

5 The musical language of the opera

'Turkish' music in Oriental opera

In Mozart's first letter to Leopold about Bretzner's libretto he remarked, 'I am going to compose the sinfonia, the chorus in the first act, and the closing chorus with Turkish music' (1 August 1781). By 'Turkish music' Mozart referred to an opaque, Westernised derivative based loosely on what little was known of actual Turkish music – a cultural distortion not so different from that of the Turkish per-sonages that this music accompanied on European stages.¹

What music of the Turks the West knew at first hand consisted almost solely of the military music of the Janissary band, or *mehier*. In battle these musicians grouped themselves around the standard and played continuously throughout an encounter, instilling courage in the Turkish soldiers and fear in their foe with the racket they raised. Western witnesses were impressed. C. F. D. Schubart described its vigorous character: 'No other genre of music requires such a firm, decided, and overpoweringly predominant beat. The first beat of each measure is so strongly marked with a new and manly accent that it is virtually impossible to get out of step.'²

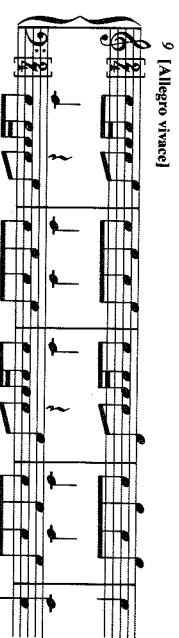
During the eighteenth century it became fashionable for European armies to import corps of Turkish musicians along with their instruments and attire. Western composers, however, were far less willing to proceed so literally in their operas, ballets, and instrumental works intended to evoke a Turkish ambience. Instead they approximated. For example, Janissary music was monophonic and rhythmically complex in its patterning. European composers, in their own versions, created by analogy a spare harmonic texture and used duple metre with firm downbeats and repetitive rhythmic patterns. A specific instrumental group, the so-called *batterie turque*, mimicked the sounds of an actual Janissary band with cymbals, triangle, tambourine and bass drum. The triangle in fact is never

mentioned as a Turkish instrument and appears only in these Western imitations.

Along with this, composers developed a thesaurus of motivic elements belonging to the *stilo alla turca*. As Miriam Whaples points out, 'The two Janissary choruses of the *Entführung aus dem Serail* are a compendium of "Turkish" mannerisms, there being scarcely a detail of the style that is not found in one or the other of the choruses.'³ From her discussion we can extract seven 'Turkish' elements which the *Entführung* holds in common with other Oriental operas of its day (they apply equally to Mozart's earlier non-operatic essays in this style, particularly the finales of the A major violin concerto K.219, and piano sonata K.331):

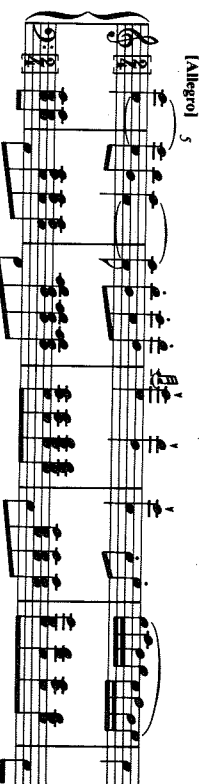
- 1 Repeated thirds in the melody, sometimes alternating with fifths. This feature saw extremely widespread use in the cadential formula Mozart employed in the opera's closing chorus (Ex. 2). Bence Szabolcsi has remarked on its appearance in Hungarian folk melodies called *türökös* (a la turque).⁴

Ex. 2

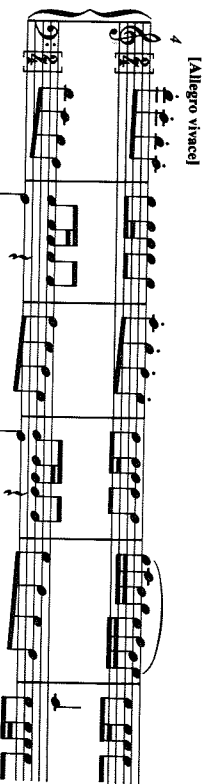


- 2 Escaped notes or upper thirds decorating a descending scale. Mozart favoured this figure in both Janissary choruses, as seen in Ex. 3a and b.

Ex. 3a



Ex. 3b



- 3 Repeated notes in both the melody and especially the accompaniment. Often they are decorated by short grace notes. Gluck underscored the vigour of this device with horns and cymbals in the overture to *La Rencontre imprévue* (Ex. 4).

Ex. 4

- 4 2/4 metre. Evident in nearly all of the examples we have cited.
- 5 Long initial note values followed by quicker ones. Again, both of Mozart's choruses and Gluck's overture offer clear examples.
- 6 Preference for harmonic relations of a third. One thinks of the interplay of A minor and C major at the beginning of the first Janissary chorus in the *Entführung* (Ex. 5), reinforced in the middle section for four soloists.

Ex. 5

- 7 Modal scalar inflections, most often a raised fourth. Whaples claims that the prominent raised fourth in Ex. 6a does not appear in other 'Turkish' pieces, but Gluck had used it in the monophonic glibberish air of the Calender in *La Rencontre imprévue*, 'Castagno, castagna', as well as in the opera's overture (Ex. 6b and c). Such passing appeals to the Lydian mode were obviously evocations of the exotic in an age so exclusively devoted to the major-minor system.

Ex. 6a

Ex. 6b

Ex. 6c

Earlier Oriental operas had turned to the *stilo alla turca* mostly for instrumental numbers (such as overtures and marches) and for choruses. Mozart, too, provided for the style in these categories, but he also saw fit to work it in elsewhere in the opera. Certainly, he was aware of the partiality of the Viennese for this style. As Friedrich Nicolai noticed on visiting the city in 1781, 'Turkish' music could be heard in the Prater as a part of the rich Viennese tradition of open-air music.⁶ In his letter to Leopold of 26 September 1781, Mozart stresses the close connexion of several of his 'Turkish' numbers and current Viennese taste. 'The Janissary chorus [in Act II] is everything one could wish a Janissary chorus to be,' he wrote, 'short and jolly; – and written completely for the Viennese.' He also mentions 'the drinking duet (for the Messrs. Viennese) [I'das Saufduett || : per li Sig.: vienerei : ||] which consists of nothing other than my Turkish tattoo'. The duet in question, 'Vivat, Bachus', in fact became the immediate delight of Viennese audiences and their favourite number in the opera.

Mozart was not simply pandering to popular taste with these *alla turca* items. Rather, they play a part in an overall strategy, one that envisaged a definite dramatic role for elements of the 'Turkish' style throughout the opera. The most significant consequence of this strategy was something that set Mozart's opera apart from all earlier Oriental operas – the integration of the 'Turkish' style into the general musical language of the opera.

Integration of the 'Turkish' style: Osmin

As a dramatic rather than merely colouristic device, Mozart's 'Turkish' music functions most clearly in scenes of conflict and contrast. Not surprisingly, nearly all of these involve his greatest musical portrait in the opera – that of Osmin. No other character has so deeply interested critics, who unite in proclaiming him completely Mozart's creation. Fascination with Osmin has in fact been a source of a great deal of misunderstanding surrounding the opera itself. Ignoring Bretzner's description of him as 'overseer of the Pasha's country estate' with his own house across the street from the palace, many writers have assumed that Osmin is the keeper of Selim's harem. Saint-Foix went so far as to call him a eunuch, 'exempt, par nature, de toute tentation', and as early as 1818 Ludwig Börne tried to make psychological hay with the same erroneous assumption:

Such a masterful fellow, such a transfigured grumbler and fawning guaritan of wives, who torments himself in fury at the locked grating, through which he daily sees the honey which he may not lick, such an angry fellow, who hates all the world, because he *cannot* love, will not soon be set to music again.⁷

These and other writers were certainly not moved to their fascination with Osmin because of his dramatic role in the plot, which is a minor one. Bretzner had thought principally in terms of a skilled actor: his Osmin sings only four times and only one of these times alone (in his strophic song 'Wer ein Liebeschen hat gefunden'). In Stephanie's version, by contrast, Osmin sings in seven of his eight scenes, including two new arias and two new duets. Of all the characters in the opera, he gains most significantly in musical numbers from one version to the other.

