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ESPAÑÓLES, INDIOS, AFRICANOS Y GITANOS.  
EL ALCANCE GLOBAL DEL FANDANGO EN MÚSICA, CANTO Y DANZA

SPANIARDS, INDIANS, AFRICANS AND GYPSIES:  
THE GLOBAL REACH OF THE FANDANGO IN MUSIC, SONG, AND  
DANCE

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# THE FANDANGO IN MOZART'S THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO: THE PRISM OF REVOLUTION IN THE ENLIGHTENMENT

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## **Resumen**

Desde el renacimiento y en adelante, en la cultura española se desarrollaron dos estilos de danza muy distintos, que reflejaban contextos sociales también completamente opuestos—el baile reflejaba al campesino, al hombre de la calle, al jaque, mientras la danza representaba la realeza, la nobleza, la alta sociedad. Pero durante el siglo XVIII ilustrado, surgieron géneros que representaban al individuo como ser que vale por sí solo, independientemente de su rango, raza, género, o clase social. Ningún baile encarnaba la filosofía igualitaria de esta época mejor que el fandango. Este género nuevo era una especie de “fotografía sonora” de derecho natural—una representación musical de las “filosofías naturales” descubiertas por Newton y Leibniz en la física, y por Adam Smith, Jefferson y Voltaire en el gobierno. Al igual que Jefferson, quien proclamó que “sostenemos como evidentes estas verdades: que todos los hombres son creados iguales,” el fandango proclamó este sentimiento en la pista de baile. En *Las bodas de Figaro*, el libretista Lorenzo da Ponte y el compositor Wolfgang A. Mozart utilizaron el fandango y sus connotaciones culturales para reflejar a la perfección los conflictos entre personajes sobre los cuales se edificaba la estructura dramática. Basado en la obra del mismo título de Beaumarchais, la ópera presenta el enfrentamiento entre sirviente y amo, que se expresa a través de la división entre baile y danza. A partir del análisis riguroso de las estructuras simétricas en *Figaro*, propongo que en la narratividad de la obra los autores dieron un papel protagonista al fandango, utilizándolo en momentos claves para proclamar el triunfo del intelecto y de un sirviente claramente valioso, sobre el “valor” artificial de un conde malvado (o sea, la esencia de la Ilustración). Tanto Susanna como Figaro cantan mensajes igualitarios, y es un hecho significativo que los dos utilicen el fandango en estos momentos claves como vehículo musical.

## **Palabras Clave:**

filosofías naturales, *Las bodas de Figaro*, Lorenzo da Ponte, Wolfgang A. Mozart, baile, danza, igualitarismo

***El Fandango de Mozart es Las bodas de Figaro: El Prisma de la Revolución en la Ilustración.***

### Abstract

From the Renaissance onward, Spanish culture had developed two highly differentiated strands of dance styles, which reflected completely different societal contexts—the *baile* reflected the peasant, commoner, and ruffian, whereas the *danza* depicted royalty, nobility, and high society. During the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, however, several new genres arose that held that each person was inherently worthy, regardless of class, ethnicity, gender, or social status. No dance better encapsulated this new egalitarian philosophy of the time than the fandango. This new genre was a sort of “audible photograph” of “natural law”—a musical depiction of the “natural laws” articulated by Newton and Leibniz in physics and by Adam Smith, Jefferson, and Voltaire in government. When Jefferson stated it was “self-evident ... that all men are created equal,” the fandango proclaimed it on the dance floor. In crafting their first opera together, *The Marriage of Figaro*, librettist Lorenzo da Ponte and composer Wolfgang A. Mozart drew upon these dance genres and their cultural associations to perfectly reflect the conflicts between characters and class structures in their drama. Based on the Beaumarchais play of the same name, the entire opera is a clash between servant and master, and to tell their tale, da Ponte and Mozart adeptly use the historical divisions between *baile* and *danza*. Using a rigorous examination of structural symmetries in *Figaro*, I will argue that one of the first things the creators did when sketching out their narrative was to place the fandango at center stage, using it at key moments to proclaim the triumph of intellect and of a transparently worthy servant over the artificial “worth” of an abusive count (an encapsulation of the Enlightenment’s essence). Both Susanna and Figaro sing egalitarian messages, and it is significant that they both use the fandango at these key moments as their musical vehicle to convey their message.

