

2 *Conception and creation*

When Stephanie hit upon *Belmont und Constanze* as an apt libretto for his friend Mozart, the name of its author alone would have recommended it to him, as we noticed in Chapter 1. But there were also other, more immediate considerations bearing upon his decision. The interplay of artistic and practical issues governing the very choice of the libretto continued to guide the project to completion over the next ten months.

Early work: singers and Russian guests

In July of 1781 the Habsburg court was astir with plans for a state visit to be paid in mid-September by Grand Duke Paul Petrovich of Russia and his wife, Princess Sophia Dorothea of Württemberg. Theatrical festivities always played a part in such state occasions, and Stephanie was quick to see in the Russian visit an opportunity to ingratiate the National Singspiel and his friend Mozart with the court. Umlauf already had a new opera ready to help celebrate the occasion, his recently completed setting of Bretzner's *Das Irrlicht*; now Stephanie could also offer a bonus – a Turkish opera by the same popular author, one which his friend Mozart was prepared to compose in the space of a single month.

It is difficult to imagine at this stage that Stephanie intended to do much, if anything, to Bretzner's *Belmont und Constanze*. By itself the libretto offered several clear advantages, given the pressing circumstances. The plot was extremely simple and contained nothing the censor could possibly object to. Unlike Bretzner's earlier librettos with their clutter of songs, this one contained only fifteen numbers, and just seven of these were arias. The ensembles were all brilliant pieces of confrontation between strongly etched personalities, in line with Italianate practice. And the opera already had its own finale – of sorts – for at its dramatic centre of gravity Bretzner had placed its

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musical centrepiece as well: a massive action quintet with chorus, encompassing the entire elopement episode. Though a daring innovation in the north, where composers had little if any experience with the finale technique of opera buffa, such an extended musical tableau was nothing new to the Viennese. Indeed, in adapting Bretzner's *Der Irrwisch* for Umlauf as *Das Irrlicht*, Stephanie himself had only recently seen fit to rework the end of Act II into a true finale.

There was every reason to believe, then, that Mozart would be able to compose Bretzner's new libretto quickly and without any extensive changes. Such was not to be the case. In fact, of all Mozart's major operas *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* took the longest to complete. To help us clarify the stages by which it emerged from *Belmont und Constanze* we have set out in Table 2 the musical numbers of Bretzner's original libretto and of the version Mozart finally set, in parallel columns. In the table and in the following discussion the prefix 'B' has been used to distinguish the numbering in Bretzner's version from the one familiar to us from Mozart's score.

After receiving the libretto, Mozart set to work at once with vibrant enthusiasm. In a single day he composed B2, B4 and B5. As was always the case with Mozart, the cast of singers had been chosen before he began composing their arias. Some of the German company's finest voices were assigned to the new opera. Josef Valentin Adamberger, the first Belmonte and the troupe's premier tenor, had sung in Italy with great success from 1762 to 1772 under an Italianised version of his name, Adamonti; later he had earned equal esteem at Munich and London before being called to the National Singspiel in 1780.

Caterina Cavalieri, destined to be Constanze, had by all accounts very little in the way of acting ability, but she possessed one of the most brilliant soprano voices anywhere, an instrument in which Mozart revelled all his life. A native of Vienna, she too had Italianised her name (originally Franziska Kavalier) and had been trained at least in part by Salieri, whose mistress she was reputed to have been. She elicited dazzling virtuosic passages from the Viennese composers who wrote for her from the very beginning of her involvement with the National Singspiel.