Mozart, we know, prompted every one of Stephanie's additions for Osmin. But how much had he been thinking in terms of Osmin himself and how much in terms of the bass Ludwig Fischer? (Recall his remark to Leopold on 26 September 1781: 'Such a man has to be made use of, especially since he has the public here wholly on his side.') By good fortune Mozart could think of both. Since lack of moderation and self-control lay at the heart of the Turkish type Osmin represents, no harm would come to the drama if he injected his personality as often as he pleased, nor would this hurt Mozart's stock with the fickle Viennese public he hoped to win over.

Mozart's letter of 26 September goes on from his comment about Fischer to a discussion of Osmin's first aria, 'Solche hergelaufne

Laffen' – a passage which has probably been quoted more often than anything else Mozart ever wrote, for it seeks to explain and defend aesthetically the aria's unusual coda:

But this Osmin has just the one little song to sing in the original libretto, and otherwise nothing except for the trio [ending Act II and finale (i.e. the Act III elopement scene)]. Therefore he has been given an aria in the first act and will have yet another in the second. – I've given the whole aria to Herr Stephanie; – and the main portion of the music for it was finished before Stephanie knew a word about it. – You have only the beginning of it and the end, which must be of good effect – Osmin's anger is made comic by having Turkish music introduced there. – In working out the aria I've let his [Fischer's] beautiful deep tones gleam forth. – The '*Drum beyn Barte des Propheten*' etc. is in the same tempo, to be sure, but with fast notes – and as his anger continues to grow, then – just when the aria seems to be over – the Allegro assai in a completely different measure and in another key must create the finest effect; for a man in such a towering rage oversteps all order, measure, and limit, he does not know himself – so the music, too, must no longer know itself – but since the passions, be they powerful or not, must never be expressed to the point of disgust, and music, even in the most horrifying situation, must never offend the ear, but must actually please, and consequently remain music, thus I've not chosen a key foreign to F (the key of the aria) but a key allied to it, yet not the closest, D minor, but rather the more distant one of A minor.

Mozart articulates four clear compositional guidelines which he followed in setting the aria: (1) The situation rather than the specific text generated the essential musical material. Mozart claims to have created the aria's main ideas even before a text for them had been written. (2) Fischer's skills were to be shown to greatest advantage. (3) The ruling passion – boiling rage – should shape the aria's formal plan, but even in depicting such an immoderate and uncontrollable emotion the composer must not abandon moderation and control. (4) 'Turkish' music was to be introduced not to heighten the brutal sadism possessing Osmin at the end but rather to render his unbridled anger comical.

So artfully did Mozart blend traditional 'Turkish' features and general musical tokens of rage that it is difficult to separate them: the monophonic opening with progressively shorter note values, the heavily accented cut time, menacing half-steps, irregular phrase lengths, diminished seventh chords, obsessive repetition of figures rising by step, upward-mounting scalar thrusts, incisive dynamic contrast and frequent *f-p* punctuation.

Fischer's voice evoked specific traits which we can identify from other arias which composers at Vienna wrote for him. Salieri, for

example, had included in the first aria of Herr Bär in *Der Rauchfangkehrer* the same low sustained notes and rapid repeated figures familiar in 'Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen' (Ex. 7). Rapid rising scales from the depths capitalise on one of Fischer's great assets in Gebler's estimation, his ability to 'sing the deepest tones with a fullness, agility, and grace otherwise found only among good tenors'.⁸

Ex. 7

Mozart concentrates chiefly on explaining to Leopold the aria's unusual double coda and particularly the close in A minor. In the first coda the pace already quickens, he notes, as Osmín fixates more and more obsessively on single motives, rhythms and pitches. Dynamic contrast grows manic, the harmonies compulsively cadential. The surprising second coda – coming after dialogue in a new tempo, metre and key, and with 'Turkish' instrumentation – does 'create the finest effect', as Mozart wished. Nor is the key really so distant. By sliding down from F at the end of the first coda to the E beginning the second, Osmín echoes the important half-step which had opened the aria. Its sinister implication of A minor (which the monophonic texture had done nothing to contradict) now comes out into the open, as does the hint of obsessive reiteration of *F–E* suggested by the opening measures (Ex. 8). Osmín will come back to this same half-step pivot between F major and A minor in the Vaudeville at the end of the opera.

Ex. 8

Mozart's unexpected and tonally eccentric coda, thanks to the famous passage he wrote to Leopold defending its dramatic role, has achieved the status of a celebrated solecism. Yet it represents only one – and by no means the boldest – such stylistic *divagation* in the *Entführung*. The tonal ambiguity of Pedrillo's Romanze in Act III offers another instance, and the very overture breaks one of the fundamental laws of Viennese Classicism by failing to recapitulate its dominant-based secondary material in the tonic during the reprise.

By far the most striking formal eccentricity appears in No. 2, the splendid Lied and duet of Osmín and Belmonte. Here the tonal irregularity Mozart had broached in composing 'Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen' permeates the entire dramatic conception of the interchange between Belmonte and Osmín:

Andante	Allegro		Presto
Lied	Duet		
g	B \flat E \flat F	-a	C/c g E \flat B \flat D

Here, too, Mozart reveals the full arsenal on which he will draw in the opera's later scenes of confrontation. The opening Lied is conceived in the style of a 6/8 Romanze (later heard as well in Pedrillo's serenade 'In Mohrenland'). André had turned his back on Bretzner's dramatic aims by setting Osmín's song as an unvaried strophic Lied in G major, ignoring the interaction between Belmonte and Osmín which already begins here (see Synopsis). It did not escape Mozart, on the other hand, that the surly, suspicious overseer aims his second and third stanzas directly at the unwelcome stranger. In each one the orchestral accompaniment grows more agitated and harmonically charged,⁹ and Osmín's animosity even erupts into a brief Allegro outburst ('oft lauscht da ein junges Herrchen') in the third stanza, the first of many to come.

The duet itself divides into two main sections. The first, a series of increasingly heated exchanges, moves freely around a constellation of keys related to Bb major. From a low energy level of antipathonal questions and mimicking answers in Eb and F, the temperature begins to rise in earnest when Belmonte mentions Pedrillo to Osmin. An aside for both in A minor introduces imitative counterpoint, a tool Mozart uses again and again to heighten the hostile atmosphere Osmin never fails to create throughout the opera. Belmonte tries a new tack in C major, to be answered promptly with Osmin's mimicry in C minor. More imitative counterpoint leads to one of Fischer's strong suits – rapid conjunct passages in rising quavers. It comes to a head with the same cadence figure that closes the second coda of 'Solche hergelaufne Laffen' – a neat parallel, for in both places Osmin is giving free rein to the same sadistic sentiments (Ex. 9a and b).

Ex. 9a

[Allegro assai]
OSMIN 165

Erst ge - köpf, dann ge - han-gen, dann ge - spielt auf hei - ßen Stan-gen.

Ex. 9b

[Allegro]
OSMIN 143

Auf ei - nen Prah! ge - hört sein Kopf, Auf ei - nen Prah! ge - hört sein Kopf.