### Keywords:

natural law, *The Marriage of Figaro*, Lorenzo da Ponte, Wolfgang A. Mozart, *baile*, *danza*, egalitarianism

### Author Bio

Cal Poly professor Craig Russell is steeped in the music of Spain and the Hispano-American world, having published over 100 juried articles on eighteenth-century Hispanic studies, Mexican cathedral music, the California missions, and American popular culture. He authored 26 articles for the newest edition of *The New Grove Dictionary* and collaborated with Chanticleer on a DVD film and four compact disks, two of which received Gramophone award nominations. His compositions are released on Naxos and have been widely performed in Europe, Australia, and the USA—including concerts dedicated to his orchestral compositions in Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Sydney Opera House, and Disney Hall in Los Angeles. In July 2009, Oxford University Press released his highly acclaimed book, *From Serra to Sancho: Music and Pageantry in the California Missions*.

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## INTRODUCTION

Between 1785 and 1791, the composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his librettist and lyricist, Lorenzo da Ponte, crafted three astounding operas that perfectly encapsulate the musical, cultural, philosophical, scientific, and sociological trends of the late eighteenth century. Their first opera together, *The Marriage of Figaro*, premiered in Vienna in 1786; *Don Giovanni* followed on its heels the following year, opening in Prague in 1787; and their third collaboration, *Così fan tutte*, was staged in Vienna in 1790, just a few months before Mozart's untimely death. Although several authors (such as Wye Allenbrook, Tim Carter, and Daniel Heartz), have explored the role of dance and dance rhythms in these operas—revealing how Mozart's choice of dance served as a tool to further the plot narrative and to convey characters' personalities and social class—no author to date has made more than passing mention of the fandango in these works, in spite of the critical role that it played in these operas.<sup>1)</sup> In this present essay, then, I propose to examine the critical importance of the fandango in the creation of Mozart's and da Ponte's *The Marriage of Figaro*, using the following road map. First, I will dig through writings by first-hand observers of the fandango in eighteenth-century society in an attempt to ferret out its important artistic and social features; second, I will scrutinize the recurring structural patterns in *Figaro*, arguing that Mozart and da Ponte developed an entirely new approach in drafting their operas, one that emphasized symmetry—and thus perfectly embodied the balance of nature as explained by Newton, Leibniz, and Bernoulli; and third, I will examine the fandango in the context of these structured patterns, showing how Mozart placed the fandango at center stage, using it at key moments to proclaim the triumph of intellect and of a transparently worthy servant over the artificial "worth" of an abusive count (yet another encapsulation of the Enlightenment's essence).

## PART 1: THE FANDANGO AND ITS SYMBOLIC ASSOCIATIONS

From the Renaissance onward, Spanish culture had developed two highly differentiated strands of dance styles, which reflected completely different societal contexts—the baile reflected the peasant, commoner, and ruffian, whereas the danza depicted royalty, nobility,

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<sup>1)</sup> Three very excellent and perceptive books that provide much insight into Mozart's use of dance include: Wye Jamison Allenbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro & Don Giovanni* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Tim Carter, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Cambridge Opera Handbooks (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Daniel Heartz, *Mozart's Operas*, edited with contributing essays by Thomas Bauman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Two other laudable contributions include the older but still discerning book by Edward J. Dent, *Mozart's Operas: A Critical Study*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1913, rptd by OUP, 1975), as well as Andrew Steptoe, *The Mozart-da Ponte Operas: The Cultural and Musical Background to Le nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

and high society.<sup>2)</sup> During the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, however, several new genres arose that held that each person was inherently worthy, regardless of class, ethnicity, gender, or social status. No dance better conveyed this new egalitarian philosophy of the time than the fandango. This new genre was a sort of “audible photograph” of “natural law”—a musical depiction of the “natural laws” articulated by Newton and Leibniz in physics and by Adam Smith, Jefferson, and Voltaire in government. When Jefferson stated it was “self-evident ... that all men are created equal,” the fandango proclaimed it on the dance floor. Padre Martí of Alicante communicates this point in his account of the fandango that he jotted down in 1712:

I became familiar with this dance of Cádiz—famous after so many centuries for its voluptuous steps—that one sees it performed even today in all of the neighborhoods and houses of this city; and it is cheered in the most incredible fashion by the spectators. It is not just a big to-do among Gypsy women and people of low social stature, but is celebrated as well by prim and proper ladies of high society....