The basso profondo Johann Ignaz Ludwig Fischer drew Mozart's special musical attention. When Stephanie and Mozart first set about changing Bretzner's libretto in mid-September, they turned their attention first of all to him and to the role of Osmin: 'Since we intended the role of Osmin for Herr Fischer, who has a really excel-

Table 2 *The musical items in Belmont und Constanze and Die Entführung aus dem Serail*

Bretzner: <i>Belmont und Constanze</i> (Leipzig, 1781)	Bretzner/Stephanie: <i>Die Entführung</i> (Vienna, 1782)
ACT I	
	1. Hier soll ich dich denn sehen (Belmonte)
B1. Wer ein Liebchen hat gefun- den (Osmiin)	2. ditto Verwünscht seist du (Belmonte–Osmiin)
B2. O wie ängstlich (Belmonte)	3. Solche hergelaufne Laffen (Osmiin)
B3. Singt dem grossen Bassa Lieder (Janissary chorus)	4. ditto 5a. March 5b. ditto
B4. Ach, ich liebe (Constanze)	6. ditto
B5. Marsch! Marsch! Marsch! (Osmiin–Pedrillo–Belmonte)	7. ditto
ACT II	
B6. Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln (Blonde)	8. ditto
	9. Ich gehe, doch rathe ich dir (Osmiin–Blonde)
B7. Traurigkeit ward mir zum Loose (Constanze)	10. [Recit.:] Welcher Wechsel herrscht in meinem Herzen – [Aria:] ditto
B8. Rondeau: Hofnung, Trösterin im Leiden! (Blonde– Constanze)	11. Martern aller Arten (Constanze)
	12. Welche Wonne, welche Lust (Blonde)
B9. Fritsch zum Kampfe! (Pedrillo)	13. ditto

Table 2 (cont.)

Bretzner: <i>Belmont und Constanze</i> (Leipzig, 1781)	Bretzner/Stephanie: <i>Die Entführung</i> (Vienna, 1782)
B10. Vivat, Bachus! (Pedrillo– Osmiin)	14. ditto
	15. Wenn der Freude Thränen fliessen (Belmonte)
B11. Mit Pauken und Trompeten (Pedrillo–Blonde–Constanze– Belmonte)	16. Ach Belmonte! ach mein Leben (Constanze–Belmonte– Pedrillo–Blonde)
ACT III	
B12. Welch ängstliches Beben (Belmonte–Pedrillo– Constanze–Blonde–Osmiin– Guards)	17. Ich baue ganz auf Deine Stärke (Belmonte) dialogue
[Includes:] In Mohrenland gefangen war (Pedrillo)	18. ditto
[Transformation]	19. O! wie will ich triumphiren dialogue (Osmiin)
B13. Ach, von deinem Arm um- schlungen (Belmonte– Constanze)	20. [Recit.:] Welch' Geschick, O Qual der Seele – [Duet:] Meinethwegen sollst du sterben (Belmonte–Constanze)
B14. Ah, mit freudigem Entzücken (Constanze)	21a. Nie werd ich deine Huld verkennen (Belmonte– Constanze–Pedrillo–Blonde– Osmiin)
B15. Oft wölkt stürmisch sich der Himmel! (Chorus)	21b. Bassa Selim lebe lange (Janissary chorus)

lent bass voice. . . such a man has to be made use of, especially since he has the public here wholly on his side' (26 September 1781). Although Fischer had not been to Italy, he had studied with one of Germany's greatest tenors in the seria tradition, Anton Raaff. After working at Mannheim and Munich he came to Vienna in 1780.

These Teyber and Johann Ernst Dauer, who created the comic pair Blonde and Pedrillo, were as highly regarded for their acting abilities as for their singing. They both excelled in portraying astute and charming servants, but they also took leading roles from time to time (in Paisiello's *I filosofi immaginari*, for example). Dauer was actually employed by the National Theatre and appeared frequently in spoken dramas.

The value of all these singers to the National Singspiel is reflected in crass economic terms by their salaries. A sampling of what various individuals received around 1781 appears in Table 3. Perhaps the most striking figure is the high salary paid to Adamberger, compared with Cavalleri and Fischer – an advantage for which he had his training and success in Italy to thank.