Thereafter Belmonte tries to return to his opening gambit in Eb. This time Osmin does not let him so much as finish his sentence but injects his own sarcastic interpretation of his intentions. By augmented sixth, Bb major yields to the dominant of D minor and the duet accelerates into its concluding section.

Everything Mozart said about the A minor coda of Osmin's aria applies to the Presto, which concludes the duet in a new key, a new metre and a new tempo. Mozart carries on the contrapuntal interplay of the foregoing with a loose canon set to fugue-like entries. The rising triadic thirds of 'Scheert euch zum Teufel!' will return in Osmin's further musical confrontations with the Europeans – in the trio ending Act I ('Marsch, marsch, marsch!') and in his Act II duet with Blonde (with 'O Engländer, seid ihr nicht Toren'). The motif could be interpreted as a 'Turkish' feature, for it is part and parcel of Mozart's 'Turkish' manner, as both the overture and the first Janissary chorus illustrate. But, like other ingredients of this style, it has been absorbed here into the opera's life-blood.

But it was not solely the character of Osmin that inspired Mozart to think of how the role of 'Turkish' music in the opera might be expanded beyond a purely colouristic one. For even in the most traditional context of all for this style – the two Janissary choruses – Mozart moved beyond the purely decorative. He appears to have been the only composer of his time to have abandoned verisimilitude by writing his 'Janissary' choruses for female as well as male voices. Perhaps his decision was partly timbral, but it also makes an important dramatic point. For the presence of the women (whom the stage director is left free to interpret as slaves, wives, or both) works a transformation on the traditional 'Turkish' values associated with Eastern males – force and sexual prowess. Through the addition of the women's voices Mozart suggests a more universal celebration of the generosity, largeness of mind and clemency displayed by the Pasha. In this sense Selim, though he does not sing, does have his own music.

Architecture: dialogue, music and tonal plan

Mozart's integral approach to his musical portrayal of Osmin and his enlarged sense of music's role in the opera as a whole had to make their peace not only with a libretto written for another composer working in another tradition, but also with the inherent limitations which comic opera in German imposed on him. Most obvious of all

was its use of spoken dialogue rather than the simple recitative of the Italians. This preference, shared with French comic opera, was not simply a linguistic one, but rather sprang from the strong historical roots of both genres in spoken comedy.

To a thoughtful composer, the presence of spoken dialogue posed several problems. Musical numbers in a dialogue-rich libretto could easily sound like lyric byways, modestly enhancing already well-developed characters and situations, or worse, serving up gratuitous or platitudinous aphorisms. Even under the best of circumstances there remained the very palpable aesthetic jolt created each time the piece shifted from spoken word to musical utterance.

In the *Entführung* Mozart makes use of several strategies which suggest his own sensitivity to this issue. He had Stephanie turn Belmonte's opening monologue into the song 'Hier soll ich dich denn sehen', minimising the role of the spoken word until after the drama has weighed anchor with the Lied and duet of Osmin and Belmonte. Only a few lines of speech intervene between the two numbers, and Mozart begins the Lied's brief ritornello already in mid-sentence, so to speak, on a *i*₆ chord in the middle of a bar (Ex. 10). As a result, the

Ex. 10



opening scene – composed of arietta, Lied and duet – begins to approximate to what Mozart will later call an *Introduzione* in *Don Giovanni*.

Mozart avails himself of other devices to bridge the gap between spoken word and song. He begins some numbers off-centre tonally or syntactically, creating the effect of taking up the music already in progress. On other occasions he mediates with the most traditional form of sung speech – recitative.

A technique Mozart had used with impressive effect in *Zaide* – melodrama – does not appear in the *Entführung*. In 1778 Mozart had written to his father full of enthusiasm for this new genre after hearing Georg Benda's *Medea* at Mannheim:

In truth, nothing has ever surprised me so much! – for I had always imagined

such a thing would have no effect! – You of course know that in it there is no singing, only declamation – and the music is like an obligato recitative – occasionally there is speech along with the music, which then makes the most splendid effect... You know what my opinion would be? – Most recitatives in opera ought to be treated in this manner – and only occasionally, when the words *can be expressed well in music* should there be singing in recitative (12 November 1778).

As Mozart implies here, melodrama offered an alternative to obligato recitative, not spoken dialogue: it best served intensely wrought moments involving serious personages, such as Gomatz and Soliman in *Zaide*. Somehow Belmonte and Constanze did not offer plausible opportunities for its use in the *Entführung*. Pasha Selim, on the other hand, presented a very attractive possibility – noble, serious, an actor's role – but his two great opportunities for dramatic monologues are pre-empted by Constanze's 'Martern aller Arten' in Act II and the lovers' recitative and duet in Act III. Then again, Mozart's enthusiasm for melodrama may have waned by 1782.

Different in style and conception though *Idomeneo* and the *Entführung* may be, Mozart's composing of the earlier Munich opera solidified his sense of dramatic architecture in a way very fruitful for his first great comic opera. Tonal planning represents one important area. Table 4 shows the opera's tonal layout.

Table 4 *Tonal plan of Die Entführung aus dem Serail*

ACT I												
Overt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7					
C-c-C	C	g-B _b -D	F-a	A	C	B _b	c-C					
ACT II												
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16				
A	E _b	g	C	G	D	C	B _b	D-g-E _b -D				
ACT III												
17	18	19	20	21								
E _b	b	D	B _b	F-C								

Mozart has clearly organised the opera around the colour of his 'Turkish' key, C major, heard in a full third of the opera's numbers. He deploys it in much the same way he had used D major in *Idomeneo*. As in all his mature operas, both these works begin and end in the 'home' key, and, additionally, the first act (comprising the

simple strophic pattern Bretzner had invited in both Pedrillo's Romanze (No. 18) and Osmin's Lied (No. 2). Both numbers, significantly, are sung as explicit songs in the drama. Elsewhere, ABA-type song forms (with or without textual repetition) appear in Belmonte's opening aria and the first Janissary chorus. The popular single-tempo rondo appears on two occasions: Blonde's second aria (ABABA, No. 12) and Osmin's last triumphant solo (ABACABA with coda, No. 19). The rondo principle also guides the drinking duet of Osmin and Pedrillo (No. 14).

(2) *Cavatina*. By this we refer to the eighteenth-century aria type composed of just the first part of the old *da capo* form, with its full text stated twice:

	A ₁		A ₂
Major:	I	V	I
Minor:	i	III	i

Osmin's sadistic 'Solche hergelaufne Laffen' (No. 3) illustrates the major form with added codas, and Constanze's exquisite elegy 'Traurigkeit' (No. 10) uses the minor-mode form after an introductory recitative. Mozart employs the cavatina in a more song-like fashion for Blonde's first aria (No. 8). His most innovative and masterly deployment appears in Belmonte's greatest aria, 'O wie ängstlich' (No. 4), to which we shall return.

(3) *Two-tempo structures*. It has been little remarked how frequently multiple-tempo patterns appear in the *Entführung* from beginning to end. One expects them in ensembles – especially larger ones concluding acts – but apart from such instances the *Entführung* includes seven further arias and duets which make significant formal use of multiple tempos. We have already discussed two of these, the Lied and duet of Osmin and Belmonte in Act I and the following aria of Osmin. Additionally all three of the penultimate Bb numbers mentioned earlier use familiar two-tempo patterns of the day. The first, Constanze's 'Ach, ich liebe' (ABA'B, No. 6) shifts gears after the initial A section on a cue from the text ('Yet how quickly my joy vanished') and later repeats the opening material in the faster tempo with augmented note values to preserve its character. The other two numbers, Belmonte's 'Wenn der Freude Thränen fließen' (No. 15) and the lovers' duet (No. 20), use the most familiar formal plan of all – a slow cavatina typically in gavotte rhythm (A₁A₂) followed by a new cadential section in the faster tempo, which is expanded on repetition (B₁B₂):

Slow			Faster	
A ₁		A ₂	B ₁	B ₂
I	V	I		

Mozart's most complex and unusual treatment of the two-tempo aria occurs in an equally serious context – in 'Märtern aller Arten', the most controversial number in the opera.