This dance’s steps are performed in the same way by both the man and woman, that grouped into pairs, the dancers follow the measure of the music with suave undulations of the body.... Noisy laughter and happy shouts break out everywhere, and the spectators—possessed with the greatest enthusiasm as with the ancient Atellans—hurl themselves into the thick of things, taking part and teetering about, following the movements of the dance.<sup>3)</sup>

The famous scoundrel Casanova (a gigolo of the time who was to befriend da Ponte and Mozart in 1787, the year after Figaro’s premiere) provides a similar description:

Each couple, man and woman, never move more than two or three steps as they click their castanets with the music of the orchestra. They take a thousand attitudes, make a thousand gestures so lascivious that nothing can compare with them. This dance is the expression of

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<sup>2)</sup> For a thorough treatment of the differences between the baile and danza genres, consult: Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, *Colección de entremeses, loas, bailes, jácaras, y mojigangas desde fines del siglo XVI á mediados del XVIII*, vol. 17 of *Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, under the direction of Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, tomo 1, volumen 1 (Madrid: Casa Editorial Bailly Baillière, 1911); Maurice Esses, *Dance and Instrumental ‘Diferencias’ in Spain During the 17th and Early 18th Centuries*, 3 vols., *Dance and Music Series*, no. 2 (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1992); Christina Rodrigues Azuma, “Les musiques de danse pour la guitare baroque en Espagne et en France (1660-1700), *Essais d’étude comparative*,” 2 vols., Ph.D. diss., Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2000; Eloy Cruz, *La casa de los once muertos: Historia y repertorio de la guitarra* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México & Escuela Nacional de Música, 1993) and my own study *Santiago de Murcia’s “Códice Saldivar No. 4”*: A Treasury of Guitar Music from Baroque Mexico, 2 vols. (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

<sup>3)</sup> Aurelio Capmany, “El baile y la danza,” in *Folklore y costumbres de España*, F. Carreras y Candi, Director, vol. 2, pp. 167-418 (Barcelona: Casa Editorial Alberto Martín, 1943-1946), quoted on p. 248, translation by Craig Russell.



love-making from beginning to end, from the desire to the ecstasy of enjoyment. It seemed to me impossible that after such a dance the girl could refuse her partner.<sup>4)</sup>

Dozens of similar accounts crop up all through the 1700s, all summarizing that the fandango was a sensual couples-dance projecting uninhibited, ecstatic, even lascivious passion. The fandango (accompanied by the clatter of castanets) clearly popped up at social gatherings where raucous onlookers would chime in with shouts of gleeful excitement. And Martí tells us that anyone was welcome, whether the dancer be a lowly Gypsy or a prim-and-proper lady.

## **PART 2: THE STRUCTURE OF MOZART'S AND DA PONTE'S FIGARO**

At a time when scientists were using intellect and applied reason to unlock the secrets of nature, finding intelligible ways to explain nature's secrets with rational, lucid "rules," music was reflecting those same transformations in a parallel movement toward an appeal to the "natural" ... and toward an expressed desire for rational, transparent, and clear structures. In the same way that Newton's theories in the *Principia Mathematica* eventually brought us such "balanced equations" as  $F = ma$  (force = mass times acceleration), so Mozart and Haydn provide us a sense of "natural balance" as well, in between the exposition and recapitulation of their sonata forms. Leibniz (with his theories on conservation of energy) and Bernoulli (with his views on fluid dynamics) both explained dynamic systems in which motion was governed by balance: likewise, each of Mozart's and da Ponte's three operas is a dynamic structure churning with characters, events, and musical themes—always set in motion by the expectations of "natural principles" such as balance, symmetry, and the rational reestablishment of equilibrium. That is to say, eighteenth-century society had its roots in Empirical science and natural law, and culturally, Mozart's and da Ponte's operas grew in that same soil.

