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Upcoming Concerts

University Singers; May 20, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater
Jazz Combos I & II; May 20 & 21, 8:00 PM, Brechemin Auditorium
Collegium Musicum & Madrigal Singers; May 21, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater
Tom Collier, Michael Brockman, Marc Seales, Dan Dean, & William O. Smith
May 28, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater
Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band; May 29, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater
PROCONART; May 30, 8:00 PM, Brechemin Auditorium

School
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The Schools of Music and Drama
present the 111th program of the 1990-91 season
and the 208th Opera Theater Production.

The Abduction from the Seraglio

299
1991
5-19

Music by
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto
Gottlieb Stephanie the Younger

Peter Erös, Conductor ~ Theodore Deacon, Director
Norm Scrivner, Sets ~ Richard K. Hogle, Lighting
Karen Ledger, Costumes

~~May 15 & 17~~ 8:00 PM

May 19 - 3:00 PM

Meany Theater

*These performances are dedicated to the memory of
Professor Montserrat Alavedra,
a beloved colleague and distinguished teacher.*

Cast of Characters

(in order of appearance)

Belmonte James Murphy ●
Paul C. Mueller ○

Osmin * Leon Lishner
[Robert Tangney - understudy]

Pedrillo Kurt E. Alakulppi

Pasha Selim Mel Ulrich

Constanza Sandra Glover ●
Margaret Cleveland ○

Blonde Nancy Williamson ●
Denise Devoe ○

Osmin's Guard Jon Curry
David Roach

May 15 & 19 ●
May 17 ○

Supratitles made possible by a grant from the Seattle Jaycees.

The appearance of Mr. Lishner and supratitles slides funded through the generosity of Friends of Opera.

* Our guest artist, Professor Leon Lishner is celebrating his 50th anniversary in the role of Osmin.

There will be two short intermissions

Synopsis

DAT # 11,817
CASS. # 11,818
CASS. # 11,819

Constanza, a gracious European lady, has been captured at sea by pirates along with her maid Blonde and Pedrillo, the servant of Constanza's lover Belmonte. Slavery seems to be their lot when they are sold to the noble Pasha Selim. They are taken to the Pasha's palace where Pedrillo is put to work as a gardener and Blonde is given as a gift to Osmin, the Pasha's rough overseer. The Pasha himself desires Constanza as a lover, but respectfully keeps his distance until he can win her affection.

CASS. # 11,818 SIDE A
SIDE B Act I (34'11")

DAT ID2 Searching for Constanza, Belmonte arrives at the Pasha's palace where his efforts are impeded by the watchful Osmin. Osmin's dislike of Westerners extends to Pedrillo as well and the poor gardener is maltreated by the irritable overseer. Finally Pedrillo is reunited with his old master and a plan is devised to introduce Belmonte to the Pasha. The Pasha and Constanza arrive amid great praise from the Janissaries. Constanza's melancholia restrains Selim from consummating his passion for her but the Pasha's patience evidently is beginning to fade. After Constanza departs Pedrillo presents Belmonte to the Pasha as an architect seeking employment. Selim extends the hospitality of his household to the newcomer but Belmonte finds his entry barred by the mistrustful Osmin.

Act II (42'06")

ID3 Osmin would like to exert his rights as master over Blonde, but the maid is far too independent of mind to allow herself to be lorded over by so dull a wit. The Pasha, too, would press his claim to Constanza's love, but her unwavering fidelity to Belmonte spurs her to a surprising display of defiance. At last, Pedrillo and Blonde devise a plan to bring their master and mistress together. Pedrillo proceeds to get Osmin drunk and out of the way so that the lovers can be ecstatically reunited.

CASS. # 11,819 SIDE A Act III (25'53")

ID4 Belmonte and Pedrillo attempt to rescue the women from the Seraglio by means of a ladder. Their plan is foiled by the arrival of the barely sober Osmin who sounds the alarm. The lovers are brought before the Pasha where Belmonte pleads for their lives by offering a ransom from his family. In hearing of Belmonte's true identity, the Pasha learns that his prisoner is the son of his most bitter enemy. Constanza and Belmonte prepare for what seems an inevitable sentence of death when Selim returns and brings about a gloriously unexpected conclusion.

—Theodore Deacon

Program Notes

From its very inception in 1778, Mozart had known about Vienna's National Singspiel, an enterprise established by the high-minded Emperor Joseph II. The Viennese court expressed immediate interest in seeing what Mozart could do for the German company when the composer arrived in March, 1781. It entrusted the task of providing him with a German libretto to one of the overseers of the National Singspiel, Gottlieb Stephanie the Younger, an actor-dramatist who was already on friendly terms with the Mozarts. Wolfgang at first offered Stephanie a German opera, already nearly finished, that he had composed in Salzburg—the work now known as Zaide (K.344), its text by the Salzburg court trumpeter Johann Andreas Schachtner. But Stephanie found it too serious for Vienna, 'where one prefers to see comic pieces,' as Mozart told Leopold in April.

