

Entführung aus dem Serail, Die ('The Abduction from the Seraglio')

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Singspiel in three acts, K384, by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to a libretto by Christoph Friedrich Bretzner (*Belmont und Constanze, oder Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), adapted and enlarged by Gottlieb Stephanie the Younger; Vienna, Burgtheater, 16 July 1782.

Selim <i>Pasha</i>	spoken
Konstanze <i>a Spanish lady, Belmonte's betrothed</i>	soprano
Blonde <i>Konstanze's English maid</i>	soprano
Belmonte <i>a Spanish nobleman</i>	tenor
Pedrillo <i>servant of Belmonte, now supervisor of the Pasha's gardens</i>	tenor
Osmin <i>overseer of the Pasha's country house</i>	bass
Klaas <i>a sailor</i>	spoken
Mute <i>in Osmin's service</i>	silent
Chorus of Janissaries, guards	
<i>Setting</i> The country palace of Pasha Selim, on the Mediterranean coast in an unidentified part of the Turkish Empire	

Dismissed from service with the Archbishop of Salzburg, Mozart must have felt satisfaction in writing to his father on 1 August 1781: 'the day before yesterday Stephanie junior gave me a libretto to compose'. Gottlieb Stephanie, director of the National Singspiel, wanted Bretzner's *Belmont und Constanze* set quickly for the visit in September of the Russian Grand Duke Paul Petrovich. Bretzner was a popular librettist, whose name assured interest (*Belmont und Constanze* had been set in Berlin by Johann André). Yet with the postponement of the royal visit (it eventually took place in November, when Gluck's operas were played), *Die Entführung* might have suffered the fate of *Zaide* had not Stephanie and, no doubt, the singers maintained support for Mozart. Mozart had already composed much of Act 1, and he wrote in detail to his father on 26 September about the arias for Valentin Adamberger (Belmonte), Ludwig Fischer (Osmin) and Catarina Cavalieri (Konstanze).

Since time was available, he urged Stephanie to enlarge Act 1. By adding an aria at the beginning for Belmonte and making Osmin's opening number a duet, Mozart virtually turned Bretzner's opening dialogue, with Osmin's song originally its only music, into a continuous introduction. He established Osmin as a major force with 'Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen' (Mozart sent Stephanie the music for words

to be added), and wrote the overture, musically linked with the opening aria. His comments to his father concerning Osmin's and Belmonte's arias, 'Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen' and 'O wie ängstlich', contain some of his most important recorded views on operatic aesthetics (*see* Mozart, (Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus). The Janissary chorus is 'short, lively and written to please the Viennese'; he also admitted that he had 'sacrificed Konstanze's aria ('Ach ich liebte') a little to the flexible throat of Mlle Cavalieri'.

Mozart and Stephanie recast the remaining two acts more extensively. The women and Osmin received one additional aria each ('Martern aller Arten', 'Welche Wonne' and 'O, wie will ich triumphieren'), while Belmonte received two (the second, opening Act 3, often cut in modern performances or nonsensically replaced by the first). They devised a new situation for a long ensemble (finale to Act 2) and a new dénouement: the libretto thus remains essentially Bretzner's (he alone was credited on the original playbill and libretto), but with significant differences. Mozart began setting a quintet which, in Bretzner, covers the whole elopement scene. The loss of such an extended action ensemble is tantalizing; doubtless it was rejected because it could not form a finale. Instead the elopement is in dialogue and reaches a musical climax only after its failure, with Osmin's aria. The enhanced importance of Osmin sharpens the oriental setting and makes him a tangible menace; whether this change resulted from, or merely took advantage of, Fischer's immense range and full deep notes, is impossible to determine.

Mozart finished the score in April 1782. Rehearsals began in June and, despite some delays, an alleged cabal and the difficulty of the music, the first performance was a success. Besides those mentioned above, Johann Ernst Dauer sang Pedrillo and Therese Teyber Blonde. Performances continued until the closure of the National Singspiel early in 1783; the German company at the Kärntnertor revived it (1784-5) with Mozart's sister-in-law Aloysia Lange as Konstanze.