Table 3 *Representative salaries of members of the Viennese National Theatre and National Singspiel (in florins)*

Name	Position	Salary
Schröder, Friedrich Ludwig	actor	2,550
Adamberger, Josef Valentin	tenor (Belmonte)	2,133
Lange, Aloysia	soprano	1,706
Weidner, Christiane	actress	1,660
Stephanie, Gottlieb	actor	1,400
Fischer, Johann Ludwig	bass (Osmin)	1,200
Cavalleri, Catarina	soprano (Constanze)	1,200
Dauer, Johann Ernst	tenor-actor (Pedrillo)	1,200
Umlauf, Ignaz	Kapellmeister	850
Jautz, Dominik Josef	actor (Pasha Selim)	800
Teyber, Therese	soprano (Blonde)	800
Oboe, clarinet, bassoon, first horn players		750
Concertmaster		450
Other string players, second horn and flute players		350

Source: F. L. W. Meyer: *Friedrich Ludwig Schröder* (Hamburg, 1823), vol. 1, pp. 355–7

The first two arias Mozart had composed on 1 August were for Adamberger and Cavalleri (B2 and B4 in Table 2); at this time he had also set the trio which closes Act I (B5). A week later he had finished Osmin's G minor Lied (B1) and the first Janissary chorus (B3). Act I as Bretzner had planned it was now completely composed. But in late August Mozart learnt that the visit of the Russian grand duke had been put off until November. Immediately he and Stephanie set about expanding the music's role in the completed act. Mozart got Stephanie to turn Belmonte's opening monologue into 'an arietta' and the dialogue following Osmin's Lied into an action duet.

He had also given some music for a new aria intended for Osmin to Stephanie, who manufactured an appropriate text to put under it (No. 3, 'Solche hergelaufne Laffen'). We may recall that Stephanie was an old hand at this, having put new German texts under the music of many a French and Italian opera he had translated for the National Singspiel. Mozart had also finished the overture by early September. In his later operas he was to reserve the composition of this item for last, but here it could not be separated conceptually from Belmonte's arietta, which is foreshadowed in C minor as the overture's contrasting middle section.

Mozart reported all of these activities to Leopold in his letter of 26 September 1781. He waxed so loquacious about the music to Act I on this occasion because he had earlier sent excerpts of it to his father, which he was anxious to explain as musician to musician. At this time he had also set to work on Act II, having completed another piece of 'Turkish' music (the duet 'Vivat, Bachus!' [B10]) and 'an aria' (probably either Blonde's [B6] or Pedrillo's [B9]).

Two musical additions were contemplated for this act. The first was another aria for Osmin, in line with the overall musical expansion of Fischer's role in the opera. In his reference to this projected aria Mozart cannot have meant 'O! wie will ich triumphieren' (No. 19), which was later added to Act III, since that aria eventually replaced an episode in the abduction ensemble, and at the time he wrote this letter Mozart still intended to set Bretzner's ensemble to music. Indeed, Mozart tells Leopold that this 'charming quintet, or rather finale' (B12) is to be moved to the end of Act II, and an entirely new intrigue will have to be manufactured to replace it at the beginning of Act III. This is the first mention we have of any departure from Bretzner's dramatic plan. Up to now, musical numbers had been added or created out of pre-existent dialogue, and Stephanie had been asked to change nothing in the construction of the plot.

The Gluck revival

Soon after this, Mozart learnt of another delay. Joseph's state chancellor, Prince Kaunitz, had already urged the emperor in July to give the grand duke and his wife 'a high idea of the power of this monarchy by every means possible' during their visit. With the observation 'chi più spende, meno spende' Kaunitz suggested that His Majesty 'have brought from Italy, for example, three or four of the best voices in existence today to give a magnificent Italian opera seria'.¹ Eventually the court decided on a course of action which offered an even more eloquent and patriotic illustration of Vienna's position in the exalted spheres of serious opera – a production by the National Sing-spiel of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*, translated into German, and his *Alceste*, to be performed with the original Italian text by the German company.

On 6 October Mozart told his father that his new opera could not be performed until both of these Gluckian masterpieces had been presented, for they required all the energies of Adamberger and Fischer. With more time now than he had ever contemplated having, Mozart settled back to think through the project he had undertaken.