'Märtern aller Arten'

The show-stopping musical centrepiece of the *Entführung* poses many questions. When and why was it added? What are we to make of its unorthodox form, especially its extensive opening ritornello? Can it claim any dramatic relevance, or does it do no more than arrest the drama for the benefit of the prima donna?

That the aria and the dialogue supporting it were a Viennese interpolation is clear from comparison with Bretzner's libretto. Possibly the desire to get rid of the rather insipid rondeau text originally sung here by Constanze and Blonde prompted Stephanie and Mozart. At any rate, they moved in a direction precisely opposite to its passive expression of hope for release from torment in either this or a future life. Bretzner, in all fairness, was no prissy moraliser by nature. He very probably tailored this text and his pathetic, unassertive portrait of Constanze to the strengths of her creator at Berlin, Marie Niklas. 'As an actress everything strong, ponderous, or overwrought lies outside her sphere', wrote one Berlin theatre-goer of her in 1780. 'She makes great efforts to bring it off, but is not convincing. . . . On the other hand, in every tender, innocent, merry, and good-hearted role she plays with great naturalness.'¹² He also remarked in this respect that 'her triumph is the rondeau'.

Elsewhere in the drama, Bretzner had provided for Marie Niklas's considerable vocal abilities in a way typical of Northern music-dramatic planning and squarely at odds with the *aria di bravura* as employed by Mozart and the Italians. At the very end of the drama – after all is said and done, and Selim has embraced Belmonte as his long-lost son and has welcomed Constanze as his daughter-in-law – Bretzner's heroine bursts into a paean of joyous rapture over the prospect of future bliss and the danger now safely passed. André set this aria (and indeed quite skilfully) as a ternary-form showpiece for Marie Niklas. It comes precisely where such an extended piece of virtuosic work could do no harm at all to the drama, already safely home to port.

Following north German precedents, Bretzner's earlier three-act librettos had also tucked the heroine's bravura aria in this same snug spot. They all trade in the unvaried theme of gratitude and joy (about the only one possible at this late moment). We can sense their dramatic irrelevance and uniformity in their poetic incipits, all introduced by the affective interjections Bretzner could seldom do without:

Das wütende Heer (1779): 'Ach! wie schwimmt mein Herz in Wonne'

('Ah! how my heart swims in bliss')

Der Irrwisch (1779): 'Ach! noch schwank ich halb im Taumel'

('Ah! I am still reeling, half delirious')

Belmont und Constanze (1781): 'Ah, mit freudigen Entzücken'

('Ah, with joyous rapture')

Stephanie's revision of the second of these operas for Umlauf in 1781 as *Das Irrlicht* had not included any attempt to relocate the bravura aria of the heroine Blanka, which stands as the penultimate number in the opera after a long prose dénouement. One suspects, in consequence, that Stephanie was urged to the excision of Constanze's similar aria in the *Einführung*, and the substitution of 'Martern aller Arten' earlier in the drama. It would appear entirely reasonable, then, to credit 'Martern aller Arten' to Mozart's account along with every other musical modification in the original libretto.

Since Stephanie and Mozart were not prepared to restructure Bretzner's plan in any major way, only a few opportunities for relocating an *aria di bravura* for the heroine presented themselves. The spot eventually selected offered several advantages. The ungenial duet between Constanze and Blonde could be eliminated, the Pasha could be more fully integrated into the drama (in Bretzner's version he does not even appear in Act II), and the prima donna now had at least one scene in the opera crowned by an exit aria. Two infelicities had to be endured: (1) Cavaleri was now expected to sing two demanding arias in a row, something Mozart never asked of any singer before or after, and (2) a new and in some respects inconsistent side of Constanze's personality had to be developed very hastily in a preparatory interchange with the Pasha, in order to justify a spirited outburst from the otherwise dispirited Constanze.

So completely did Stephanie change Constanze's tone that her sudden self-possession and insolence toward her threatening wooer

strikes us as nearly equivalent to Blonde's comportment toward Osmiin in their altercation earlier in the act. (The temporary equivalence perhaps offers some small justification for the otherwise ridiculous decision of an 1859 Parisian production which assigned Constanze's great aria to Blonde.¹³)

The text Stephanie composed for Mozart is in some ways an unusual one. Though originally printed in a single block of sixteen lines, it divides poetically and logically into three stanzas of six, four and six lines:

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| A. | Martern aller Arten
Mögen meiner warten,
Ich verlache Qual und Pein.
Nichts soll mich erschüttern,
Nur dann würd' ich zittern,
Wenn ich untreu könnte seyn. | Tortures of every kind
May await me,
I deride agony and pain.
Nothing can unnerve me,
I would only tremble
If I could be untrue. |
| B. | Lass dich bewegen,
Verschone mich!
Des Himmels Segen
Belohne dich! | Let yourself be moved,
Spare me!
May heaven's blessing
Be your reward! |
| C. | Doch du bist entschlossen.
Willig, unverdrossen
Wähl' ich jede Pein und Noth.
Ordne nur, gebiethe,
Lärme, löbe, wüthe,
Zuletzt befreyr mich doch der Tod. | But you are determined.
Willingly and unwearied
I choose every pain and misery.
Order away, command,
Bluster, storm, rage,
In the end death shall free me. |
- (*geht ab*) (exit)

Standard formal strategies in serious opera had all been developed with poetic texts of one or two stanzas in mind. A triple division, comparatively rare, always elicited unconventional responses from composers.¹⁴

The first six lines of Stephanie's poem establish Constanze's air of open defiance, of scorn for the horrors awaiting her, and of perpetual loyalty to Belmonte. The next four lines swerve suddenly to the supplicating tones familiar from her scene with the Pasha in Act I. Her pleas avail nothing, however, so the final sextain returns with even greater firmness to her original defiant resolve to embrace death.

Mozart's setting has some points of contact with a genre of two-tempo aria then at the beginning of its vogue among the Italians, which they and Mozart called simply 'Rondo':

Slower		Faster	
A ₁	B	A ₂	
I	V	I	

Mozart's experimentation with various two-tempo patterns in the *Einführung* marks the beginning of his continuous cultivation of the Rondo throughout his final decade, both in operas and concert arias. Like the two-tempo pattern quoted earlier (p. 76), the Rondo involves a departure from the tonic only in the middle of the slow section. The same holds for 'Martern aller Arten', but in this case Mozart was much more directly concerned with the special rhetorical properties of the text itself:

Tempo: Allegro		Allegro assai		Allegro assai	
Section: R ₁	A	B ₁	R ₂ (B)	C ₁	B ₂
Text:	1-3	4-6	7-8	9-10	11-16
Key:	I	-V/v	V	V/I	I

The contrasting B section of Stephanie's text presented a special problem. After beseeching the Pasha's mercy and invoking heaven's blessing if he grants it, Constanze cannot possibly return to the opening stanza. The third section supplies what is needed here: she reacts to his unresponsiveness to her pleas not with reiteration but with intensification of her original resolve. The last section (C) she states twice – a link to the two-tempo Rondo in its tonic orientation and cadential character. But Mozart turns this convention of repetition to poetic account by repeating Constanze's pliant supplications from the B section between the two statements of C.

