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Composed by Mozart in 1786, *The Marriage of Figaro* is an opera that has stood the test of time. In Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* libretto, Act II opens with a solo by the Countess. The scene takes place in the Countess's bedroom, and "the Countess is alone" (27). Immediately, the audience knows this will be a dramatic account of how the Countess is coping with an internal struggle because she's going to be singing to herself about her feelings.

Under closer examination of the lyrics of "Porgi amor," the reader understands that the Countess is sad and possibly depressed. She sings, "Grant, love, some relief to my sorrow" (27) because she learned of the Count's desire to marry Susanna. She loves her husband so much and is shaken that he wants to leave her. She's willing to die rather than have to live with the pain and agony of losing him. Heartbroken, she confesses, "Give me back my treasure, or at least let me die" (27). For her, there is no point in living life without her husband at her side.

The sheet music for "Porgi amor" begins in *larghetto* which is a slow tempo. This slowness emphasizes the drama of the song and the story, and more importantly the sadness of the Countess. There is a large instrumental introduction to the Countess's singing and it's comprised of strings instruments which can sound sad and gloomy. These somber sounds prepare the audience for the Countess's vocalizations.

The Countess sings in higher notes for the majority of the song, and there are a couple notes that are very high. This reflects her desperation for getting her husband back because women tend to get higher-pitched when they are emotional. There are also some notes where the

Countess holds them and slides up to a new note without taking a breath. This also demonstrates her distraught temperament, possibly on the verge of a breakdown, and could be speaking so quickly that she is unable to catch her breath. Some of the lowest notes she sings are when she is talking about wanting to die instead of living without the Count, which shows her anguish as she slips into depression.

To get the full sensory impact of this scene, it is helpful to view a live performance of *The Marriage of Figaro*. In 2006, The Paris Opera and The Royal Opera House performed different renditions of "Porgi amor". The Paris Opera's performance puts a modern twist on *The Marriage of Figaro*. The Countess deals with her problems by taking a shot of whiskey before beginning her lament. It also appears that Susanna is in the room with the Countess, but she is sleeping. The spotlight is also focused on the Countess, so it appears to be her soliloquy that Susanna couldn't hear. The actress that plays the Countess is very stoic, and the emotion she portrays is like a drunken stupor – whether it's from grief or from drinking too much. She hides her emotions while performing the piece. There are minimal props, so the audience can fully focus on the Countess.

The Royal Opera House performance is quite different from the Paris Opera. The setting is grandiose and more like what it would have looked like during Mozart's time. The only person in the room during the performance is the Countess, so she doesn't need a spotlight. Initially, when she walks in the room an assortment of servants and butlers are visible, but they quickly scatter from the stage. Susanna doesn't return until after the Countess is finished singing, much like it's outlined in the libretto. The audience can see that the Countess is upset through her facial expressions and the removal of her wedding ring.

I enjoyed the Royal Opera House performance more than the Paris Opera. I think the set, in all its grandeur, contributes to the overall performance. The Countess is royalty and that's something that is emphasized more in the Royal Opera House's production. I think the Countess's acting is also much more effective, and the removal of the wedding band gives insight to the audience about how distraught she is. The Royal Opera House performance mirrors more closely with how Mozart would have imagined it, so I think it's appropriate to keep close to his vision. I think the actress in the Royal Opera House seemed more visibly upset about losing her husband, which is exactly what should be portrayed in the piece. Overall, both portrayals are unique, but to get the best understanding of the plot, I liked watching the Royal Opera House's interpretation of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.