To better understand Mozart's and da Ponte's creative process, let us first examine the artistic world in which they were working. Up until the 1780s, almost all opera seria and opera buffa librettos were drafted in three acts: Act 1 presents all the characters and sets up a predicament; in Act 2, confusion abounds, and the problems become seemingly intractable. Act 3 (much shorter than the previous acts) provides an "unexpected solution," usually provided by magnanimous forgiveness by a wise ruler. In France, staged musical works were usually in five acts, and they tended to be episodic and somewhat unrelated in nature. When Mozart and da Ponte got together at the local coffee shop to draft the outline for any new collaboration, they adopted an entirely new scheme, for they gravitated towards the number "four"—either crafting four distinct acts (as is the case for *Figaro*); or

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<sup>4)</sup> Curt Sachs, *World History of Dance*, Trans. by Bessie Schönberg (New York: Norton, 1937), quoted on p. 99. For Casanova's memoirs, including passage of Fandango, see Giacomo Casanova, *The memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt*, <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/casanova/c33m/book6.3.html>

two large acts with clearly demarcated mid-points, thus creating four divisions as well (as is the case for *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*). If one maps out the symmetries (please see the appendix for Example 1), one can observe the grand, overall scheme of *Figaro* with its recurring four-sided symmetries: it is just one enormous square.<sup>5)</sup>

This “four-ness” is not to be taken for granted, given that *Figaro* is based on Beaumarchais’s 5-act play of the same name that met with spectacular success after its premiere in 1780, and much of *Don Giovanni* is based on Tirso de Molina’s 3-act *El burlador de Sevilla*. In both cases, the 4-quadrant scheme had to have been entirely Mozart’s and da Ponte’s idea.<sup>6)</sup> It is almost as if the creative team, from the outset, took a sheet and folded it in two halves lengthwise—making the two acts—and then folded the

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<sup>5)</sup> For all examples, please see appendix.

<sup>6)</sup> Daniel Heartz and Tim Carter have observed symmetries in Mozart’s *Figaro*, as have scholars R. B. Moberly in *Three Mozart Operas: Figaro, Don Giovanni, The Magic Flute* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1968); Siegmund Levarie, *Mozart’s Le Nozze di Figaro: A Critical Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952) with its reprint (New York: Da Capo, 1977); William Mann, *The Operas of Mozart* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). Carter, in particular, acknowledges that there were precedents for the 2-part division of comic operas in the 1780s and that Mozart would have known these creations. That being said, when I see 2-act works such as Paisiello’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* or any others from that decade, there may be a binary division of acts—but without any noticeable attempt to have similarities or reflections between them. Mozart, on the other hand, carves out symmetries at every opportunity—that is where he sets himself apart from his contemporaries. With regard to Beaumarchais and the actual structure of his version of *Figaro*, consult: Edna C. Fredrick, *The Plot and Its Construction in Eighteenth Century Criticism of French Comedy: A Study of Theory with Relation to the Practice of Beaumarchais*. Published initially as a doctoral dissertation at Bryn Mawr College, 1934. Rptn. in New York: Lenox Hill (Burt Franklin), 1973.

For other scholars who delve into Mozart’s symmetries (some with *Figaro* and others with *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*), it is well worth the effort consulting: James Webster, “The Act IV Finale of *Le Nozze di Figaro*: Dramatic and Musical Construction,” found on p. 91 onward, of Sergio Durante, Stegan Rohringer, Julian Rushton, James Webster, *Collected Writings of the Orpheus Institute: Drame Giocoso: Post-Millennial Encounters with the Mozart/Da Ponte Operas* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012); James Webster, “Mozart’s Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity,” in *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2 (1990), pp. 197-218; Jessica Waldo and James Webster, “Operatic Plotting in *Le Nozze di Figaro*,” in Wolfgang Amadé Mozart: *Essays on His Life and his Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Bruce Alan Brown and John Rice, “Salieri’s *Così fan tutte*,” in the *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 17-43; Alan Tyson, “*Le nozze di Figaro*: Lessons from the Autograph Score,” in *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 114-24; Julian Rushton, *Don Giovanni*, *Cambridge Opera Handbooks* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Bruce Alan Brown, *Così fan tutte*, *Cambridge Opera Handbooks* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995). With regard to accessing the actual music, the critical edition from the Neue Mozart Ausgabe is available through their splendid “Digital Mozart Edition,” found on the website <http://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/main/>. The facsimile of Mozart’s original score is also easily available through the elegant 3-volume edition published through the generous support of the Packard Humanities Institute. See Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*, K. 492. Facsimile of the Autograph Score. 3 vols., introductory essay by Norbert Miller and musicological introduction by Dexter Edge (Los Altos California: The Packard Humanities Institute in conjunction with Bärenreiter Kassel, 2007).

