



**The 50th Annual Southern Region National Association of Teachers of Singing Conference
Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA**

**Poster Presentation
Thursday, November 13th, 2025**

4:00–5:00pm

***Così fan tutte?—A Study of Character Development through Key Characteristics in the Prima Donna
and Soubrette Roles from Four of W.A. Mozart's Late Italian Operas***

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This research, presented for the Southern NATS Conference, investigates how Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart uses key characteristics—the emotional and expressive qualities historically associated with specific keys—to shape the psychological depth of soprano roles in his late Italian operas. Focusing on eight roles from *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, and *La clemenza di Tito*, the study reveals how Mozart's tonal choices align with 18th-century theories of musical affect.

Drawing on writings by Johann Mattheson, C.F.D. Schubart, and G.J. Vogler, the research examines how specific keys communicate emotions and enhance character portrayal within dramatic contexts. Using a hermeneutical and analytical approach, each aria is explored at both macro (overall form) and micro (verse- and word-level) levels to identify how key selection reinforces textual and emotional meaning.

Findings indicate that Mozart deliberately chose keys to convey nuanced emotional states, confirming the expressive function of key choice in his operatic writing. These insights offer practical applications for singers, teachers, and students: integrating historical key-affect theory can deepen emotional understanding, refine stylistic awareness, and inform interpretive choices. By connecting historical scholarship to vocal practice, performers can develop more expressive, informed, and compelling interpretations of Mozart's repertoire.