, and secondly because the bulk of the narrative is connected with the second half of the song, i.e., the part we don't hear at all. But this fits with the narrative, as the ultimate irony is that Louis is about to be hanged for a murder of which he is innocent, although he is actually responsible for six other deaths. With Mr Mazzini the singer of 'Il mio tesoro intanto', and Mrs Mazzini the subject of the words of the first verse, so their son Louis thus becomes the inheritor of the remainder of the aria, the Other who must avenge the wrongs.<sup>18</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As Marcia Citron has stated, Mozart "has become an international commodity whose 'wares' belong to everyone" (Citron 2000, 246). The composer is considered as a commercial asset within the worlds of both 'low' and 'high' culture. For example, while a programme that includes one of the composer's works can draw in the crowds within the concert hall, it is also acceptable to sell sweets bearing the Mozart moniker; as both Bruno Nettle and David Schroeder point out, the town of Mozart's birthplace, Salzburg, has created confectionary named Mozartkugeln, promoted for sale simply through the use of the composer's name (Schroeder 1999, 1, Nettle 1989, 9). For Mozart, then, the path between the worlds of 'high' and 'low' art is a smooth one, and can lead in either direction. In film, this malleability enables his music to be equally at home as an

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<sup>18</sup> In an illuminating interview with Tommy Pearson for the BBC programme *Sight and Sound* on 18 March 2002, John Huntley explains that it was Ealing Studios' music director Ernest Irving's decision to use Mozart's music in the film. The director of the film, Robert Hamer, was initially reluctant, but Irving was determined and persuaded him that Mozart's music could work on more than one level. My thanks to Mervyn Cooke for sending me a recording of this interview.

accompaniment for exclusive, high-class gatherings, yet also to represent Otherness of some kind.

The examples I present above illustrate that a number of filmic narratives suggest an overlap or link between Otherness and the music of Mozart. Heathcliff is an Other in his environment, despite his attempts to camouflage this fact, and this is highlighted through the playing of an interpolated Mozart piece. In the case of Truman, the audience – both within and outside the film – is aware of the character’s real situation, while he is oblivious to the truth. As filmic audience, therefore, we become voyeurs alongside the viewers in the narrative, waiting for Truman to realise the truth of his Otherness, with Mozart’s music providing an accompaniment during a number of significant scenes that highlight his regular life in Seahaven. Mick and Singer are both Others, but they find a bond through Mozart’s music, despite Singer’s deafness. Louis’s father in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* is incessantly connected to a Mozart aria and his Otherness lives on through Louis, particularly as both parts are played by the same actor. Indeed, each film analysed here features an Other who is linked in some way to a Mozart composition, sharpening the outlines of plot and characterisation, while enhancing the idea of the composer as somehow different from the norm, and thereby feasibly perpetuating the idea of Mozart’s own Otherness. Although the Otherness of the characters is not always immediately clear, Mozart’s music allows the nature of their Otherness to be realised in a subtle and nuanced fashion.

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