sheet again, this time from top to bottom, with the crease becoming the “midpoints” for each of the larger acts. Once the sheet is divided in columns, it is a rather straightforward task to start placing items across from each other, either as near replications of the same event, or—just as useful—as near opposites of each other, making symmetrical events that are “mirror reflections” of each other. It is this four-ness of the structure over which Mozart and da Ponte apparently obsessed and which I have drawn out in the Examples 1 through 6.

If we focus on a few recurring elements, the 4-sided symmetry becomes even more apparent. For example, we see that Mozart and da Ponte set up the same sequence of events for plot development in each act. At the beginning of each act, they first present a strong female character who is the focal point of dramatic action and for explaining the disturbing dilemma that will need to be solved in the coming scenes of the act (see Example 2 for a more detailed explanation). Shortly thereafter, we get a bit of plot exposition regarding the scheme to entrap the Count; and this is always followed by the unwelcome appearance of the love-struck, teenaged pageboy Cherubino who is forever making advances on a principle female character (Susanna, the Countess, or Barbarina).

The young boy repeatedly shows up as a “guest” in Susanna’s or the Countess’s private bedchambers where—in each act—he first hides (sometimes half dressed, changing into women’s clothes). His subsequent discovery by the quick-tempered and jealous Count then initiates a series of confusing but hysterically funny antics. (See Example 3 regarding the function and symmetry of Cherubino’s appearances in *The Marriage of Figaro*.) Interestingly, Cherubino’s cross-dressing develops as we move from act to act. In Act 1, Cherubino (wearing his own clothes) is caught hiding underneath Susanna’s dress in an armchair in her private chambers. In Act 2, Cherubino is in the process of disrobing and is changing into Susanna’s dress at the moment that the Count nearly finds the half-naked page hiding in the Countess’s private chambers. In Act 3, Cherubino has discarded his military attire completely and is now fully dressed in women’s attire in order to blend in inconspicuously with the crowd of peasant girls. And in Act 4, Cherubino is back in uniform but is completely fooled by Susanna’s dress in the final garden scene (The Countess is dressed in Susanna’s garb as part of their plot to trip up the philandering Count). The same pattern is rigorously maintained here as in the previous three acts, for it is Cherubino’s physical presence—combined with bewilderment surrounding a dress that is on the “wrong person”—that become the catalysts for the flurry of consternation and confusion that is about to unfold before our eyes.

In *Figaro*, the two female protagonists provide the most substantial “moral fiber” to the drama. Susanna, the servant girl and fiancé to Figaro, finds herself in a horribly difficult situation, for she must deflect the lecherous Count’s unwelcome advances, yet she will

need the Count's permission and blessing if she is to marry Figaro.<sup>7)</sup> (See Example 4, regarding Susanna's function in Figaro.) Truly, in eighteenth-century society, she is at the bottom rung of society's hierarchy—since she is young, poor, unmarried, a servant, and female. In a word—POWERLESS. But in each act, Mozart and Da Ponte place Susanna in duet settings—symmetrically placed—where she invariably becomes the one “in charge,” the character calling the shots, due to her wit and quick thinking. Even with her fellow protagonists (the Countess and Figaro), she is always one step ahead. By drama's end, her brilliant mind allows her to “win” in every respect. She evades the Count's abusive coercion to have an affair, successfully trips him up and holds him accountable, and finally is allowed to marry her love, Figaro. Thus, Susanna's function is an artistic manifestation of the Enlightenment's most prized virtue—superior intellect.

