

Trials and tribulations of writing le nozze di figaro

[Business](#), [Company](#)



A man known for composing brilliant instrumental music for most of his career, made a huge step in the world of opera on 7 May 1783. It was on this date which Mozart wrote a letter to his father with the intentions of his next composition. In the coming years this spectacle would become Mozart's 18th Operatic Work and 11th in Italian, *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Already having 10 Italian Operas accredited to his name *Le Nozze di Figaro* seemed to be Mozart's greatest operatic challenge to date. The Burgtheater in Vienna was currently home to an Italian Company whom Mozart thought would not last long – however, now was doing excellent business.

There were many members of the Opera Company who could not wait to get involved in the project Mozart had in mind. Particularly the buffo bass, Benucci who was described by Mozart as “ Particularly good. ”[1] Despite having much interest by members of the company to aid his intentions, finding a libretto which appealed to Mozart seemed impossible. Hundreds of librettos were looked through, examined, acted out however, none seemed to be the perfect fit.

Eventually Mozart's second hand man at the time, the buffo bass, Benucci came across Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais outrageously cheeky play *La folle journee, ou Le mariage de Figaro*. 2] Just as Mozart's *Figaro* Beaumarchais' play was not well accepted in the beginning. Yet the way to acceptance was paved by the Viennese success of the first *Figaro* play by Beaumarchais, *Le barbier de Seville*. [3] Now having found a libretto to work with Mozart felt so many changes would have to be made. Writing a new text seemed easier to Mozart than having to work through and omitting parts of

dis-interest - possibilities which he had little time for. A new text Mozart felt would be better anyways.

Mozart goes on in his letter saying " Our poet here is now a certain Abbate da Ponte. He has a huge amount to do, revising pieces for the theatre, and he has to write per obbligo an entirely new libretto for Salieri, which will take him two months. He has promised after that to write a new one for me. But who knows whether he will be able to keep his word - or whether he will want to. As you are aware, these Italian gentlemen are very charming to your face... Enough, we know them! If he is in league with Salieri I shall never get anything out of him.

But I should dearly like to show what I can do in an Italian opera. " [4]

Supported by the letter to Mozart's father - challenges were imminent from the start. One of the biggest was that of Da Ponte being available and willing to make changes to Beaumarchais existing work. Clearly unable at first being employed by Salieri Mozart had to ponder with the idea that his composition would not get started for at least two months, if at all. Mozart was worried about Da Ponte teaming up with Salieri, fearing he would then get nothing out of him.

All Mozart wanted to do was show what he could do with Italian Opera. After a chequered career as priest, preceptor, radical thinker and frequenter of married women, Da Ponte had recently settled in Vienna in the winter of 1780-81. He is described as having immense talent and passion for poetry and the theatre which were all genuine. Aside from his incredible talents Da Ponte's charm and good manners did the rest. His charm and

ability to talk to people and persuade landed him a job working for Caterino Mazzola, poet to the Italian opera at the Saxon court in Dresden.

This eventually led to the relationship which Da Ponte and Salieri endured as a letter of recommendation came in high regard from Maestro Mazzola. Upon arriving in Vienna he quickly put his charm and masterful intelligence to work by courting the aged Metastasio, renewed acquaintance with Mozart's admirer and patron Count Cobenzl and endeared himself to Count Rosenberg. Once the Italian company was set-up in Vienna at the Burgtheater he was immediately appointed resident librettist. Mozart rarely mentions Da Ponte's name in any correspondence he had with people like his father and Count Mazzola.

Reasoning could be thought of in one way - firstly and most obvious is the fact they lived only a few doors down from one another in Vienna so the need of corresponding through letters was not. For what some record as one of the most influential, dynamic and destined partnerships known in the musical world there is little known about the on-goings between Mozart and Da Ponte.

In the months while Figaro was taking shape and being composed Mozart resided in Grosse Schulerstrasse (the modern Domgasse), a short walk to Da Ponte's office at the Burgtheatre. 5] Their partnership is easily explained through this quote where no source comes attached " a composer who understands the theatre and a true poet, that phoenix, working together. " Despite all these reasoning's as to why Mozart and Da Ponte were such a dynamic, intelligent, forceful duo - one question which lingers in one's mind

<https://assignbuster.com/trials-and-tribulations-of-writing-le-nozze-di-figaro/>

might be “ why did their collaboration not happen sooner? ” Afterall, Da Ponte had been in Vienna 4 years prior to them beginning their collaboration. Several different reasons exist.

The first - standing between Da Ponte and Mozart was Mozart's meticulousness and his increasingly acute dramatic sense. Mozart was not going to settle for less than first rate, or at any rate with the mediocre. Another reason was concern of his reputation and identity. Thirdly, was the readiness and availability of Da Ponte. Upon meeting with Da Ponte, Mozart learned that his soon to be partner was currently engaged by Salieri for another two months. Not knowing when or if Da Ponte would be ready to go by then did not cause Mozart to wait around - fully willing and prepared he kept moving forward.

Lastly, the presence and consistent seeking of Mozart's father for approval with everything he did. Being so brilliant minded one does not think on the same levels as that of regular society. Thoughts, processes, formulas, details are manufactured at a different level then the rest. Mozart was definitely in this category of people. The gifted category if you will. One walks a fine line with this comparison however, the way Mozart took on projects and ways of capturing musical results could not be far off from the thought process of an engineer getting to the end result of a project drawing or building structure.

Both professions - meticulous in preparation, meticulous during construction and both having such an acute focus on what the finished product must be. Bridget Brophy succinctly summarizes the immense thought and time Mozart put into his composition and completion of his opera, Le Nozze di Figaro, in

<https://assignbuster.com/trials-and-tribulations-of-writing-le-nozze-di-figaro/>

her book "Mozart The Dramatist." Brophy does so by paying tribute to the devotion and fastidiousness in which he had with all his compositions and contrasts the evident musical outcome in his operatic writing. [6]