The oriental milieu of Zaide was very much in vogue, however: the two most popular operas with Burgtheater audiences at the time were both older pieces set in the Middle East, Gluck's La Rencontre imprévue (Vienna, 1764) and Grétry's celebrated Zémire et Azor (Paris, 1771). By happy coincidence the fashionable Leipzig playwright-librettist Christoph Friedrich Bretzner had just published a new opera text with a plot laid in Turkey, Belmont und Constanze. That it had already been set by Johann André and produced at Berlin that May was of small consequence. Stephanie handed a copy of the printed libretto over to Mozart on 30 July.

Stephanie hoped that Mozart's setting could be ready in little over a month, when it could be used as part of festivities honoring the visit of the Russian Grand Duke Paul Petrovich and his wife. Mozart began composing feverishly. All of Act I (as Bretzner had planned it) was finished in one week. Then news came that the grand duke's visit had been put off until November. Almost at once Mozart asked Stephanie to make some changes in the first act.

Eventually other musical plans were made for the Russian guests (revivals of several of Gluck's operas), and Mozart in turn sought further and more thorough-going changes in Bretzner's text. In the end, Die Entführung aus dem Serail—which was originally to have been a feat of compositional dispatch—took ten months to complete, the longest gestation of any of Mozart's operas.

The National Singspiel boasted some of the best German singers on any stage in Europe. For the part of Belmonte, Mozart was given the finest tenor in the company, Josef Valentin Adamberger (1743-1804). His stature with the enterprise is reflected in its pay records (his salary was nearly twice that of the other male singers) and in the number of arias assigned to him by Mozart and Stephanie—four, including one of Mozart's own favorite creations ('O wie ängstlich, o wie feurig') and a two-tempo rondo tailored to the sweet, lyric pliancy of Adamberger's voice ('Wenn der Freude Thränen fließen').

The part of Constanze was created by Caterina Cavalieri (1760-1801), a native Viennese trained in the grand Italian bravura tradition by Salieri. The series of arias Mozart wrote for her beginning with the three in Die Entführung and continuing through the insertion aria for Donna Elvira in the Viennese production of Don Giovanni ('Mi tradi,' K.540c) attests to her outstanding technical prowess and musicianship. Her two arias in Act II sketch the heroine's personality with a depth and precision rivalled only by her great recitative and duet with Belmonte in the final act. Never before had Mozart asked a singer to carry off two such demanding arias back to back, and he never did so again.

Mozart's greatest musical coup in Die Entführung was the transformation of the surly old overseer Osmin into a central character. In Bretzner's original libretto the part is a minor one: Osmin scarcely sings at all, and both his blustery sexual advances on Blonde and his swift recourse to violence in dealing with Belmonte and Pedrillo are more risible than dangerous. But with the duet of confrontation between Osmin and Belmonte, followed immediately by Osmin's vindictive 'Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen', Mozart places him on an equal musical footing with Belmonte and Constanze. Both these numbers represent musical additions specifically ordered by the composer, as does the brilliant standoff between Osmin and Blonde near the beginning of the second act. Osmin's final aria of triumph, malice, and retribution ('O! wie will ich triumphiren') completes Mozart's musical portrait with all the verve of a brilliant symphonic finale (in fact, its theme was shortly to see use in the last movement of the 'Haffner' Symphony, K.385).

The singer for whom the part was destined, Ludwig Fischer (1745-1825), possessed two qualities that figured prominently in Mozart's thinking—a magnificent basso profundo, as agile as it was rich, and high standing with the Viennese public. Die Entführung was, as it turned out, Mozart's major trial by fire at Vienna. After his break with

the prince archbishop, his trip to Vienna was no longer a temporary visit. Mozart had cast his lot with the imperial city, and almost at once an anxiety to identify with Vienna and please Viennese ears took hold of him. Much rode on the opera's success, and that in turn rested squarely on the shoulders of the original cast.

Mozart had need of his singers' loyalty at the premiere of *Die Entführung* on 16 July 1782. A cabal organized against the composer at the first performance redoubled its efforts at the second performance three days later. But the opera carried the day, first at the Burgtheater, then in Prague that autumn, and soon on nearly every German operatic stage. Mozart followed the opera's fortunes closely, both at Vienna and elsewhere. He even returned to the keyboard to conduct a performance in October of 1782 for the Russian grand duke (now on the return journey from Italy), who may well have learnt only then that he himself had been one of the first of the many and varied stimuli that had guided the opera's creation.

— Thomas Bauman

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Staff for The Abduction from the Seraglio

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