The reinserion of the B section, one might argue, points to the 'instrumental' dimension of this extraordinary aria, adumbrated and kept in our ears by the *concertino* of solo flute, oboe, violin, and cello. For the repetition of the 'Lass dich bewegen' section provides a sonata-like restatement in the tonic of the material previously presented in the dominant, something not considered necessary in the Rondo.

Still, there is nothing abstract about the dramatic role of the aria, which Mozart went out of his way to insert at the very mid-point of the opera, rather than simply set or substitute for Bretzner's *aria di*

brevura at the end. 'Martern aller Arten' moves into clear dramatic focus if we hear it not as an expression of Constanze's defiance itself but of her struggle for this new-found spirit of resolve, a struggle which encompasses both proud derision and earnest pleading. If so, what better vehicle than the trappings of the concerto? The long opening ritornello, supposedly such a puzzle to auditors and such a headache to stage directors, offers a perfect medium for a preliminary instrumental-pantomimetic exposition of the struggle, for its own form anticipates the alternation of defiance and supplication co-existing in the embattled heroine. And the unusual reiteration of the B section in the middle of the Allegro assai – where an audience in 1782 would least expect it – carries the uneasy struggle of her two sides into the most conventional and, often, dramatically irrelevant section of this aria type.

Let us not overlook another struggle, the one going on in Selim's breast. He, too, plays his part in the aria, the opening words of which he himself supplied in the preceding dialogue. Mozart reflects the 'Eastern' harshness that temporarily holds sway over the Pasha's better instincts by injecting 'Turkish' elements into Constanze's aria. The very key of C major is one. Then there is the main motif, to which he himself has supplied the text – unisono, vigorously triadic, duple with firm downbeats, and invoking immediately the sharpened fourth degree (Ex. 12a). And just prior to it the ritornello's con-

Ex. 12a

Allegro
CONSTANZE

Mar-tern al - ler Ar - ten, al - ler Ar - ten mö - gen

Ex. 12b

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cluding theme echoes the *échappée* embellishment of a descending scale heard in the Janissary choruses (Ex. 12b). The rising triad in the accompaniment heard in the C sections had already done service as an emblem of Osmin's spleen, and the riotous monophonic scales inundating the closing pages create an appropriately frenzied conclusion of a vaguely 'Turkish' stamp.

There is good dramatic sense beneath the introduction of these 'Turkish' tokens, as there is in every passage in 'Marten aller Arten', from its expansive opening *ritornello* to its high-voltage conclusion. The dark side of Selim's complex personality has evoked, in the best traditions of opera, a strong new voice in Constanze's hitherto melancholic personality. This new voice offered Mozart the opportunity to deal musically with a central relationship in the drama, to accommodate his *prima donna*, and to impress an audience he was anxious to win over.

The Romanze

On a far humbler level, Mozart displayed the same masterly creativity in dealing with song forms when he confronted and subtly modified two especially characteristic strophic genres in German operas of the day, the *Romanze* and the *Vaudeville*.

The first of these Mozart actually called by its French name, 'Romanze', in the autograph score of the opera. But even though it was indebted to French example, the German *Romanze* had from its inception adopted a tone derived from a native forebear, the centuries-old tradition of the *Bänkelsänger*, or mountebank. It was the practice of these lowly, itinerant singers to set up platforms at fairs or in town squares and to recite their tragic and often grisly ballads as they pointed with a long stick to episodes depicted on a large piece of canvas or cloth. Usually, the *Bänkelsänger* sang about current events of a sensational nature – murders, suicides, or purported supernatural visitations, for example – while an accomplice sold printed copies of the poem and melody to the auditors.

As a literary category, the *Romanze* appeared in the 1750s as a mildly ironic imitation of this popular tradition. (The tone of a good *Romanze* was described in an important anthology issued in 1774 as one 'composed of caprice and drollery, of feigned simplicity and affected seriousness, sorrow, compassion, astonishment, and so forth'.¹³) It also absorbed features from similar poetry in France, Spain and England. Poets established a preference for the folk-like

ballad metre, or four-line stanzas with first and third lines in iambic tetrameter and second and fourth in iambic trimeter. And when the *Romanze* found its way into German comic opera in the 1760s, librettists followed French models in fashioning the poem's narrative as a doublet of the opera's own plot. Usually a character sings the *Romanze* as an explicit song, warning someone, through the little story it tells, of the dark consequences a projected course of action might bring with it.

The primacy of the *Romanze*'s narrative and its folkish character led most German composers to adopt a syllabic style in a simple strophic setting. They also overwhelmingly preferred moderate tempos – so much so that, as in the case of Pedrillo's 'In Mohrenland', a tempo designation might be omitted altogether. To varying degrees, these composers followed Rousseau's practical lead in trying to achieve the somewhat 'archaic' style he urged for a good *romance*. Various means were used – irregular melodic construction, frequent recourse to the minor mode, harmonic enrichment with secondary dominants and diminished chords, and modal degrees or modal ambivalence between major and minor.

As a literary phenomenon the *Romanze* was largely a northern product, but Austrian composers and audiences welcomed it in the librettos they imported from the north. Stephanie never thought to eliminate this popular item in any of the librettos he adapted, and in the *Entführung* he preserved Pedrillo's *Romanze* even though he dismantled the action ensemble in which it occurs.

Bretzner's 'In Mohrenland' does not confine itself simply to providing a narrative reflex of the opera's plot, as custom had established. It also creates a new role for this lowly genre as an ingredient in the elopement itself. Pedrillo, we learn, has been wont to sing such songs in the streets at night, so the Janissaries will take no particular notice of him. But tonight the completion of his song signals to Constanze and Blonde that they are to throw open their windows. Each passing stanza is an eternity to Belmonte, who breaks in after the second to urge Pedrillo to be finished quickly. By playing upon his nervous impatience, Bretzner quite cleverly turns the repetitive strophic structure of the *Romanze* to dramatic account.

The tense, expectant atmosphere urged an equivalent aura of hushed tension in the music. Mozart's setting is often described as loosely Moorish or exotic, in response to the text's subject, but the dramatic situation on stage provided the main impetus for the way he chose to interpret Bretzner's poem. Pedrillo is to accompany

himself on the mandolin, and Mozart exploits this instrument not only with the 6/8 *alla siciliana* metre and pizzicato string accompaniment, but also with the choppy, hesitant one-bar cadences in B minor in the ritornellos, which imitate the trochaic metre characteristic of the up-down motion of a mandolin player's strumming hand (Ex. 13). Throughout the Romanze the trochees stand at metric odds with the firmly iambic tune which Pedrillo sings.

Ex. 13

Romanze

PEDRILLO

I. In Moh-ren - land ge-fan-gen war...

In some respects this tune follows the folk-like ways of earlier Romanzen, but not in the complexity of its motivic structure. As Ex. 14 illustrates, the rising and falling conjunct fourths which proliferate across the piece's surface appear as well on the song's highest architectural level. The descending B minor tetrachord (B-F#) represents only one process, however: there is interwoven with it a concomitant descent from D to B, itself the handiwork of a pair of falling fourths – D to A, then C to G, outlined harmonically and melodically in Pedrillo's first two phrases.

Ex. 14

Ritornello

Stanza I

etc.

Another fourth continuing this pattern seems called for – it would complete both structural descents with its termini B and F#. But Mozart compresses the up-down motion of the earlier phrases, clinging to G and then slipping down directly on to F#. Possibly he had been led to this melodic plan by Bretzner's stanzaic structure, which adds an extra line of iambic tetrameter to the ballad metre scheme:

- | | | |
|---|---|------------|
| A | In Mohrenland gefangen war | (D major) |
| B | Ein Mädel hübsch und fein; | (A major) |
| A | Sah roth und weiss, war schwarz von Haar, | (C major) |
| A | Seufzt Tag und Nacht und weinte gar; | (G major) |
| B | Wollt' gern erlöset seyn. | (F# minor) |

The parallel D–A, C–G motion leaves us hanging on the 'added' fourth line disturbing the ABAB ballad metre scheme. Our ears still await a concluding trimeter 'B', rhyming with 'fein', to complete the stanza, which the compressed phrase resolving on to F# supplies.

