

## The Characteristics of Donna Elvira in Mozart's Opera " Don Giovanni "

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### Abstract:

Don Giovanni is an opera adapted by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in 1787. In the play, perhaps one of the strongest voices conveying the minds of modern women is Elvira. This article starts from the female character Elvira (Elvira), analyzes her role in the opera, and concludes that Elvira is a truth-bearer with a strong desire for revenge. Through her transformation and sublimation from abandonment to revenge, she discusses the interpretation of the characters, and further conveys the understanding of the performance of opera characters. Finally, this paper also summarizes the views on Elvira's role interpretation.

### 1. Background of the work and an overview of character traits

"Don Giovanni" (Italian: Don Giovanni),<sup>[1]</sup> also known as "The Prodigal Son" (Italian: Il dissoluto), work number K.527, is a novel by Wolfgang Amadeus ·A two-act Italian opera composed by Mozart and written by Lorenzo da Ponte, premiered on October 29, 1787, at the City State Theater in Prague, directed by Mozart himself. Don Juan in the opera staged a series of legends about a famous romantic man in Spanish history (Don Giovanni is the Italian name for Don Juan, and the two are synonymous).<sup>[1]</sup> As a fictitious image of a prodigal son, Don Juan widely appears in Western literary works. The play is classified as "drama giocoso", while Mozart himself classified the play as "Opera buffa". Although often classified as a comedy, the show actually incorporates elements of comedy, tragedy, and even supernatural events.

In the play, Elvira (Donna Elvira) is positioned as a noble lady abandoned by Don Juan. Don Juan steals Elvira's heart and calls her his wife but abandons her after days of being "in love". After repeated lies and deceptions, Elvira's heart was finally broken. After realizing it, Elvira and the other two women in the play who were hurt by Don Juan's deceit, Anna (Zerlina) decided to make Don Juan's evil deeds public, and then began Three women's road to revenge.

This article takes Elvira, the classic female revenge character in the opera "Don Giovanni" as the research object and analyzes the character through the change of her character's heart in the opera with the development of the storyline. And from the transformation of Elvira's main milestones, it shows her inner contradictions and struggles, which finally arouses a strong revenge emotion, and analyzes the character characteristics more comprehensively and deeply. This article will analyze Elvira's four dimensions: "struggle after being abandoned", "strong revenge in struggle", "protector of hysteria" and "guardian of truth". Systematic character analysis helps performers to be more accurate in conveying opera content and related performances, and also helps to combine theoretical understanding with personal performance imagination, playing a good auxiliary role.

### 2. Music Analysis of Donna Elvira's Bridge

The song "Far from This Evil Man" appears in the tenth scene of the first act of the opera. It is an aria sung by Elvira when she advised Zelina. See Figure 1 for the sheet music. The gist of its

lyrics is: "Ah, stay away from this wicked man, let him haunt you no more; he's full of lies and false in his face. From my misery you will know and believe what it will be, from my misfortune, you can get a warning in time." This is a more lyrical aria, which is full of Elvira's hatred of Don Juan and kindness to Zerina. The band uses the same rhythm pattern as the vocal melody: dotted and continuous big jump intervals. Starting from the fifteenth section, the melody of the music gradually becomes gentler, and the intensity becomes more moderate. This is because Elvira expressed a comforting and enlightening tone to Cai Linna through her own efforts. The two parts of the melody form a sharp contrast. The specific performance is through the comparison of pitch and speed. This comparison accurately expresses Elvira's angry mood and kind character traits. At the beginning of the second half, the melody rhythm becomes flatter, thus forming a kind of contrast. In the end, the melody rhythm is still used to run a large number of scales, and the whole work is ended with a high pitch and passion. It can be seen from this that through the expression of pitch and speed, Elvira's resentment and kindness are accurately portrayed.

This aria is relatively short, but the rhythm is soothing and peaceful, the melody is beautiful and melodious, and it fully reflects Elvira's hatred for Don Juan and her eagerness to consider Cailina. It can be seen from the lyrics that Elvira hated Don Juan at the beginning, and the high-pitched singing performance can show Elvira's inner resentment and anxiety. Afterwards, when entering the second section, the emotion enters the climax and reaches a high point. Singing at this time generally needs to mobilize emotions. Use increased speed and enhanced intensity to further express inner pain and despair. Then it shows the character characteristic of Elvira's firm determination to expose Don Juan 's evil face.

The image shows a musical score for the aria "Ah fuggi il traditor" by Donizetti. The score is in 3/4 time, marked "Allegro." and "Donna Elvira." The vocal line is in treble clef with lyrics: "Ah! fug - - gi il tra - di - The trai - - tor means de - Da miei - - tor-men - tijn - pa - ra a From wrong - - un-just and cru - el, From". The piano accompaniment is in bass clef with "Strings throughout." and dynamic markings "f" and "p".

Figure 1. Part of the score of "Ah fuggi il traditor" ("Ah, leave this heartless man!")