The fame of the new opera spread rapidly. The second production, also in 1782, was in Prague, which at once took Mozart to its heart (the first performance in Czech was not until 1829). *Die Entführung* was the foundation of Mozart's reputation outside Austria. In 1783 there were productions in Warsaw, Bonn (under Neefe, Beethoven possibly assisting), Frankfurt and Leipzig. The first translation (Polish) followed in November, again at Warsaw. In 1784 there were productions in Mannheim, Karlsruhe, Cologne and Salzburg; Dresden, Munich and other German cities followed in 1785. It was given in some 40 centres in Germany and the Austrian Empire, and reached Amsterdam in Mozart's lifetime. The second foreign language used was Dutch (1797, Amsterdam), the third French (1798, Paris, in a version by Gluck's librettist Moline); it was also the first opera ever heard in German in Paris (1801). In Moscow it was given in 1810 in Russian (St Petersburg following in 1816) and in 1820 in German.

The first London performance, in English, was at Covent Garden in 1827, the score arranged by C. Kramer with an altered plot; the setting was moved by the translator, W. Dimond, to a Greek island. Such alterations were standard in 19th-century revivals. In Paris the 1859 revival to a translation by Prosper Pascal reordered several numbers and gave 'Martern aller Arten' to Blonde (no less a Mozartian than Beecham placed this aria in Act 3). Later in this century London also saw it in German and Italian (the title *Il Seraglio* is still often used in English). The American première was in New York in 1860, probably in German. An attempt to produce it in 1840 in Milan came to nothing. The Italian première was not until 1935, in Florence, by which time the 20th-century revival of Mozart was under way; it had already appeared at Glyndebourne.

The background is the territorial and cultural intersection of the Islamic lands and the older Christian civilization of Europe, especially Spain; Belmonte's father is Governor of Oran on the coast of North Africa. A major stimulus for artistic interest in things Turkish was the menacing but in the end unsuccessful siege of Vienna in 1683, but the action evokes an earlier period when piracy was rife and crossing between religions not uncommon; Pasha Selim is a renegade Christian. The overture is a bubbling Allegro in C major, its 'Turkish' style martial and colourful yet, in Mozart's hands, subject to abrupt changes of mood; a promising crescendo lurches into the dominant minor, anticipating the confusion of the action to come. A slow middle section in C minor brings a foretaste of sentiment, its melody by turns hesitant and passionate, richly clothed in woodwind sound. The Allegro resumes, ending on the dominant.

Synopsis

ACT 1

A plaza before Selim's palace, near the sea A major-key version of the middle section of the overture ('Hier soll ich dich denn sehen') forms a short aria by the standards of this opera, but after a hesitating start its lyrical cadences convey Belmonte's ardent desire for reunion with Konstanze. Osmin brings a ladder, and begins picking figs; he sings a moral Volkslied (lied and duet, 'Wer ein Liebchen hat gefunden': 'Whoever finds a lover, let him beware'). When Belmonte speaks Osmin refuses to answer, directing the later verses at him instead: plausible strangers bring danger to lovers. Belmonte now sings, wrenching the tempo to Allegro, but the wrath of the Turk, enraged by mention of Pedrillo, dominates the ensemble. In a furious Presto, the original G minor yielding to D major, he drives Belmonte away.

Pedrillo asks Osmin whether Selim has returned. Still not answering, Osmin fumes about vagabond fops fit only to be hanged ('Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen'). A full binary exit aria, portentous and often contrapuntal, it flies off the handle in the coda to which Mozart added 'Turkish' music for comic effect. Belmonte reveals himself. Pedrillo assures him that Selim will not force love on Konstanze, but they are in great danger and Osmin watches everything. Belmonte's heart is beating with anxiety and ardour ('O wie ängstlich, o wie feurig'); both melody and orchestra are suffused with feeling as well as detailed imitation of the lover's symptoms.