The arrival on the dominant completes the descending tetrachord, but the other structural descent from D to B is left hanging until the jittery pizzicato ritornello sets in once again. As a result, the music's structure is at once open and circular. There is mild irony, too. The poem's final line brightly announces the successful escape of the imaginary knight and lady in its narrative, but Pedrillo's concluding 'hop-sa-sa' dies uneasily in the night air on the dominant, and the last statement of the ritornello stops skitterishly in mid-air, suspended in modal indecision between B minor and D major. The lovers in the opera, in fact, will fare far worse in their own escape attempt, which is set in motion by this ambiguous Romanze.

Belmonte

Now to the aria of Belmonte in A major. You know how 'O wie ängstlich, o wie feurig' is expressed. – And his beating 'loving heart' has also been portrayed already – with the two violins in octaves. – And it was written entirely for Adamberger's voice. You can see the trembling – irresolution – how his heaving breast rises, which is expressed by a crescendo – you hear the murmuring and sighing, expressed by the first violins with mutes and a flute in unison (26 September 1781).

With these appeals to seemingly naive pictorialism, Mozart described to Leopold the most revealing, characteristic and subtle of the arias in the opera – and one of the most beautiful as well. What kind of hero is Belmonte? Bretzner, in common with many libret-

tists, looked upon a protagonist's first aria as the most important occasion for fixing his dramatic character. His Belmonte in this aria is a lower paralysed with hope and fear at the moment of seeing his beloved – an excruciating moment in this case, for he knows she will be in the company of her would-be lover.

Mozart had asked Stephanie to insert an earlier aria for Belmonte, which offers a preliminary glimpse of the ambivalence in his breast. Uncertain and tentative, and marked with skitterish dynamics, the melody of 'Hier soll ich dich denn sehen' opens up cautiously to its high *g'*. Its first note seems unsure whether it is to be *crusis* or *anacrusis* (Ex. 15); but then out of initial tentativeness blossoms

Ex. 15



instinctive lyricism, capped by the high *a'* of 'bringe mich ans Ziel'.

Mozart deepens and completes this preliminary portrait of his hero with 'O wie ängstlich'. So thoroughly does this aria describe Belmonte that for the rest of the drama he develops further only in ensembles (the quartet and lovers' duet). His two additional arias contribute nothing of dramatic relevance to his character, and in fact when the second (No. 17) is omitted, as often happens, No. 15 is usually plucked from its place near the end of Act II and substituted for it in Act III.

No such transference of 'O wie ängstlich' could possibly be contemplated, at least not without carping the preceding dialogue between Belmonte and Pedrillo along with it. Their interchange not only sets the stage verbally for the aria's poetic burden with Belmonte's exclamation, 'My heart is beating with fear and joy', but more importantly it sketches in the kind of young man who might find himself caught between these emotions.

The strength of Belmonte's ardent love for Constanze is also his weakness, for it makes him a hapless prey to pangs of jealousy and fear over her fidelity. It is up to Pedrillo to channel events, to invoke reality and pragmatism against his master's airy hopes and fears. As Sonja Riekmann has put it in a thoughtful study, 'However understandable Belmonte's anxiety may appear, it indicates a sentimental,

undynamic nature. One gets the impression that without Pedrillo's power of action the prisoners would never get out of the seraglio.¹⁶ 'O wie ängstlich' is without doubt one of the most pictorial arias Mozart ever wrote. Scarcely a significant word escapes musical painting:

ängstlich (anxious) – open cadence, staccato, piano
feurig (fiery) – closed cadence, staccato, forte
klipft (beats) – violin figure, staccato¹⁷
liebevolles Herz (loving heart) – chromatic inflections, roulade on 'volles'
Zähre (tear) – trickle-down figure in first violins
Schmerz (pain) – deceptive cadence, V-IV
zittern, wanken, zagen, schwanken (I shake, waver, hesitate, falter) – 'heartbeat' figure in minor with *fp* accents
es hebt sich die schnellende Brust (my swelling breast heaves) – murmuring demisemiquavers rising above a crescendo
Lispeln (whisper) – flute fluttering in demisemiquavers
Seufzen (sigh) – demisemiquaver flips on weak beats
täuscht, Traum (deceive, dream) – augmented sixth chord

Mozart could indulge himself to such a degree because the pictorial technique, far from serving its own ends, acts as an ingenious psychological tool.

His letter of 26 September 1781, quoted above, spells out the factors uppermost in his mind – Adamberger's voice and Belmonte's irresolution. The two are not completely separate, however. The vocal writing in the aria suggests that Adamberger had a particular gift for singing expressive chromatic neighbours, appoggiaturas, and passing notes. These are precisely the ingredients Mozart had lavished on the role of Ilia in *Idomeneo*, suggesting a subtle parallel between her and Belmonte. His later arias, too, elaborate the same chromatic touches seen in 'O wie ängstlich' as an emblem of his hesitancy.

Musical indecision and wavering appear on several planes. At the beginning the dominant and subdominant jostle for control, both in the brief opening recitative and in the first two phrases of the aria, where after an open cadence on the dominant a mildly ungrammatical subdominant asserts itself and forms a plagal close (Ex. 16*a*). A hundred other composers of the day would probably have written a parallel second phrase here resembling the one proposed in Ex. 16*b*.

Harmonic irresolution appears several times in the aria after this. E major, heard in bar 28 as the dominant of A minor, converts abruptly to E minor. This turns out to be the subdominant of ii,

Ex. 16a

Aria
Andante
BELMONTE

O wie ängstlich, O wie feurig

Ex. 16b

O wie feurig

B minor, but the dominant of that key, to which Belmonte's heaving breast swells, decides to veer off to D major instead. Though highly irregular as the goal key of the first section, this subdominant could scarcely be bettered as an area for Constanze's imagined whispers and sighs.

In the second half of the aria tonal stability returns. But the text now appears disordered and with it the sequence of musical images traversed in the first half. The 'heartbeat' motif assumes complete control, substituting for other figures derived from it (as at 'Schon zitter' ich und wanke'). It participates as well in a final delightful allusion Mozart makes to the young lovers' predicament in the closing ritornello: Belmonte's heartbeats slowly die away beneath a reminiscence in the woodwinds of Constanze's whispers and sighs, the two of them separated, as it were, by a sustained tonic octave in the horns. Thus at the return to dialogue Mozart leaves us with a sort of musical preview of the uneasy scene that follows – Belmonte and Constanze finally together again, yet still separated by the presence of the Pasha.

Unity and coherence

Compared with other German operas of its day, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* set new standards of musical ambition. A popular, apocryphal anecdote, first aired by Niemtschek in 1798, records a purported exchange between Joseph II and Mozart over the opera: 'Too beautiful for our ears, my dear Mozart, and monstrous many notes!' Exactly as many as are necessary, Your Majesty.' The tale fits neatly into the posthumous myth of Mozart the free artist on the outside of the Viennese musical establishment and ruled only by his innate genius. Its historical plausibility may be questioned on several grounds – it does not sort with Mozart's anxiousness to please the Viennese, with the musical concessions he admitted making to Caterina Cavalieri's 'geläufige Gurgel', or with the cuts in several numbers which he later sanctioned.