### 3.Elvira: Struggles after being abandoned

In Lawrence Lipking's essay "Donna Abbandonata " , the author describes her as "abandoned woman", the character of Elvira always conjures up a painful story. We know that the idea of the

abandoned woman is not new in performance work, but the abandoned woman and her subsequent actions are the more interesting part of the work. Elvira's obsession with Don Juan always prevails in every situation. Unwisely, Elvira courts Don Juan for a time, which she hopes will spark Don Juan to rekindle his feelings for her. This motivation is indeed evident in the "balcony scene" of "Act Two". In this sequence, Elvira shakes her feelings for Giovanni and rediscovers her infatuation with him.

### **3.1 Elvira: Intense revenge in struggle**

Unlike Elvira, Don Juan never really expresses his vulnerable feelings to anyone, which ensures his emotional detachment from the outside world. At the same time, it is also a lack of emotion, but he himself is not aware of it. It formed a strong contrast with Elvira's emotional expression. Her extreme anxiety, anger, and desire to articulate her emotions are the verbal and body language expressions that we are hidden from us at an early age as humans. While Elvira expresses her emotional thoughts openly, it is a good interpretation that can reveal the true nature of human beings. Jean Starobinski, in his book *Enchantment, The Seduction of the Opera*, argues that music is the only art form that can carry such intense emotions. He said: "Music has the privilege of maximizing emotion, and music produces emotional amplification" (Starobinski 2008) [2].

Elvira's accumulated power, abandoned by Don Juan, is clearly revealed when Elvira warns Zerlina about Don Juan's deception. Elvira's selections are full of angry big skipping intervals, waves of running scales, grace notes and tremolos stirred up by the strings. Bringing Elvira's gritty spirit to orchestral, feminine ferocity. Moods are constantly shifting amidst pain and agitation and spark new strength and spirit. Elvira struggles with her feelings of being abandoned, as well as her love and hatred for Don Juan. It is a strong expression of unrequited love.

### **3.2 Elvira: Protector of Hysteria**

"Don Giovanni" performance, Elvira is hysterical at every cut, with wild throws here and there, so much so that one wonders if the director wants the audience to laugh out loud. Why name, criticize, and mock the extent of female hysteria by a male-dominated art form? Many opera companies interpreted it as "hysterical" in Elvira, which is actually a manifestation of a desperate mood. Elvira frantically tries to save the women around her from Don Juan's emotional entanglements, despite the dangers it puts herself at.

Liane Curtis explores Elvira's request for protection: Elvira warns Anna and does everything in her power to ensure that Zerlina is safe from emotional or physical harm. Curtis' interpretation of Elvira's vengeful actions and her need to prevent harm makes Elvira a more powerful character than Don Juan. Indeed, Elvira is clearly protective when she rushes in and breaks the seductive scene of Don Juan and Zerlina in the duet "La ci darem la mano." Elvira immediately warns Zerlina to leave Don Juan, and as a method of self-preservation.

### **3.3 Elvira: Bearer of the Truth**

Elvira means "truth" in Spanish (Hispanic Culture Online, 2007). Her hunger for the truth runs throughout the opera, and she works her way through revenge by continually warning others of Don Juan's criminal and barbaric nature. Elvira's protective attitude is rooted in her mission to bear the truth. Don Juan's crimes, which she revealed to Dona Ana and Don Otavio in "Act I", and after a revelation from Elvira, the three planned to trap Don Juan and eventually intercepted the His attempted rape of Zerlina.

Although Elvira frantically exposes Don Juan's crimes throughout the play and makes every effort to disclose the truth about Don Juan. But it's worth noting that her feelings for Giovanni were divided. Elvira exposes her fragile emotional divisions, and even as she realizes the imminent death of Don Juan to the point where her desire for vengeance fades, her performance is filled with anxiety and longing. Mozart's work speaks well of her deep emotional dialogue. Lipking stated that Elvira represented the archetypal feminine principle, which wanted to be protected, loved and not to be alone again (Lipking 1990) <sup>[3]</sup>; an idea that parallels Elvira's same demeanor in this scene. Elvira longs for intimacy with Don Juan as a temporary relief from her loneliness. This may be due to the need to develop the maternal traits of their genetic components.

#### **4. My thoughts on Elvira's character performance**

As an artist, Mozart also could not escape the influence of the living environment and the background of the times on the shaping of female artistic images and character traits in operas. Under the impetus of the Italian Renaissance, the ideas of freedom and equality were deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and these ideas were deeply affecting and infiltrating into various works of art at that time. The character image of Elvira in the opera "Don Juan" was a representative of that time. In that background, Elvira's female image is also a typical portrayal of the life of noble women at that time. It reflects the social environment of women at that time: an era of moral hypocrisy. Elvira's love-hate struggle against Don Juan also reflects the struggle against the atmosphere of feudal society. It is this profound conception of character creation that makes Mozart's opera works very attractive to the audience. The opera "Don Juan" enjoys a high reputation and lasts for a long time.<sup>[4]</sup> Performances are crucial, with much focus on what she calls her character weaknesses, notably in Montes-Baquer's 1991 work, in which Elvira is portrayed as utterly innocent. help neurotic madwoman.<sup>[5]</sup> The perspective brought to the viewer is her infatuation with Don Juan, and she is a silly woman to his feminine desires. Elvira should be given the recognition she deserves, instead of infinitely magnifying her character weaknesses and reducing her to a neurotic madwoman.

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