

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

“Bella mia fiamma...Resta, o cara,” Concert aria, K.528

“Oh smania! oh furie!...D’Oreste, d’Aiace,” from

“Idomeneo,” Act III

JOANNES CHRISOSTOMUS WOLFGANG GOTTLIEB MOZART—who began calling himself Wolfgango Amadeo about 1770 and Wolfgang Amadè in 1777 (he used “Amadeus” only in jest)—was born in Salzburg, Austria, on January 27, 1756, and died in Vienna on December 5, 1791. He composed his concert aria “Bella mia fiamma...Resta, o cara,” K.528, in Prague, for the soprano Josepha Duschek; the manuscript is dated November 3, 1787, less than a week after the premiere of “Don Giovanni.” The aria “D’Oreste, d’Aiace” was intended for the third act of his opera seria “Idomeneo, rè di Creta” (“Idomeneus, King of Crete”), but it was cut from the premiere (see below), which took place in Munich on January 29, 1781.

THE SCORE OF “BELLA MIA FIAMMA,” in addition to solo soprano, calls for flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, and strings.

THE SCORE OF “D’ORESTE, D’AIACE,” in addition to solo soprano, calls for two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Mozart’s extraordinary gifts as a composer of arias are manifest not only in those he wrote for the operatic stage, but also in a large number of stand-alone arias—including “Bella mia fiamma” on this program—composed for a variety of singers, occasions, and reasons. From a 21st-century perspective—especially given our primary emphasis on Mozart’s symphonies, concertos, operas, and chamber music—it is not only interesting but important to note, too, that such arias were not necessarily minor or casual by-products to Mozart’s output. In fact, they would sometimes have reached a larger audience than might hear his purely instrumental compositions.

Though we have no details of the first performance, the autograph score of “Bella mia fiamma” is dated November 3, 1787. That fall, Mozart was in Prague for performances of *Le nozze di Figaro* and the first performance anywhere, on October 29, of *Don Giovanni*. He spent part of his time in Prague with his friends the Duscheks at their nearby country cottage—where, in fact, he put the finishing touches on his new opera. Franz Duschek was a composer, teacher, and pianist; his wife, Josepha, was a concert and oratorio singer with whom, Alfred Einstein speculates, Mozart was “perhaps a little in love.” It was as a present to his hosts that Mozart composed “Bella mia fiamma”; a famous story relates that Josepha locked him in the pavilion of her garden with a supply of writing materials, refusing to release him until the aria was done. Mozart, in turn, threatened to destroy the piece unless Josepha could sing it perfectly at sight. Though the text was for a long while believed to be by Lorenzo Da Ponte (Mozart’s collaborator on *Figaro*, *Giovanni*, and *Così*), who was with him in Prague, we now know it to be from D.M. Sarcone’s *Cerere placata* (set as an opera by Niccolò Jommelli and produced in Naples in 1772), based on the myth of Proserpina and her mother Ceres. Ceres has separated Proserpina (the “bella fiamma” in question) from her mortal lover Titano, whom Ceres has decreed will die, and who here expresses his anguish.

Bella mia fiamma, addio! Non piacque
al cielo di renderci felici.

Ecco reciso, prima d’esser compito,
quel purissimo nodo, che strinsero
fra lor gli animi nostri con il solo voler.

Vivi! Cedi al destin, cedi al dovere!

Dalla giurata fede la mia morte t’assolve;
a più degno consorte...oh pene!

Unita vivi più lieta e più felice vita.

Ricordati di me; ma non mai turbi
d’un infelice sposo la rara rimembranza
il tuo riposo.

My dearest love farewell! It did not
please heaven to make us happy.

Lo, severed before yet completed
is that holy knot that bound our
spirits together in a single will.

Live! Yield to fate, yield to duty!

My death will absolve you from
the faith you pledged—oh grief!

Live a happier and more carefree life.

Remember me, but never let the
occasional memory of an unfortunate
betrothed disturb your peace.

Regina, io vado ad ubbidirti; ah tutto
finisca il mio furor col morir mio.
Cerere, Alfeo, diletta sposa, addio.

(a Proserpina)

Resta, o cara; acerba morte
mi separa, oh Dio, da te.

(a Cerere)

Prendi cura di sua sorte,
consolarla almen procura.

(ad Alfeo)

Vado...ahi lasso! addio per sempre...
Quest' affanno, questo passo
è terribile per me.

Ah! Dov'è il tempio, dov'è l'ara?

(a Cerere)

Vieni, affretta la vendetta!

Questa vita così amara
più soffribile non è.

(a Proserpina)

Oh cara, addio per sempre!

Queen, in obedience to you, I go.
Ah, may all my fury end with my death.
Ceres, Alfeo, beloved spouse, farewell!

(to Proserpina)

Stay, my dearest: bitter death
parts me, oh God, from you.

(to Ceres)

Care for her lot:
try at least to console her.

