Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

and

The Development of *Don Juan's* Character through four Centuries of Art

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The three Legends which fascinated the Art World

1. ***Faust***, **a historical figure in Germany in the first half of the 16th Century. First appearance in Puppet Plays in the 1580 ties**

2. ***Don Quixote*** **by Miguel Cervantes, published 1605**

3. ***Don Juan de Tenorio*** **,first mentioned in the 14th Century. First appearance in a play by Tirso de Molina:** ***Don Juan*** **, the Trickster of Seville (*El burlador de Sevilla*), published between 1620 to 1630 depending on sources**

- **The last 2 date back to the Golden Age of Spanish Theatre and Literature. All date back to the second half of the 16th Century to the beginning of the 17th Century.**
- **Their stories have served as metaphors of human yearning.**

The *Don Juan* Legend

- **The character of *Don Juan* has been held up as a critical mirror of societal ills in plays, libretti of operas, poems, other musical interpretations and the visual arts.**

- **The presentations of the *Don Juan* Legend has therefore changed over the last four Centuries**

The essential Elements of the *Don Juan* Legend

- **The names of the persons appearing have often changed.**
- ***Don Juan*** **is a womanizer, seducer, libertine (non believer), rationalist, rebel against social order and has a driven daemonic personality.**
- **Attempted rape of a virgin girl and subsequent murder of her father, who comes eventually back to force *Don Juan* faze judgment of his evil deeds.**
- **At times there are descriptions of *Don Juan* being shipwrecked during or as a consequence of one of his escapades as in Moliere's play and Byron's poem.**
- **The vengeance of one or more ladies he has seduced and subsequently abundant.**
- **Farcical elements from Commedia dell'Arte of the 17th Century to the irony of the late 19th to 20th Century**

The essential Elements of the *Don Juan* Legend continued

- **Serious tragic characters are usually represented by the aristocracy.**
- **Comic or buffo characters are represented by the servant or the peasant class.**
- **Irony and comical elements are also encountered in the serious characters even in *Don Juan***

The *Don Juan* Legend

- **There are over 60 publications dealing with the story of *Don Juan* cited in the wikipedia.org.**
- **We will discuss some of the important ones here in relationship to Mozart's and Da Ponte's Opera of *Don Giovanni***

Tirso de Molina 1579-1648
El burlador di Sevilla (The Trickster of Seville) 1620-30

- **The basic story elements are there, but in a much more complicated plot than in Mozart's opera.**
- **The story contains the rape of a virtuous aristocratic lady and the murder of her father who avenges her as a stone statue. The Statue strikes him dead after he sets out a table on the cover Of a tomb and serves *Don Juan* a meal of snakes and tarantulas. This has resemblance to the tortures of the sinners described by Dante in his Inferno. In a clap of thunder the ghost, the tomb and *Don Juan* disappear, leaving only his terrified servant to run away to tell the story of *Don Juan's* fate.**
- **The moral of this Counter-Reformation version of the story is Tirso De Molina's (a monk) warning: that the sinner can not rely upon last –minute repentance; death and damnation may strike at any moment.**

Moliere 1622-73
Don Juan 1665

- **Moliere streamlines the story line to the essential elements which also appear in subsequent presentations of the legends including Mozart's opera**
- **He events the character of Donna Elvira dragged by *Don Juan* from a convent, her brothers who demand satisfaction for the dishonor of their sister and *Don Juan's* father who holds up the mirror to his godless libertine son whose action is unworthy of a Noble Family.**
- **The rape of Donna Anna and the murder of the father occur before the play starts.**
- **In Moliere's play *Don Juan* is a garrulous rationalist, forever engaging in philosophical dispute about his puerile principles. He becomes a hypocrite hiding behind the cloak of religion when it suits him though he believes in nothing except his sensual pleasures and he rebels against the accepted social order**

Moliere's *Don Juan* continued

- **His servant Sganarelle, the forerunner to Leporello, warns him of the consequences of *Don Juan's* misdeeds.**
- **The peasant girl Charlotte and her fiancée Pierrot are the forerunners to Zerlina and Masetto in Mozart's opera.**
- **The specter of the Commander finally drags *Don Juan* to hell.**
- **The play was considered blasphemous and promoting atheism at the time. The scene where *Don Juan* tempts the poor man with a gold coin if he blasphemes was stricken after the first performance and the play was totally withdrawn by the censors after 15 performances and never again staged during Moliere's life time.**

Mozart's and DaPonte's *Don Giovanni*
Prague 1787, Vienna 1788

- The story centers around the aristocratic Characters of Donna Anna, her father who becomes the stone stature after his murder, Donna Anna's fiancée Don Ottavio who are juxta -positioned to Don Giovanni who in turn is transcending the social hierarchy and therefore threatens social order and Donna Elvira who assumes an ambiguous position to Don Giovanni from the fury of revenge to the final Angel warning him of his fiery end and forgiving him.
- Leporello, Zerlina and Masetto are the buffo characters.
- Don Giovanni is simply the personification of Appetite, Lust and Violence in the terms of the Baroque society and is perceived in the last part of the 18th Century, the age of enlightenment, as a threat to the institutions of a stable societal hierarchy.