Similarly, the Countess has unimpeachable virtues, towering over all other personages (with the possible exception of Susanna). (Please see Example 5, regarding the Countess.) Without question, she is the most noble spirit of the drama and as such is the perfect antithesis of her brutish, shallow, and hormone-crazed husband, the Count. Her loyal virtues are the mirror reflection of the Count's shallow nature. In a sense, then, it is Susanna's supreme intellect that entraps the Count and the Countess's supreme magnanimity that saves him. And those virtues are displayed in actions that are symmetrically balanced, as if they were quadratic equations of sung drama.

### **PART 3: THE FANDANGO AND ITS ROLE IN FIGARO.**

The finales to the acts also have parallel features in “Mozart's square,” for Acts 1 and 3 belong together as a matched pair, and Acts 2 and 4 constitute the other couple. (Please see example 6.) Mozart places ensemble finales at the ends of Acts 2 and 4 in which characters come onto stage in dribs and drabs until the whole cast is gathered in full, sonic richness, singing away in full force to a flurry of excited orchestral exclamations and rapidly-racing scale passages that make a mad dash to the finish. In a similar way, Mozart drafts a march-to-fandango combination to pull together the closing moments of Acts 1 and 3. Notably, it is here (at the conclusions of Acts 1 and 3) that the fandango plays its defining role in establishing a cultural context in furthering the dramatic action.

Act 1 pulls to a close as Figaro sings the comic march “Non più andrai” to tease poor Cherubino who has just suffered the misfortune of being drafted into military service by the Count (a necessary step, from the Count's perspective, since Cherubino had just witnessed the lecherous nobleman's failed attempt to bed the servant girl Susanna). It should be noted that this scene is nowhere to be found in Beaumarchais's original play;

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<sup>7)</sup> Most of the opera sources cited previously delve into Mozart's treatment of his female protagonists. To this list, we can also add Charles Ford's recent book that approaches this singular issue in considerable detail: see Ford, *Sexuality and the Enlightenment in Mozart's Figaro, Don Giovanni and Così fan Tutte* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2012).

this comical scene is entirely Mozart's and da Ponte's invention. In the midst of this tongue-in-cheek march, Figaro pokes fun at the poor youth, observing that the page will have no more time for flirting with young maidens because he'll be surrounded instead by smelly warriors with moustaches! And to drive home the point, Figaro taunts the poor teenager further, singing, "you'll have helmet or a headdress, and you'll get loads of honor—but very little money! And instead of dancing the fandango, you'll be marching through the mud, over mountains, through valleys, in icy snow and sweltering heat—and all to the sound of muskets, gunfire, and cannon shots." (Please see Example 7.)

In the parallel location at the end of Act 3, Figaro calls the tune for the rest to dance, all to a march.<sup>8)</sup> The common folk parade up to the Count's doorstep (at Figaro's urging), as Figaro is trying to hurry up the wedding date for his impending union with Susanna. Two young girls step forward to sing a duple-meter contredanse (a jaunty tune intended for peasant-folk, not nobility), thanking the Count in advance with the hopeful expectation that he finally will grant permission for Figaro's and Susanna's nuptials to proceed. They are trying to force the Count's hand, who has been trying to delay or derail that marriage at every turn so that he might have the unwed Susanna all to himself. This sprightly contredanse proceeds without interruption into the more sensual fandango, which becomes the audible soundtrack as Susanna (and to a lesser extent, Figaro) sets in motion her plan to ensnare the adulterous Count, all to the strains of the fandango. The use of the march and the fandango are faithfully drawn from Beaumarchais's precise stage directions and dialogue in his play. Beaumarchais uses the fandango during this scene, as the servants Figaro and Susanna successfully fool the Count and trip him up in their plan. The peasants and even the gardener's daughter (Barbarina) are dancing at the same time as Don Bartholo and other aristocratic nobility. The fandango, then, symbolizes the equal status between all the characters on stage (a view that fits hand-in-glove with Padre Marti's description that we examined earlier in this essay). And of course, Mozart and da Ponte eagerly adopt this same symbolism to full effect in their opera.