Leopold, meanwhile, had responded some time in early October to the music from the first act which Mozart had sent him. The loss of Leopold's remarks on this music is an unhappy one, for they elicited one of Mozart's most important epistolary ruminations on the relationship of music and poetry in opera:

Now about the text of the opera. – As far as Stephanie's work on it is concerned, you are admittedly correct. – Still, the poetry is wholly in keeping with the character of the foolish, coarse, and spiteful Osmin. – And I am aware that its metre is not the best – but it is so appropriate, and fits so well with my musical ideas (which were already parading around in my head beforehand), that I necessarily had to be happy with it; – and I would bet that in performance nothing will be missed. – As far as the poetry in the original work itself [i.e. Bretzner's libretto] is concerned, it is really nothing to sneeze at. – Belmonte's aria, 'O wie ängstlich, etc.', could scarcely be better written for music. – Except for the 'hui' and 'kummer ruht in meinem Schoos' (for grief – can't rest), the aria really isn't bad; especially the first part. – And I really don't know – in an opera the poetry absolutely must be the obedient daughter of the music. – Why else are Italian comic operas popular everywhere? – considering how wretched their librettos are! – even in Paris – which I myself witnessed. – Because the music rules entirely in them – and when that is the case everything else is forgotten. – Certainly an opera must please all the more when the piece's plan is carefully worked out; the words, however, are written solely for the music and not stuck in for the sake of a miserable rhyme here and there (which doesn't contribute a thing,

by God, to the value of a theatrical performance, whatever it may be, but in fact harms it instead) – or whole strophes, which ruin the entire conception of the composer. Verses are, it is true, the most indispensable thing for the music. – But rhyme – for rhyme's sake is the most harmful; – the gentlemen who operate so pedantically will always come to grief and the music along with them.

So the best thing is for a good composer who understands the theatre and has something of his own to contribute, to meet up with a clever poet, a true phoenix. – Then one need not worry about the applause of the ignorant. – Poets almost remind me of trumpeters with their journeyman's tricks! – If we composers were always to follow *our* rules so faithfully (which were perfectly fine at a time when no one knew any better), we would write music that is just as unsuitable as the librettos they write. –

Now I think I've chattered away to you enough about these silly things (13 October 1781).

This famous passage can be broken down into two parts. The first we can assume to be a point-by-point reply to remarks about the musical texts of Act I made in Leopold's lost letter of early October. Otherwise we would have to assume that Mozart mistakenly placed part of Constanze's first aria in Belmonte's 'O wie ängstlich' (see the sentence beginning 'Except for the "hui"'). Such an oversight is scarcely credible, for the whole letter breathes keen involvement with the texts on which Mozart had been labouring.

The second half of the passage is introduced by Mozart's well-known dictum about poetry playing the obedient daughter, and amounts to a spontaneous effusion on the problems occupying his mind as he studied the musical texts of Bretzner and Stephanie (which, we may notice, he distinguishes clearly). Concern here focuses exclusively on the poetry, not the spoken dialogue. References to Stephanie in other letters from this period make it clear that Mozart entertained a high opinion of his collaborator's dramatic skills. He no doubt left decisions concerning the dialogue in Stephanie's hands, and Stephanie, in turn, was happy to abide by what Bretzner had written – at least for the first act.

After the torrent of information and commentary on the music of Act I which Mozart provided for Leopold during September and October, his subsequent letters mention the opera less and less frequently and in little or no detail. In early November Stephanie finally had 'something ready' for Mozart, who in a letter of 3 November still speaks in terms of completing the opera quickly: two singers for Umlauf's rival production (*Das Irrlicht*) were ill, and Mozart hoped to steal a march on the National Sing-spiel's Kapellmeister.

Gluck's operas, meanwhile, lived up to general expectations as the

artistic events of the season. *Iphigénie en Tauride*, translated by the young Viennese poet Johann Baptist von Alxinger, was produced on 23 October under Gluck's personal supervision, despite the composer's declining health. *Alceste* followed, in Italian, first at the Schönbrunn Palace Theatre in honour of the Russian visitors on 25 November, then at the Burgtheater. The National Singspiel, flushed with success, decided to follow up with a new production of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* on 31 December, with the part of Orfeo (originally written for the great castrato Guadagni) taken by Adamberger.