A march (possibly cut by Mozart, but restored by the Neue Mozart-Ausgabe) announces the arrival of the Pasha in a boat with Konstanze; the Janissaries greet them with a vigorous chorus in 'Turkish' style. Selim asks why Konstanze remains sad and promises that her answer will not anger him. In the Adagio of her aria Konstanze relives her past love ('Ach ich liebte, war so glücklich!'); the Allegro compresses the Adagio's melodic outline into a vehement protest; all happiness has fled (the Adagio text and mood return in the middle of the Allegro). Mozart's sacrifice for Cavalieri brings coloratura to an inappropriate text ('Kummer ruht in meinem Schoss': 'sorrow dwells in my heart'), but this emphatic utterance tells us that Konstanze is a considerable character. Selim is angry, but when she leaves he admits that he loves her all the more for her resistance. Pedrillo introduces Belmonte as an Italian-trained architect; Selim approves his entry into the household. But Osmin has other ideas. A vivacious trio in C minor ('Marsch, marsch, marsch! trollt euch fort!'), ending with a faster major section, forms a comic finale; eventually the Europeans force an entry.

ACT 2

The palace garden, with Osmin's house to one side Osmin is pursuing Blonde, whom the Pasha has given him as a slave; but she will have none of it; tenderness, not force, wins hearts ('Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln'). Her Andante aria is the epitome of Mozartean A major elegance, yet Blonde must glide up to *e*". Osmin indignantly orders her to love him, but she merely laughs, and wards off an assault by threatening his eyes with her nails and reminding him that her mistress is the Pasha's favourite (duet, 'Ich gehe, doch rate ich dir'). Osmin warns her not to flirt with Pedrillo; she mocks his low notes with her own (to *ab*). In a lugubrious Andante Osmin declares that the English are mad to allow their women such liberties; Blonde rejoices in her freedom.

At the nadir of her fortunes, Konstanze turns to the most intense style of *opera seria*, obligato recitative ('Welcher Wechsel herrscht in meiner Seele', and aria, 'Traurigkeit ward mir zum Lose'). In an exquisite Adagio Mozart paints her sighing breaths, her halting steps. The aria, its orchestra enriched by basset-horns, is a sustained lament in G minor, like Ilia's (*Idomeneo*, Act 1) but attaining a new poignancy through its higher tessitura.

Blonde tries to comfort her mistress. Selim threatens not death, which Konstanze welcomes, but every kind of torture. Her aria ('Marten aller Arten': 'Every kind of torture awaits me; I laugh at pain; death will come in the end') picks up Selim's threat, but not before a 60-bar ritornello with obligato flute, oboe, violin and cello has unfolded a rich motivic tapestry founded on a march rhythm (with trumpets and timpani). The closing words are given more emphasis by a faster tempo. This magnificent piece, coming immediately after another long aria for Konstanze, presents a challenge to the actors and the producer; but as the expression of stubborn resistance to coercion from a woman with no hope of deliverance, it is of immense dramatic power. Selim is baffled; affection and force having failed, he wonders if he can use cunning. (This exit line perhaps prefigured a new intrigue intended for Act 3 but not included.)

Pedrillo tells Blonde of Belmonte's arrival. Blonde's reaction, a rondo with a melody from the flute concerto K314 ('Welche Wonne, welche Lust'), sparkles with unalloyed delight. Pedrillo musters his courage in a martial D major ('Frisch zum Kampfe!'), but a nagging phrase ('Nur ein feiger Tropf verzagt': 'Only a cowardly fool despairs') shows his underlying lack of confidence. He succeeds in getting Osmin drunk (duet, 'Vivat Bacchus'), and sends him to sleep it off so that the lovers can meet. Tears of joy are love's sweetest reward; Belmonte's aria of *galanterie* ('Wenn der Freude Tränen fließen') is a slow gavotte and then a serenade-like minuet announced by the wind and embellished with wide-ranging passage-work.

The escape is planned before the finale (quartet, 'Ach Belmonte!'). The first mature Mozart ensemble to incorporate dramatic development begins with a lively D major Allegro. Joy gives way to anxiety (Andante, G minor); have the women yielded to blandishment? In a faster tempo, Konstanze expresses hurt, Blonde slaps Pedrillo's face, and the voices come together in mingled relief and regret. The men ask forgiveness (Allegretto); Blonde withholds it, singing in compound time against the simple time of the others (a device Mozart might have picked up from *opéra comique*). But eventually misunderstanding is cleared away and the four join in praise of love.