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<sup>8)</sup> Due to the limited space allowed in an article, full quotations of this scene are not included here. The relevant passages, though, easily can be found in the following locations: Beaumarchais's Figaro, the complete play in the original French, especially the latter part of Act IV, in [Pierre-Augustin Caron de] Beaumarchais, *Théâtre de Beaumarchais: Le Barbier de Seville, Le Mariage de Figaro, La Mère coupable*, with an introduction by and notes by Maurice Rat (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1964), p. 297 following, and on the web site [http://bacdefrancais.net/mariage\\_de\\_figaro.pdf](http://bacdefrancais.net/mariage_de_figaro.pdf), esp. on p. 109 following, accessed on May 21, 2015; and the English translation of Beaumarchais's play can be found in Pierre Agustin Caron de Beaumarchais, *The Figaro Trilogy: The Barber of Seville, The Marriage of Figaro, The Guilty Mother* (New York: Oxford World's Classics, 2008) as well as in Beaumarchais's Figaro complete play in English translation (by Thomas Holcroft in late 18th century), found on the web site Online Library of Liberty, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/1563>, accessed on May 21, 2015; Da Ponte's and Mozart's libretto for Figaro can be found in TITLE, especially Act III, Scene IV, and in English translation of their libretto on the web site [http://www.murashev.com/opera/Le\\_nozze\\_di\\_Figaro\\_libretto\\_English\\_Italian](http://www.murashev.com/opera/Le_nozze_di_Figaro_libretto_English_Italian), accessed on May 21, 2015.

kneeling position before the Count. As the two lovebirds return across the room, the stage directions state in the printed libretto state, “During this time, another reprise of the fandango is danced.” Although that statement is ambiguous as to whether or not Figaro and Susanna are participating, Mozart’s autograph score clarifies the issue with the annotation scribbled over the vocal staff, “Figaro balla (Figaro dances).” Importantly, Figaro is no bystander here but, on the other hand, is in the thick of the action, orchestrating the tune and dancing to the music of the commoner—the fandango that will trip up his “noble Lord.”<sup>9)</sup>

It also is worth noting that the Count does not remain seated during all of this commotion but instead rises to seek out the pin that he has dropped but will need to retrieve as part of the secret signal to Susanna that he’s ready for their illicit tryst that evening. In the previous century, when aristocrats or townsfolk danced before their ruling lord and his spouse, the royal couple would be seated at the end of the room and were seen as “The Presence,” for whom the dancers performed.<sup>10)</sup> Everything visually (and socially, for that matter) was directed toward the position of privilege, the seat occupied by “The Presence.” But this new-fangled fandango rejected all that nonsense. There was no singular point from which the steps were to be viewed. Anyone could dance a fandango, and all spectators had equally valid viewpoints for observing it. Thus in the aforementioned scene, when the Count chooses to leave his “throne” during the fandango in order to scurry about on the dance floor, looking for that blasted pin that he had misplaced; he no longer is controlling the pageantry of the dance as the event’s “Presence.” Now, he is on a level playing field with the rest of humankind. There he was, the Count, suddenly “unseated” and unsettled, hobnobbing around, bumping elbows with peasants, servants, gardener’s daughters, and the riffraff of the world. I have to think that Tom Jefferson would have been right at home in this culturally democratic setting where it was the common man who was calling the tune, while the ruling lord seems to be out of place and out of step.<sup>11)</sup>

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<sup>9)</sup> For a facsimile of Mozart’s statement “Figaro balla” in his autograph score, please consult: Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*, K. 492. Facsimile of the Autograph Score, vol. 2, p. 450 (but with the page number “118” written in brown-red ink on the actual manuscript in the upper left corner and the page number “451” written in pencil or black ink in the lower left corner of the manuscript page).

<sup>10)</sup> See Wendy Hilton, *Dance of Court and Theater: The French Noble Style, 1690-1725*, ed. by Caroline Gaynor, with labanotation by Mireille Backer (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Book Company, 1981) pp. 85-87, 262, 282, 284-85.