Apart from its suitability for the rites of Mozart-worship, the anecdote also thrived on the inability of many among the opera's initial auditors to grasp the music's psychological involvement in nearly everything that matters in the drama. The true subject of this brief conversation, if anything like it ever occurred, might well have been Mozart's accompaniments, perceived by many of his contemporaries as overwrought, distracting and difficult to absorb. Yet precisely here throbbed the very heart of Mozart's style – or, to push a metaphor, the diastole to the systole of the human voice which together create the sense of a living organism in each of his mature operas.

Actually, 'accompaniment' is too narrow a term for a complex of phrasing, harmonic rhythm, cadences, motivic structure, and dialogue with the instruments. Mozart used all these elements with unprecedented freedom and plasticity. For a brief illustration, we need look no further than his sublime setting of the first two lines of Constanze's meditation 'Traurigkeit ward mir zum Loose' in Act II (Ex. 17).

The first word means everything; its motif, announced ahead of time by the woodwinds, speaks all the more eloquently in that it is never used for anything else in the aria. The following nine bars explore three new motifs (x, y, z); each has its own rhythmic shape, but each also echoes the poignant upward leap of 'Traurigkeit'. Further, the half-steps that account for virtually all the voice-leading in the opening motto find their way back into our ears at every opportunity.

Ex. 17

Andante con moto

CONSTANZE

Trau - rig - keit ward mir zum

6 x' ward mir zum Loo - se, well ich dir - ent - ris - sen bin, y y'

11 $z (= y' inv.)$ well ich dir - ent - ris - sen bin, $ten.$ p well ich dir - ent - ris - sen bin, $ten.$ p

16 well ich dir - ent - ris - sen bin.

91

The unifying power of the strong opening gesture is apparent, yet the aria does more than languish in Constanze's 'Traurigkeit'. A striking pause and stern *D's* from the woodwinds twice dramatise the cruelty of the 'Loose' ('fate') about which she complains. Similarly, mention of her being torn from Belmonte ('ich dir entrissen') inspires disruptions of her line. These linear disruptions complement other elements in Mozart's style – the varied harmonic rhythms used in each new bar, the sforzandi, the flexible phrase lengths (6–5–6, subdivided 2+4–2+3–2+2+2), and the cadence goals (i₆, IV1, i).

Now let us look at what André did with these same two lines (not an especially unfair comparison in this instance, since he too was setting Bretzner's verses for an accomplished soprano). Though a pleasant, competent eight-bar phrase, Ex. 18 falls woefully short of bringing to life Constanze's sorrow, much less anything that Bretzner's text is saying. Everything is squared off, the harmonies change regularly and predictably, the ii–I sequence falls right where we expect it, and for his cadences the composer can think of nothing

Ex. 18

[Andantino grazioso]

CONSTANZE

5 Trau - rig - keit ward mir zum Loo - se, well ich dir - ent - ris - sen bin, p

8 ris - sen bin, Trau - rig - keit ward mir zum Loo - se

11 well ich dir - ent - ris - sen bin, sfz

more original than an open-closed pattern. Such a framework leaves no room for anything striking. How pallid and pointless the tonicisation of the subdominant (bars 6–7), compared with the sinking effect that reaches out for our sympathies from bars 15–17 of Mozart's setting! André opts at the beginning for the neutral up-down scurrying in conjunct motion which he had learnt from French melodies. By the time his Constanze gets to her sforzando leap in bar 11 it is too late for such a token gesture to mean much.

Psychologically and emotionally, Mozart creates vividly and specifically from text, character and situation, engaging the listener with every compositional detail. André, of whom northern operatic tradition demanded far less, demands less of us as well. One number readily blends into the next in his score. He cast his 'Traurigkeit' in rondo form, even though the succeeding duet is also a rondo. Most telling of all, the main theme of the aria is disturbingly similar to that of the preceding aria, which stands at such great spiritual distance from what Constanze sings (Blonde's 'Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln', Ex. 19). After the initial upbeat of the earlier number,

Ex. 19

Allegro commodol
BLONDE 1/4

Durch Zärtlich-keit und Schmeicheln, Ge-fäll-ig-keit und Scher-zen, er-
o-berbt man die Her-zen der jun-gen Mäd-chen leicht—

the recipe is much the same: it's up a fourth and down a sixth in stepwise motion, then on to a tonicisation of IV, correct the seasoning at once with a sharpened fourth degree, then end with a double appoggiatura, all without ever violating the control of duple bar groups.

To return to Mozart, we might recall here Dent's influential assessment of the opera as 'a succession of masterly and original

numbers' with no real unity of style. His major criticism of the opera, embodied in this statement, clearly has nothing to do with the internal consistency and musical merits of individual items, nor their dramatic relevance, but rather with the overall impression they create as a group. Dent no doubt realised that the range of serious and comic in the opera was nothing extraordinary for the period. The real source of what dismayed him lies rather in the profusion of German, French, Italian and 'Turkish' elements which rub shoulders in the *Entführung*.

Mozart expended every ounce of his genius in tempering each one of these elements to fit clear and consistent operatic-dramatic ends. But there were clear limits set by the model he and Stephanie worked from; under these circumstances it was inevitable that incongruities would arise whenever Mozart's poetics of opera ran up against structures created for more modest musical accompaniment. Here, indeed, loomed the central aesthetic problem of the opera. Its stylistic diversity does not really lie between the individual musical numbers but between the competing claims of Mozart's music and Bretzner's dialogue. They are claims we must learn to live with. Any modern performance or analysis that fails to take the dialogue seriously does Mozart no great service and compounds the problems posed by the opera.

Modern critics have tried in various ways to analyse the inner coherence of the music, usually under the assumption that what lies between the opera's twenty-one numbers should be ignored as so much inert matter. They begin, of course, with the overture. Constantin Floros has charted a constellation of associations between the overture and several later numbers, which demonstrates nothing more than the motivic consistency of Mozart's 'Turkish' style.¹⁸ Stefan Kunze objected to Floros's programmatic implications and preferred to view the overture as 'an autonomous instrumental composition', an emblem, in fact, of Mozart's commitment to 'musical autonomy'. Any hidden motivic connections with the opera are 'accidental'.¹⁹ Kunze fails to acknowledge, much less explain, the overture's formal unruliness; its strong expressive contrasts he interprets with antiseptic detachment as 'the objective idea, as it were, of the theatre as comedy'.

Imagine, however, that you are a stage director entertaining the idea of raising the curtain with the first notes of the overture (as often happens these days). Now Kunze's pallid metaphor must be transformed. No disembodied play of ideas about 'the theatre as comedy'

takes centre stage, but Belmonte, thrust into a menacing, exotic environment. Amid the disorderly racket of the overture's 'Turkish' sections, the hesitant, darkened anticipation of the hero's Lied emerges in C minor as a personality – as a complete, closed lyric utterance.

To be sure, in Mozart's own day our experiment would have raised eyebrows along with the curtain, which normally remained down for an opera's overture, no matter how closely tied its music might have been to the rest of the opera. Even so, Daniel Heartz has argued, Mozart's overtures from *Idomeneo* onward follow Gluck's directive in the preface to *Alceste* (1769) that an operatic overture should acquaint the audience with the nature of the action about to unfold – in other words, that it should act as the opera's dramatic argument.²⁰ In so doing it also adumbrates a unity of musical discourse which interacts with and deepens the dramatic unities, both the neo-Aristotelian ones of time, place and action (scrupulously observed by Bretzner) and more especially the all-encompassing one which superseded these three in the minds of theorists like Diderot, Mercier and Lessing – unity of interest.