Mozart's and DaPonte's *Don Giovanni* continued

- This interpretation has to be understood against the Josephinian reforms in Vienna in the 1780 ties which started to be so liberal at the beginning of the Emperor's reign, leading to disruption of social order and finally to reversal of many of the reforms when Emperor Joseph II began to be afraid of the results of his reforms.
- Don Giovanni is the protagonist of a daemonic spirit who is an amoral elemental force of nature and his libertinism was recognized by Mozart and his contemporaries as dangerous.
- This amoral force cannot be adequately restrained by society, as the opera shows us, even by the combined forces of Anna, Elvira, Zerlina, Ottavio and Masetto.
- So even the libertine Voltaire came to the conclusion that Religion is the most effective instrument to further moral conditions. I would question this conclusion in light of the destruction of society perpetrated by religious fanatics throughout history.

Mozart's and DaPonte's *Don Giovanni* continued

- At the end Don Giovanni's crimes are so bad that Mozart and the Enlightenment recognized the avenging powers of a God which leads to Don Giovanni's damnation.
- Mozart believed in an Austrian enlightened Catholicism following Moratorie's reforms. He joined in 1784 the Free Mason Lodge "Zur Wohltaetigkeit" (Beneficence). He and DaPonte came to the conclusion in their Don Giovanni presentation that a higher force than man was needed to stop Don Giovanni.

Lord George Gordon Byron 1788-1824 *Don Juan*, Cantos I to XVII 1821-24 incomplete at Byron's death

- Byron admired the satire of the Italian writers.
- At the beginning of the Romantic age the interpretation of the *DonJuan* Legend drastically changed.
- Byron placed *Don Juan* into the 18th Century. His poem became a romantic satirical travelogue with critical observations of the societies of Spain, Greece, Turkey, the Russia of Empress Catherine the Great and finally England.
- In Byron's poem for the first time *Don Juan* is depicted as a young man who is ensnared by women who pursue him and draw him into their illicit affairs. He is no longer the pursuer but is the pursued.
- Byron died before the conclusion of his poem, so we will never know what finally happened to his *Don Juan* .

Aleksandr Pushkin 1799-1837
The Stone Guest 1830

- **This play is part of four short plays known as *The Little Tragedies***
- **The Stone Guest was written in verse after Pushkin saw the Russian-language version of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* .**
- **Pushkin borrowed from Da Ponte's libretto but focused on the tragic romantic elements rather than the farcical ones.**
- **Alexander Dargomyzhsky (1813-1869) made it into his last opera: The Stone Guest, which was incomplete at his death and was finished by Cesar Cui and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.**

George Bernard Shaw 1856-1950
Man and Superman 1903

- **George Bernard Shaw is known his acerbic social criticism of his time.**
- **He tells us that"*Don Juanism"* is no mere *Casonovism any longer* and therefore he attempted to bring *Don Juan* up to date by launching him as a modern Englishman into a modern English environment which produced a figure superficially quite unlike the hero of Mozart.**
- **Shaw's *Don Juan* has come to birth as a stage projection of the tragic-comic love chase of the man by the woman and *Don Juan* is the quarry instead of the huntsman.**
- **This is the further character and plot development which started in Byron's poem *Don Juan .***
- **In the third act of the play we find *Don Juan* (in a dream sequence of the modern Englishman Tanner) in Hell in conversation with the devil and the other people in the legend: Donna Anna and her father as the Statue of the commandatore.**

George Bernard Shaw
Man and Superman continued

- They are having a dispute full of irony about the merits of Heaven and Hell. There now is no more discussion of the existence of God. They are living in a scientific age and consider themselves rational people.
- They are discussing the existence of the Life Force of nature that has the inquiring special brain of the philosopher as pilot
- Don Juan argues: to be in hell is to drift, to be in heaven is to steer.
- The Devil argues that this will drive man from religion into science.
- Don Juan is bored in hell and declares he wants to change to heaven.
- The Statue comes from heaven to hell to have some fun.

George Bernard Shaw Man
Man and Superman continued

- Donna Anna is looking for the Superman which the Devil says is the latest fashion of the Life Force fanatics. The Devil tells her he has not been created yet.
- Shaw's *Don Juan* has become a libertine of the late 19th to early 20th Century and Donna Anna pursues the Superman not yet created.

Mozart's Opera
Don Giovanni

- I am going to present some of the Highlights of the opera. You will see that Don Giovanni in Bryn Terfel's portrayal is truly a daemonic force.

1.Act

The opera starts with the masked Don Giovanni fleeing from the irate Donna Anna who he just was trying to rape while Leporello was the look-out. Her father, the commander, comes to her assistance and is killed by Don Giovanni in a duel before Donna Anna, the servants and her fiancée Don Ottavio are arriving to help him. The escaped Don Giovanni immediately pursues another woman who to his surprise turns out to be Donna Elvira in hot pursuit of her faithless lover who had pledged to be her husband. Don Giovanni manages to escape again leaving Leporello to tell her the reason why they had to leave on short notice.

