

The way the music proceeds, in fact, is by building up tensions and immediately releasing them, those releases themselves becoming a source for new tensions. The music is, literally, progressive – not in the sense that it is modern for its time; but in that it is built so that it never relaxes, because each phrase is always pressing forward into the next.

But doesn't all music work like that? Am I merely imagining this particular source of tension? Look at another Mozart overture, superficially built on the same lines – that to *Così fan tutte*. It begins quite differently; here, indeed, we have the conventional loud opening in the easiest of harmonic styles, merely alternating between tonic and dominant. But even when it starts sounding a bit like *Figaro* – in the following fast section – the likeness is only superficial. The actual musical phrases, to be sure, are not at all unlike those of *Figaro* – a soft rapid movement round a note followed by loud passages with trumpets and drums. But the tension of the *Figaro* harmony is not in the *Così* overture at all – in *Così*, the strings frankly settle down to an easy um-cha-cha-cha rhythm, and the woodwind merely chuckle above them.

Or for an even clearer example of the way tension is built into the music of *Figaro*, compare its opening scene with that of *Così*. *Così* actually begins with a quarrel; and here, at any rate, you might expect the music to be tense and energetic. Not at all: the opening tune blandly outlines the common chord:

