

PREFACE

“Voi, che sapete” is sung by Cherubino, an aristocratic page to Count Almaviva, in whose palace the drama takes place. During Act II, Cherubino visits his godmother, the Countess, and her maid Susanna. Knowing his adolescent infatuation with all women, Susanna encourages him to sing a love song he has written (a veiled confession of his love for the Countess), while she accompanies him on the guitar.

The part of Cherubino is played by a woman — as it is in the Beaumarchais play on which the opera is based. In its immediacy, the aria perfectly depicts the mind-set of a bewildered young man in love. He’s naturally rather proud of his ‘song’ and the outer sections convey a studious formality in the polite words about love, conventional harmony and attractive tune. However, as he describes his symptoms, the language and harmony grow more colourful, the phrases shorten, and his true feelings emerge. The possibilities for a personal interpretation of the aria are wide; you do not have to perform it in the character of a teenage boy. After all, self-contemplation when in love is part of the regular diet of singers and you might prefer to choose an alternative emotional background.

In bars 24 and 32 the appoggiaturas are traditionally sung as quavers (eighth notes), although it is also possible to extend them to crotchets (quarter notes).



However, in bar 43 the grace note is usually sung as an acciaccatura.

The recapitulation at bar 62 has been performed variously over the years, as evident in the many recordings from Adelina Patti onwards. A common interpretation is to relax the tempo on “languir così”, beginning in bar 60, before picking up speed for the recapitulation (although an out-and-out *ritardando* is not recommended). Some singers anticipate the note of “Voi” before taking a breath; an alternative is to combine the phrases and take a breath after “sapete”. It is a matter of personal preference.



It is also possible to decorate very delicately this last statement. If done with affection, and a little humour, it is the sort of thing a young composer-singer might think would impress the Countess. Appoggiaturas on the first notes in bars 64 and 73 are certainly possible without straining the texture.

The orchestra’s pizzicato strings double for the guitar throughout. In this arrangement, the pianist emulates the guitar, mostly in the left hand, whilst playing Mozart’s exquisite wind writing in the right. The difference between strings and woodwind needs to be emphasised; touches of pedal rounding out the articulated semiquavers can help to convey the orchestral sound.

Gordon Stewart

VORWORT

„Voi, che sapete“ wird von Cherubino gesungen, einem adligen Pagen des Grafen Almaviva, in dessen Schloss die Handlung spielt. Im 2. Akt besucht Cherubino seine Patin, die Gräfin, und deren Kammermädchen Susanna. Da sie um sein pubertäres Schwärmen für die gesamte Frauenwelt weiß, ermutigt Susanna ihn, ein von ihm geschriebenes Liebeslied zu singen (ein verschleierte Bekenntnis seiner Liebe zur Gräfin), während sie ihn auf der Gitarre begleitet.

Die Rolle des Cherubino wird von einer Frau gespielt — wie auch im Stück von Beaumarchais, auf dem die Oper basiert. In ihrer Direktheit bringt die Arie das verwirrte Innenleben eines verliebten jungen Mannes perfekt zum Ausdruck. Er ist natürlich sehr stolz auf sein „Lied“, und die Rahmenabschnitte vermitteln mit ihrem artigen Text über die Liebe, ihrer konventionellen Harmonie und gefälligen Melodie den Eindruck einer schulmäßigen Förmlichkeit. Bei der Beschreibung seiner Symptome aber werden Sprache und Harmonie schillernder, die Phrasen verkürzen sich, und seine wahren Gefühle kommen zum Vorschein. Die Möglichkeiten zur persönlichen Interpretation dieser Arie sind vielfältig; man muss sie nicht in der Rolle eines pubertierenden Jungen singen. Schließlich gehört die Selbstbeobachtung beim Verliebtsein zum täglichen Brot des Sängers, und man mag sich vielleicht lieber für einen anderen emotionalen Hintergrund entscheiden.

range:



Voi, che sapete
Tell me, you ladies ★
 from *The Marriage of Figaro*

Lorenzo da Ponte (1749–1838)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

[Andante]

7

CHERUBINO

Voi, che sa - pe - te che co - sa è a-mor,
 Tell me, you la - dies, you whom I a-dore,

13

don - ne ve - de - te, s'io l'ho nel cor, don - ne ve -
 tell me what Love is, O is he here? Tell me what

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