

WOMEN AND POWER IN MOZART'S OPERAS

ASECS 2019

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Graduate Music History, Thomas Hunter Honors Colloquium, & 200-level

GOALS OF THE COURSE

Close reading of the music and text of Mozart's operas in light of the history of women and power. We trace demeaning moments alongside humanizing ones just as Enlightenment progress was not made in a straight line. Likewise, we do not live in a completely changed context, and to view 18th-century works from a morally superior perch only adds to the gulf between them and our students. There was plenty of moral repugnance to go around in the 1700s.

STUDENTS CONNECT THE DOTS:

WE ARE CLOSER TO THE 18th CENTURY THAN WE THINK

"NO, GENTLEMEN, I DO NOT CITE IT IN ORDER TO EXCUSE HER MORALS, BUT TO MAKE YOU BLUSH FOR *YOURS* CONCERNING...THE CORRUPTION OF YOUNG WORKING GIRLS."

1784 BEAUMARCHAIS, *LE MARIAGE DE FIGARO*

2017 ALABAMA SENATE CANDIDATE ROSE FROM A CULTURE THAT "TEACHES MEN THAT THEY CAN USE THEIR AGE, CLASS, GENDER, AND POWER TO...TARGET WORKING-CLASS GIRLS WHO ARE UNLIKELY TO RETALIATE." —Rachel Hope Cleaves

"Who nurses in us the wretched inclination toward flirtation...this is the work of men. These masters of creation (as they call themselves) **consider us living dolls...**; when they have amused themselves with one doll...they tire of it and seek another..." **1783** *Truths for and about men in Vienna, edited by well-read women*

"I lament that women are systematically degraded by receiving the trivial attentions, which men think it manly to pay to the sex, when, in fact, they are **insultingly supporting their own superiority...** it is to be feared that women will... smile, though told that 'woman, either slave or queen, is quickly scorned when not adored.'" **1792** Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*

Leporello: "Bravo, Two charming enterprises. Force yourself on the daughter and kill the father."

Don Giovanni: "He asked for it."

Leporello: "And Anna, what did she ask for?"

1787 *Don Giovanni, Act 1*

*being all the merry and diverting Trials for above these thirty years; particularly for Rapes and private Stealing: such as had made even the Judges on the Bench forget their Gravity; and caused Scenes of Mirth very unusual in Courts of Justice "***1772** *HUMOURS OF THE OLD BAILEY.*

2018 *SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE,*

BLASEY-FORD: "INDELIBLE IN THE HIPPOCAMPUS IS THE UPROARIOUS LAUGHTER BETWEEN THE TWO AND THEY'RE HAVING FUN AT MY EXPENSE." LEAHY: "YOU WERE THE OBJECT OF THE LAUGHTER?" FORD: "I WAS, YOU KNOW, UNDERNEATH ONE OF THEM WHILE THE TWO LAUGHED."

"Your mother can no longer protect you. My power went with your father to the grave. He said: 'DO NOT INQUIRE INTO AFFAIRS WHICH ARE INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO THE WOMANLY MIND. YOUR DUTY IS, YOU AND YOUR DAUGHTER, TO RELINQUISH LEADERSHIP TO WISE MEN.' " —*QUEEN OF THE NIGHT,* **1791** *THE MAGIC FLUTE, ACT 2*

2010 "Both sexes considered power-seeking men strong and competent yet—also for both sexes, power-seeking women elicited 'moral outrage.' " *The Price of Power: Power Seeking and Backlash Against Female Politicians, Tyler G. Okimoto and Victoria L. Brescoll*

"You love one man now, you'll love another later: **one is as good as The other,** since none of them are worth anything... But they are far away, rather than wasting time with useless tears, **think about enjoying yourself.**" —*Despina:* **1790** *Così fan tutte, Act 1*

2013 Sam Tenenhaus, NYT review of Amanda Knox, *Waiting to be Heard*
"It is this innocence that Knox... insists on, though she abjures any pretense of virginal purity and **openly acknowledges that her junior year abroad... included a 'campaign to have casual sex'.**"