During this Gluck revival no other new opera was brought into production by the National Singspiel. Even after these three works were on the boards, only one further work was added to the repertory during the rest of the season (from New Year's Day to the beginning of Lent) – Umlauf's long-suffering *Das Irrlicht*, on 17 January 1782, shortly after the departure of the Russian visitors. It was all but lost in the shuffle, for between the introduction of *Iphigénie* and Shrove Tuesday Gluck's three operas and his opéra-comique *La Rencontre imprévue* monopolised the stage. For twenty-seven of the thirty-eight nights on which operas were given by the National Singspiel during this period, one of these four works was given. (*Das Irrlicht* hung on, however, and soon became one of the most popular German operas of the decade in Vienna.)

Not surprisingly, Mozart's hopes of producing his opera with any speed had quickly evaporated in late 1781. For the winter season other commitments and difficulties preoccupied his mind – not the least of which was his decision to marry Constanze Weber, a development that generated unprecedented tension between Wolfgang and Leopold.

On 30 January Mozart reassured his father that his German opera was not dormant, but owing to Gluck's operas and to 'many very necessary alterations in the poetry' it would not be given until after Easter. What were these 'very necessary alterations'? Mozart does not tell us. But the very phrase bears witness to the fact that, once the opportunity to rethink seriously the opera's musical shape had presented itself, Mozart and Stephanie introduced substantial changes in the portion yet to be composed – that is, in much of Act II and in all of Act III. In contrast, Act I, set to music under severe time pressure, had preserved even in its final form all five of Bretzner's original musical items in its seven numbers (see again Table 2).

Mozart's letters say virtually nothing about the changes he and Stephanie made in the last two acts of Bretzner's plan. We glean

from his correspondence only a few dates: on 8 May he played all of Act II for the Countess Thun-Hohenstein, one of his warmest admirers among the Viennese aristocracy; on 30 May he played all of Act III for her; and on 3 June the finished opera was finally put into rehearsal.

If we glance forward at the synopsis provided in Chapter 4, we can form an idea of the kinds of adjustments Mozart and Stephanie made in the last two acts. Some of the additions and alterations continue the pattern established earlier for the first act: the duet for Osmin and Blonde (No. 9), the recitative to lend greater expressive force to Constanze's aria 'Traurigkeit' (B7), a cheery aria for Blonde after her scene with Pedrillo (No. 12), yet another aria for Belmonte near the end of Act II (No. 15) which replaces a few lines of dialogue, and in Act III an added aria for Fischer to close the abduction scene (No. 19). They disturb nothing in the original plan, and we may assume with some confidence that, like all the changes in Act I, each one came at Mozart's behest.

Other additions are of a different order, however. In Act II Constanze's aria *di bravura* 'Martern aller Arten' required three new scenes from Stephanie and, what is more, the presentation of a wholly unexplored side of Constanze's personality. We shall deal with this most celebrated and problematic of the opera's arias later in Chapter 5. The great quartet at the end of the act, justly admired by everyone who writes about *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, posed far fewer problems than Constanze's aria. Stephanie found the incident upon which he based this episode already at hand in Bretzner's dialogue.

The decision to dismantle the extensive quintet Bretzner had written for the abduction scene near the beginning of Act III was forced on Stephanie and Mozart once they realised that it could not be moved to the end of Act II.² In Berlin, perhaps, one could still put a number which was a finale in everything but name wherever the dramatic logic called for it, but Vienna lay too much in the thrall of the patterns of opera buffa. Stephanie's task in turning it back into dialogue and closed numbers was not a difficult one. He could easily be persuaded to write a substitute text for Belmonte's 'Welch ängstliches Beben' (an aria which formed the first section of the original abduction quintet, B12), because it duplicated almost exactly the sentiments of Belmonte's 'O wie ängstlich' in Act I. Stephanie knew the rules for treating important singers like Adamberger, singers who demanded arias which would show all sides of their voices to greatest

advantage. Pedrillo's Romanze 'In Mohnenland' (No. 18) presented no problem at all – it was already there, embedded in Bretzner's quintet.