(to Alfeo)

I go...alas! Farewell for ever...
This torment, this step
is terrible to me.

Ah! Where is the temple, where the altar?

(to Ceres)

Come quickly, hasten vengeance!

So bitter a life as this
I can no longer bear.

(to Proserpina)

My dearest, farewell for ever!

D.M. Sarcone

Sometimes, for a later production of an opera that had already been premiered (whether his own or someone else's), Mozart would write a so-called "substitute aria" geared to the specific strengths or needs of a particular singer taking a role in that later production. (Two well-known examples that subsequently remained in the opera for which Mozart wrote them are in *Don Giovanni*—Donna Elvira's "Mi tradi" and Don Ottavio's "Dalla sua pace," both composed for the 1789 Vienna production of *Giovanni* two years after the Prague premiere.) In the case of Elettra's extraordinary "rage aria," "D'Oreste, d'Aiace," we have an aria that Mozart actually eliminated from the premiere of *Idomeneo, rè di Creta* ("Idomeneus, King of Crete")—the great opera seria that established his maturity as an opera composer upon its premiere in Munich on January 29, 1781—because the production was running too long. To avoid compromising dramatic efficacy, Mozart expanded the aria's brief, introductory recitative to an intensely dramatic, three-times-longer recitative (fifteen vs. the original five lines) that could work on its own. Nowadays, whether in concert or in full productions, it is not unusual to have the expanded recitative introduce the aria, as will be heard here. These final moments for Elettra come in Act III near the very end of the opera: Idomeneo's son Idamante, with whom Elettra is in love, is betrothed instead to the Trojan princess Ilia. The desperate Elettra (daughter of Agamemnon) resolves to join her brother Orestes in hell, to remain "in everlasting woe, in eternal weeping."

Marc Mandel

THE FIRST BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PERFORMANCE OF "BELLA MIA FIAMMA" was a single performance in Lowell, Massachusetts, with Gertrude Franklin under the direction of Georg Henschel. Subsequent BSO performances featured Ms. Franklin with Wilhelm Gericke conducting in Boston in January 1885, in Springfield in April 1886, and in Providence in April that year; soprano Dorothy Maynor at Tanglewood on August 17, 1940, with Serge Koussevitzky conducting; soprano Jessye Norman with Colin Davis conducting in February 1974, in Boston and at Carnegie Hall; and soprano Andrea Rost with André Previn conducting at Tanglewood last summer, on August 10, 2008.

THE ONLY PREVIOUS BOSTON SYMPHONY PERFORMANCE OF “D’ORESTE, D’AIACE” AS A CONCERT EXCERPT *took place at Tanglewood on August 22, 1992, with soprano Carol Vaness under the direction of Grant Llewellyn. The aria would also have been sung by Hildegard Behrens at Tanglewood on July 13, 1991, in the concert staging of the complete “Idomeneo” led by Seiji Ozawa to commemorate the bicentennial of Mozart’s death. Also worth noting here is that the first American performance of “Idomeneo” was given by the Tanglewood Music Center (then called the Berkshire Music Center) in the Theatre-Concert Hall at Tanglewood on August 4, 1947, with Boris Goldovsky conducting.*

[RECITATIVE]

Oh smania! Oh furie!
Oh disperata Elettra!
Addio amor, addio speme!
Ah, il cor nel seno già m’ardono
l’Eumenide spietate.
Misera! A che m’arresto?
Sarò in queste contrade
della gioia, e trionfi
spettatrice dolente?
Vedrò Idamante alla rivale in braccio,
e dall’uno, e dall’altra
mostrarmi a ditto?
Ah no, il germano Oreste
ne’ cupi abissi io vuò seguir.
Ombra infelice! Lo spirto mio accogli,
or or compagna m’avrai
là nell’Inferno.
A sempiterni guai, al pianto eterno.

Oh frenzy! Oh Furies!
Oh, desperate Electra!
Farewell, love! Farewell, hope!
Ah! Already within my breast
the pitiless Eumenides are burning my heart.
Wretch that I am! Why do I hold back?
Shall I, in this region
of joy and triumphs,
be a grieving spectator?
Shall I see Idamante in the arms of my rival,
and see both of them point their
fingers at me?
Ah, no! My brother Orestes
I shall follow into the deep abysses.
Unhappy shade! Receive my spirit;
in no time you’ll have me as a
companion in Hell.
In everlasting woe, in eternal weeping.

[ARIA]

D’Oreste, d’Aiace
Ho in senor i tormenti.
D’Aletto la face
Già morte mi dà.

Squarciatemi il core
Ceraste, serpenti,
O un ferro il dolore
In me finirà.

The torments of Orestes and Ajax
I have in my breast.
The torch of Alecto
already brings me death.

Tear open my heart,
Ceraste, serpents,
or a sword will put an end
to my sorrow.

Giovanni Battista Varesco