

Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as a Prototype for the Romantic German Tragedy

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From Kierkegaard's seminal interpretation of Don Giovanni in *Either/Or* to a range of philosophical, aesthetic, semiotic, and music analytical readings, Mozart's opera has posed significant problems. While such readings are illuminating, they are not adequate to explain the opera's climactic moment, where Don Giovanni refuses the Commandatore's offer to repent and descends to the underworld. However, in light of contemporaneous philosophy, we can interpret this climactic moment, adequately. In fact, not only in this scene but also throughout the whole opera, Don Giovanni chooses to be a free, seductive villain, establishing an absolute freedom of reason and morality. As I demonstrate, Mozart's rendering of Don Giovanni's moral defiance and unwavering defense of his actions illustrates Friedrich Schiller's concept of freedom, which substantiates his theory of tragedy and is essential to the formation of the romantic drama. Of particular significance is Schiller's concept of absolute freedom, which explains not only Don Giovanni's actions, but also Mozart's musical choices at the end of the opera and the issue of contingency in opera's final sextet. On the basis of Schiller's concept of absolute freedom, I argue that Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is a prototype of the concept of romantic German tragedy.

To unveil the relevance of Schiller's concept of freedom in the evolution of his theory of tragedy and to unfold the role of Schiller's theory of tragedy in the formation of the nineteenth-century German drama, I explain how Schiller's concept of freedom informs the plot of his major plays. Investigating the character of Don Giovanni and the quintessential scene between him and the ghost, I will then rationalize the significance of interpreting the opera according to Schiller's concept of absolute freedom, concluding that, as a prototype for the German romantic tragedy, Mozart's work paved way for Schlegel, Tieck, von Weber, and, eventually Wagner.