Up to the last scene of the opera, in sum, Stephanie had made only one significant change in Bretzner's dramatic plan – the added scenes around Constanze's 'Märtern aller Arten' in Act II. He was to make one more: at the moment when the captured lovers are brought before Selim, Stephanie jettisoned the model he had been following so closely and substituted a new denouement. The scene introduces a new dimension to the character of Selim, a spoken role, so musical considerations can have had little bearing on the substitution. Here, it would appear, Stephanie offered his sole original contribution to the literary edifice he had received from Bretzner.

Stephanie's hand

What can we say about the respective roles Mozart and Stephanie played in creating the major departures from Bretzner? Compared with an opera such as *Idomeneo*, the documentary resources necessary to answer such a question are comparatively few. No preliminary sketches for the opera survive save for an abandoned effort at composing the action quintet encompassing the abduction scene near the beginning of Act III. The autograph score represents the sole musical authority for the opera as it was completed and performed in July of 1782.

Mozart's letters on the *Entführung*, although of uncontestedly pre-eminent value as witnesses to his evolving aesthetic of opera in the early 1780s, deal exclusively with changes worked on Act I of Bretzner's libretto, which are on the whole less interesting than the alterations to Acts II and III just discussed. Two other documents, none the less, shed at least a little light on Stephanie's role in the opera's revision. The first is the original edition itself of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, issued in July of 1782 under the auspices of the 'Logenmeister', as was normal in conjunction with the première of a new opera at the Burgtheater. Plate 1 reproduces the title page of this publication.

If we compare the portions which Stephanie took directly from Bretzner as they appear in this edition with the same texts in the original printed version (*Belmont und Constanze*), we observe a remarkable correlation, not only in the words but also in orthography, punctuation and the disposition of the verses of the musical



Plate 1 Title page of the first edition (Vienna, 1782) of the text to *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*

texts. Even stage directions are taken over unchanged. There is only one plausible explanation for this: Stephanie handed over to the imperial printer a copy of Bretzner's libretto itself, with his own added musical texts and scenes written out separately. It was only natural, therefore, that he made no mention of his own name on the title page or anywhere else in the libretto, but simply inserted the phrase 'freely adapted after Herr Bretzner'.

The second document bearing on Stephanie's conception of his part in 'freely adapting' Bretzner's libretto appeared a decade after the premiere of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* – the collected edition of his German comic operas, issued in 1792. Stephanie did not include the *Entführung*, or any of his other adaptations of Bretzner's librettos, in this volume. He did include, however, an interesting preface³ in which he discusses several problems plaguing German comic opera, notably a lack of good singers and of good original texts.

The former can be easily remedied with higher salaries, he notes, but the second is not so easy to correct: 'Certainly good librettos have been written now and then,' he admits, 'but they seldom had the proper form of a Singspiel and usually they had to be revised, because the composers for these librettos could not and would not set them as they stood.' Stephanie's next sentence makes it clear that he is thinking of Bretzner's popular librettos of the early 1780s: 'And so I had to rework *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* for Mozart, *Das Irrlicht* for Umlauf, and *Das wüthende Heer* for Ruprecht.'

Stephanie goes on to outline the rules a good opera ought to follow, rules he derived 'from the many translations of operas which I furnished, from association with and guidance from the composers for whom I wrote, and finally from six years of directing the opera with the Royal Imperial Court Theatre at Vienna'. He proposes a dozen specific points to keep in mind when creating a libretto. If we bring these to bear on the final text of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, we sense at once the compromises inherent in this work between the primitive conception of German opera current in the 1770s and the paradigm Stephanie was to propose in 1792:

<i>Stephanie, 'Preface' (1792)</i>	
1 18 to 24 numbers	<i>Die Entführung (1782)</i> 21 numbers
2 divided properly into arias and 'concerted pieces'	14 arias, 7 ensembles and 2 choruses
3 begin with an ensemble	begins with an 'aria-tta'