ACT 3

The scene of Act 1; Osmin's house to one side. Midnight Pedrillo and Klaas bring two ladders. Belmonte is assured that all is ready, but they must wait for the guards to finish their rounds. Pedrillo advises him to sing; he himself often sings at night and it will not be noticed. In a long Andante, featuring clarinets and extended coloratura, Belmonte builds his hopes on the power of love ('Ich baue ganz auf deine Stärke').

Pedrillo gives the agreed signal, a romance ('In Mohrenland gefangen war ein Mädchen'). The opera's second lied, this too refers to the dramatic situation. Its haunting melody, to a plucked accompaniment, rests upon harmonic ambiguity and ends unresolved after four verses when Pedrillo sees a light. Belmonte fetches Konstanze; they hurry off as Pedrillo climbs up for Blonde. But the mute has seen them. Suspecting thieves and murderers, the bleary-eyed Osmin sends for the guard and dozes. Blonde and Pedrillo spot him too late; all four Europeans are arrested. In a brilliant rondo ('O, wie will ich triumphieren'), with piccolo but without trumpets or Turkish music, which Mozart keeps in reserve, Osmin anticipates the delight of torturing and killing his enemies, his lowest bass notes (to D) filled with ghoulish relish.

The interior of the palace Osmin claims credit for the arrest. Selim confronts the lovers. Konstanze admits guilt in his eyes, but pleads loyalty to her first lover. She begs to die if only his life can be spared. Belmonte humbles himself; he is worth a fine ransom; his name is Lostados. Selim recognizes the son of the enemy who chased him from his homeland. He bids them prepare for the punishment Belmonte's father would certainly have meted out, and leaves them under guard. Belmonte movingly laments his folly in bringing Konstanze to her doom; she blames herself for his destruction, but death is the path to an eternal union, symbolized by the serenely extended arabesques doubled in 3rds and 6ths (recitative and duet, 'Welch ein Geschick! O Qual der Seele!').

Selim asks if they are prepared for judgment. Belmonte says they will die calmly, absolving him from blame. Selim, however, bids him take Konstanze and go. He despises Belmonte's father too much to imitate him; clemency will be his revenge. As he takes dignified leave of them, Pedrillo begs freedom for himself and Blonde. Osmin is overruled; does he not value his eyes? In a vaudeville finale, each sings a verse of suitable sentiment, with a moral sung by the ensemble: those who forget kindness are to be despised. Blonde is interrupted by Osmin whose rage boils over into the litany of torture from his Act 1 aria, complete with 'Turkish' percussion. He rushes off; the others draw the further moral that nothing is so hateful as revenge. A brief chorus in praise of the Pasha, in the principal key, C major, brings back the merry 'Turkish' style of the overture.

The viewpoint of *Die Entführung* is decidedly European. Muslim life-style is crudely represented as luxurious but immoral; the Enlightenment, through Blonde, makes tart observations about the social position of women. Selim himself, raised to eminence by ability rather than rank, reflects Enlightenment values; he is not moved to clemency by religion, but contrasts his action with the cruelty of Belmonte's Christian father. This ending adds a new dimension to Bretzner's drama in which, implausibly, Belmonte proves to be Selim's son. It is a pity that, unlike the denouement of *Die Zauberflöte*, this scene was not set to music.

The lavish musical invention of *Die Entführung* perhaps exceeds what the dramatic structure is fit to bear; nor is its design immaculate. Apart from the cluster of arias for Konstanze in Act 2, there is surely one aria too many for Belmonte, and the length of the individual numbers (if not their forms)

suggests *opera seria* and contrasts starkly with the speed of the dialogue. Was it length or plenitude of instrumentation which induced Joseph II's famous (but probably apocryphal) comment: 'Too many notes, my dear Mozart'? Such problems cannot be overcome by making alterations, still less by cutting the dialogue, for Mozart carefully controlled the flow between speech and music, running some numbers closely together but separating others. His prodigality of invention, however, is also a cause of the opera's enduring fascination. Even as it endangers the dramatic whole, the music, paradoxically through its creation for a specific group of remarkable singers, turns the actors in this serious comedy into humans a little larger than life but of universal appeal.