Here follows the catalogue aria of Don Giovanni's conquest.

Disc1, Chapter 10

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

The next scene shows a wedding party for Zerlina and Masetto, happy peasants dancing and singing. As soon as Don Giovanni and Leporello join the group Don Giovanni's eagle eye is enraptured by the pretty bride and starts to court her, while Leporello tries to divert Masetto's attention. Masetto gets increasingly angry, but finally Leporello gets him out of the way.

Next comes one of the most beautiful love duets between Don Giovanni and Zerlina, who is slowly tempted by Don Giovanni's promises.

Disc 1, Chapter 16 "La ci darem la mano"

Mozart's *Don Giovanni* continued

Much to Don Giovanni's dismay Donna Elvira interrupts his tete a tete with Zerlina and tells her about Don Giovanni's deceitfulness with women. To Don Giovanni's horror Donna Anna and Don Ottavio join them in pursuit of Donna Anna's rapist and the murderer of her father. Without knowing who Don Giovanni is, they first seek his help with their pursuit and are confused by Donna Elvira's accusations. When Don Giovanni tries to discredit Donna Elvira, Donna Anna recognizes his voice belonging to the man who violated her and murdered her father.

She describes to Don Ottavio what happened to her and her lament ends in her vengeance aria.

Disc 1, Chapter 23 "Or sai chi l'onore"

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

After Donna Anna leaves, Don Ottovio reflects on the crime which was perpetrated on his beloved.

His recitative:" come mai creder deggio" is followed by the first of his lyric arias in the opera describing how he feels about her pain."Dalla sua pace la mia dipende"

Disc 1, Chapters 24 and 25

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

In his castle Don Giovanni prepares the wedding party for Zerlina and Masetto.

He sings a rousing aria about the lavish celebration and orders that the dances follow no pattern: here a minuet (the aristocratic dance), there country dances which disturbs the societal order and how he plans to make love to whom he pleases during the confusion.

Disc1, Chapter 27 "Fin Ch'han dal vino"

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

Zerlina tries to make up with Masetto in the charming seductive aria "Batti, batti, o bel Masetto"

Disc 1, Chapter 29

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

The party is joined by Donna Anna, Don Ottavio and Donna Elvira in masks and the first act ends in a twirling ensemble where everybody is in pursuit of the other participants and Donna Elvira is successful in preventing Zerlina's rape.

Disc 1, Chapter 33 "Riposate, vezzose ragazze"

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

Act 2

Act 2 opens with Don Giovanni serenading in the disguise of Leporello's clothes and Leporello in Don Giovanni's clothes what they first thought would be Donna Elvira's maid and to their surprise turns out Donna Elvira herself. Don Giovanni's serenade is so seductive that Donna Elvira is beginning to fall for it. When she comes down from her balcony, Don Giovanni quickly escapes in Leporello's clothes and leaves poor Leporello to Donna Elvira's wrath.

Canzonetta "De, vieni alla finestra"

Disc 2, chapter 5

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

Poor Masetto is beaten up by Don Giovanni in Leporello's clothes, when he tries to corner the disguised Don Giovanni with his villagers.

Masetto calls for Zerlina's help in his pain. Zerlina offers him the best medicine her sexual love.

"Vedrai, carino"

Disc 2, Chapter 9

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

Leporello disguised as Don Giovanni is left to the wrath of Donna Anna, Don Ottavio, Donna Elvira, Zerlina and Masetto, who all want to kill Don Giovanni.

Leporello barely can save himself by taking off his disguise and the avengers are again fooled.

Donna Elvira sings her lament about her suffering that Don Giovanni caused her.

"Mi tradi quell'alma ingrata"

Disc 2, Chapter 17

This aria was added to the opera in the Vienna premiere

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

Don Ottavio tries to console Donna Anna and continues to offer his tender love.

Donna Anna pleads for another year to grieve her father.

Recitative: "Crudele! Ah no bene!"

Aria:" Non mi dir, bell'idol mio"

Disc2, Chapter 21 and 22

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

Don Giovanni escapes his pursuers with Leporello into the sanctuary of the cemetery where they encounter the statue of the commandatore, the murdered father of Donna Anna.

When Don Giovanni blasphemes the statue by striking it with his sword, the statue speaks out and Don Giovanni invites him jokingly to dine with him.

Back at home Don Giovanni orders a lavish meal and to everybody's horror the statue comes to dinner.

When Don Giovanni refuses to repent his sins, the statue drags him to hell.

Disc 2, Chapter 26

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

Leporello lives to tell about his master's fate and all people Don Giovanni harmed muse about the just damnation of this great sinner.

Donna Anna and Don Ottavio wait another year before their marriage.

Leporello plans to go to the inn to find a new master.

Zerlina and Masetto are going home to a good supper.

This opera is considered one of the greatest operas ever written.