<sup>11)</sup> Significantly, Beaumarchais was actually an ally of the Colonists in the Revolutionary War. He put his egalitarian views into action. See: Harlow Giles Unger, *Improbable Patriot: The Secret History of Monsieur de Beaumarchais, the French Playwright Who Saved the American Revolution* (Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2011); and Cynthia Cox, *The Real Figaro: The Extraordinary Career of Caron de Beaumarchais*, especially Chapter 12, “Beaumarchais and the American Colonies” (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1962).



had planned on ending Acts 1 and 3 similarly with marches is clear when one examines the printed libretto for the first performance; Act 1 closes with the stage instructions, “partono tutti al suono di una marcia / Fine dell’ Atto primo” (All exit the stage to the sound of a march / End of Act 1)<sup>12</sup>; with nearly identical guidelines Act 3 draws to an end, “Il coro, e la marcia si ripete e tutti partono. / Fine dell’ Atto terzo” (The chorus and the march are repeated, and all exit the stage / End of Act 3).<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, sometime after sending the libretto to the printer for duplication, Mozart and da Ponte changed their minds, for in the final score Mozart actually ends Act 3—not with the march as was initially planned—but with the lovely contredanse that the two peasant girls had introduced earlier in that same scene. Perhaps they felt it wiser to end more concisely by simply tagging on a reprise of the contredanse and then dropping the curtain, instead of having the whole cast departing in pairs, marching off two-by-two (in the same way that they had entered) until the stage was vacated. For whatever reason a change was made, we nevertheless can state with certainty that their first plan was to end these two acts symmetrically, both making references to the fandango and polishing things off with an actual march.

A few words regarding Mozart’s musical models for his fandango are in order. Otto Jahn, Mozart’s first biographer, revealed that Mozart mines most of his musical material for the fandango straight from the “Moderato” movement in Gluck’s ballet *Don Juan* that had been mounted in Vienna in 1761. In both Gluck’s fandango and Mozart’s slight reworking of it, we hear the descending tetrachord in a Phrygian mode upon which the fandango is built, the alternating E major-to-A minor chord progressions that volley back and forth, and the distinctive fandango rhythm.<sup>14</sup> Neither Gluck nor Mozart can resist the desire to insert those inevitable V-to-i cadences that tonicize A-minor as opposed to the E, the actual tonal destination of the Phrygian mode, and in that respect the ephemeral allusion to Andalucía is momentarily dispelled as we are yanked back, musically speaking, to the context of Italian opera buffa in Mozart’s and da Ponte’s Vienna of the 1780s. This misstep, however, almost doesn’t matter, for the rest of the cultural context they absorb and then project to perfection.

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<sup>12</sup>) See the facsimile of the original da Ponte libretto, as reproduced in Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*, K. 492. Facsimile of the Autograph Score, vol. 1, p. 59 (but p. 24 of the actual libretto).

<sup>13</sup>) See the facsimile of the original da Ponte libretto, as reproduced in Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*, K. 492. Facsimile of the Autograph Score, vol. 1, p. 73 (but p. 78 of the actual libretto).

<sup>14</sup>) For a description of the fandango’s musical features in the eighteenth century consult my own study Santiago de Murcia’s “Código Saldivar No. 4”: A Treasury of Guitar Music from Baroque Mexico, vol. 1, pp. 50-52. For Santiago Jessica Waldo and James Webster, “Operatic Plotting in *Le Nozze di Figaro*,” in Wolfgang Amadé Mozart: Essays on His Life and his Music (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); de Murcia’s setting of a fandango, consult that same Hertz, Daniel. Mozart’s Operas, edited with contributing essays by Thomas Bauman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. publication, vol. 2, pp. 138-42.

and its meaning in Figaro. What did the Viennese public actually hear in 1786, and why might it have mattered? I would propose that when Figaro and Susanna took the stage at the end of Act 3, the taconeo of the characters' heels and clatter of their castanets became as much premonition as entertainment. The French Revolution was but three years away—and I suspect that some of the audience members were cognizant that they were experiencing more than enchanting melody, jocular humor, and silly antics in this opera. In truth, Mozart's and da Ponte's *The Marriage of Figaro* resonates with the dynamic structures of empirical science and with the ideals of "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality" made manifest on their dance floor—and it was all made possible by the fandango.

#### **EXAMPLES (SEE APPENDIX)**

Example 1 Figaro in 4s

Example 2 Strong Female Characters

Example 3 Cherubino

Example 4 Susanna

Example 5 Countess

Example 6 Symmetry in Finales

Example 7 Non più andrai

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