4 end each act with an action finale including all principals	only Act II has a finale, and it contains inner rather than outer action
5 only seldom should more than two arias appear together	Act II: four in a row Act III: three in a row
6 consecutive arias should not be sung by the same person	Constance sings two demanding arias in a row (Nos. 10 & 11)
7 thereafter a duet or trio should form a section	Nos. 2 and 9 do so (both added by Stephanie), plus the ensembles ending Acts I and II
8 at least three arias and a duet or trio for the main voices	Belmonte, Constance and Osmiin are so served; Pedrillo and Blonde have only two arias
9 numbers should not follow one another too closely	only a line or two of dialogue between numbers at the start of Act I and some other spots observed in both versions
10 put nothing absolutely necessary to the intrigue in the musical numbers	
11 few singing roles so as to use only good singers	only five, with Selim a spoken role
12 avoid choruses	two, both for the same group

Most of these points are self-explanatory. Some are followed scrupulously in the *Entführung*, others are not, and in most cases these deviations go back to Bretzner's original plan. A clear instance of Stephanie's stronger operatic sensitivity is his use of musical numbers to close off a scene (almost always marked dramatically with the exit of a character). Bretzner had included nine arias in his original version, none of them exit arias. Stephanie decided to retain seven of these, but he also added six new arias, and four of them are exit arias. The duet of Osmiin and Blonde in Act II functions in the same way.

It may be objected – and with good reason – that we have been over-charitable in assigning to Stephanie alterations that may well have come from the composer. To see what a difference Mozart's involvement made in the creation of the *Entführung* we need only examine the activities of his Viennese contemporaries. Umlauf's *Das Irrlicht*, already mentioned several times, offers an unusually close basis for comparison – both texts are by Bretzner and both were adapted by Stephanie for the National Singspiel at nearly the same time and with several of the same singers in mind. Bretzner's original libretto (*Der Irriwisch*) had contained a healthy thirty-one numbers. Stephanie omitted five of them, left twenty-one exactly as they were,

and made only minor verbal adjustments in four others. He rewrote one aria for Fischer and, in his only substantial exertion of poetic energy, substituted a finale at the end of Act II for two duets and intervening dialogue. Such minor tinkering scarcely bears comparison with what Mozart had him do to *Belmont und Constanze*.

We might ask another question here as well: who among the local composers who contributed to the National Singspiel went on to write opera buffa for the Italian company which superseded the German one at the Burgtheater in 1783? Only two – Mozart and Salieri. For both these composers, the great ease with which they returned from German to Italian comic opera was matched by great unease in the alliance which their lone German operas for the National Singspiel had struck between spoken and musical traditions. Mozart's insistence throughout the genesis of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* that music's prerogatives not be short-changed had to make its peace with the hybrid nature of opera with spoken dialogue. Only to a certain degree could a libretto conceived in a tradition beholden to the overpowering demands of spoken drama be adapted to the musical stage, even to one with the cultural loyalties of the Viennese National Singspiel.

3 *Oriental opera*

Islam and its believers have never been perceived with either objectivity or indifference by the West. Several perceptions and misperceptions, codified during the Middle Ages, enjoyed remarkable longevity in Western attitudes. Europeans recognised Islam as one of the three great monotheistic religions but also as 'the sum of all heresy', in the words of Norman Daniel. 'The two most important aspects of Muhammad's life, Christians believed, were his sexual license and his use of force to establish his religion.'

Over the past millennium the relationship of the West and Islamic culture has moved in a vast swing of the pendulum from an initial period of Moorish expansionism, through a lengthy decline ending with the military impotence of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the seventeenth century, into a modern phase of Western imperialism and colonialism, which began with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798.

In the areas of literature, theatre, travel and fashion the eighteenth century turned again and again to the East, and usually with a strong sense of ambivalence. On the one hand, what W. Daniel Wilson² has called the medieval 'Crusade mentality' perpetuated in European minds the image of the sabre-wielding Muslim long after the practical military danger posed by the Turks had evaporated. At the same time, most of the leading writers of the Enlightenment turned specifically to the cultures of the East to create heroes directly counter to this popular image. Thus there co-existed in eighteenth-century Europe two contrary paradigms of the Eastern world in 'high' and 'low' culture, directly reflected in Selim and Osmin and in their predecessors on European stages.

Bretzner and the vogue Oriental opera

As a military presence the Turks offered a source of direct concern