Yet within the opera Mozart appears to carry on an especially brisk trade in elements that challenge our sense of stylistic well-formedness – contrast, disruption, tonal irregularity. In a play where East meets West the results could scarcely have been otherwise, given the Western stereotypes of Islamic personality traits current in Mozart's day. Disruption threatens whenever Osmiin appears, and the consistency with which it does so is not only a reflection of his integrated musical personality but also a major factor in the unity of the opera's musical language. What the overture promises and Osmiin embodies is sustained through each act, thanks to his enlarged presence, and achieves its full measure of dramatic integrity at the end in the most resolutely regular opera-ending item of the day, the Vaudeville.

A typical closing vaudeville in a French or German opera provides a stanza of text for each of the principals, each sung to the same folk-like tune. The text inevitably expounds a lesson learned or an insight gained from the action by each character. Each stanza ends with a refrain-like thought which all the singers repeat. Sometimes, as in the *Entführung*, a chorus follows the vaudeville.

Mozart did not set his Vaudeville and chorus in the same key, however, but rather reserved the opera's tonic C major for the perfunctory Janissary chorus tacked on to the F major Vaudeville. Hans

Keller has pointed to the seeds of this 'progressive' tonal plan in the Vaudeville tune itself (Ex. 20). Following tradition, first Belmonte and then Constanze repeat the melody exactly, but Mozart modified the second five-bar phrase for Pedrillo and Blonde (Ex. 21). Keller saw the significance of this in more forceful linear motion to the dominant (preparing for its promotion to tonic in the chorus).

Ex. 20

Andante

BELMONTE

Nie werd' ich del - ne Huld ver - ken - nen, mein Dank bleib

4 e - wig dir - ge - weith; an je - dem Ort, zu je - der

7 Zeit - werd' ich dich groß - und - e - del - nen - - - nen.

Ex. 21

PEDRILLO

und all der an - de - ren Ge - fahr: - - - ich -

42 lief, - - - als - - - ob der Kopf mit brenn - - - te.

Actually, the modification possesses more immediate import. The new phrase, less ornate and thus more appropriate to the servant pair, acts to strengthen the hold of the pitch *A* and of the sub-dominant area of the anticipated dominant (IV/V and ii⁶/V). These features pave the way for even more radical changes at precisely the same spot in Osmiin's contribution to the Vaudeville. Begrudgingly he has sung along with the others in praise of his master at the end of the first three stanzas, but he bursts out in fury at the end of Blonde's stanza, of which the last lines were clearly not intended for repetition by everyone but as a parting poke at Osmiin:

(*auf Osmiin zeigend*)
Denn seh' er nur das Tier dort an,
Ob man so was ertragen kann.

(pointing to Osmín)
For just look at that animal –
can such a thing be endured?

As happened so often before, Osmín loses control. He browbeats the music into a new key, metre and tempo with a recapitulation of the only thing he can think of in such a state – the tortures that the lovers have coming to them, first catalogued in 'Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen' in Act I.

Yet even this final outburst has been carefully prepared, not just by the earlier occurrence of the passage but also by the Vaudeville itself. In his rendition of its melody, Osmín simply exaggerates, as he has done all along, what he hears these foreign dogs sing – in this case the *A* dwelt on earlier by Pedrillo and Blonde in the tune's second phrase (see Ex. 21). By twisting its harmonisation into an augmented sixth chord²¹ he propels the piece into *A* minor instead of the anticipated *C* major (Ex. 22). Keller would like to hear this

Ex. 22

OSMÍN
7/8 Stringendo il tempo
Allegro assai
mit starrt die Zun - ge fast im Mun - de, um ih - ren Loh - n zu ord - nen an:

A minor 'retrospectively invested with the significance of a relative minor' once we get to the *C* major chorus, but its most meaningful relationship is the immediate one with *F* major, both here and in Osmín's aria in Act I. This may well be why Mozart chose *F* major for the Vaudeville in the first place.

Stephanie re-established the number's tone with a final sextain for all four lovers. Apparently he intended it to be sung, like their earlier separate stanzas, to the Vaudeville's melody. But such a crudely managed return right after Osmín's dramatic exit would have been a capital musical blunder. The lovers recover *F* major only by degrees. At first Constanze's line hangs with uncertainty on to Osmín's repeated *A*'s. Eventually her brooding sforzando half-step *A-B* yields to a high *f*. From here Constanze slowly sinks down through

the octave, withholding a solid tonic *f* until the very end of the sextain. Nothing is as hateful as revenge, the lovers observe. In contrast, to be humane and to forgive selflessly is the province of only great souls. With this drawing of the moral to the accompaniment of simple, heartfelt chordal four-part harmony Mozart anticipates the spirit of *Die Zauberflöte* more clearly than anywhere else in the opera.

When the lovers finally rejoin the Vaudeville, they pick it up right where Osmín had broken off in his wrath – with the closing epigram. And once recovered, fittingly, it is turned against him. The Pasha's noble example should be as obvious to the virtuous-minded as the return to the tonic, and

Wer diese nicht erkennen kann,
Den seh' man mit Verachtung an.

(Let him who cannot recognise this
be looked on with scorn.)

In a blaze of sunlight the Janissary chorus bursts in to second the lovers' praise. Although in a new key, their exaltations do not come out of nowhere, for Constanze's descending octave has established an important motivic link with the opening of the *C* major chorus (Ex. 23). The *C-B* figure adds a subtle tonal link, too – invoking for

Ex. 23

Allegro vivace
f

a moment the dominant of *F* Lydian, with the sharpened fourth degree characteristic of Mozart's 'Turkish' style.

The descending octave at the beginning of the chorus has another antecedent as well. It recalls and completes the *C* to *G* to *D* falling fourths left unresolved by the opening phrases of the overture (Ex. 24). Hearz has indicated in the other mature operas of Mozart 'cases where a late or even final musical gesture in the work became, at some point in the compositional process impossible to determine, the nucleus of the overture'. Here in the *Entführung* the gesture we

have cited creates not only architectural but also poetic closure. The restoration of moral order acknowledged by the Janissaries in their own key and in their own way completes a kaleidoscope of human states to which Mozart had applied his 'Turkish' style throughout the opera.

6 *The opera in performance*

On 30 May 1782, exactly ten months after having received Bretzner's libretto from Stephanie, Mozart played the final act of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* to Countess Thun-Hohenstein and Constanze Weber. Four days later the opera was put into rehearsal. Mozart looked forward eagerly to the premiere, which came six weeks later on 16 July. An influenza epidemic had closed the theatre for a week during rehearsals, and the National Singspiel no doubt needed every minute to prepare this difficult but promising new score.

The current season had not begun auspiciously that April. In each preceding year the enterprise had put three new operas into production at the start of the season, between Easter and the end of May, but this year only two appeared. Stephanie, now in sole charge of operatic productions, first scheduled Maximilian Ulbrich's *Das blaue Schmetterling*. Despite an attractive score and a strong cast (including Dauer, Fischer, Teyber and Aloysia Lange¹), the opera disappeared after only three performances.

Next the National Singspiel tried something unprecedented in its brief history – an opera buffa sung in Italian, Sacchini's *La contadina in corte* (first performed at Rome in 1765 and already familiar to Vienna from a 1768 production at the Burgtheater). Stephanie no doubt knew of strong local prejudice in favour of Italian opera, although his own avowed sympathies lay with German opera, and he may already have got wind of the emperor's plans to reinstate a troupe of Italian singers at the Burgtheater. Further, Sacchini's opera allowed him to take advantage of Antonia Bernasconi, whom Gluck had enticed to Vienna for *Alceste* and *Iphigenia auf Tauris* in late 1781. But *La contadina in corte* had to be dropped after only two performances when Bernasconi took a leave of absence in April. No other new work was ready to put into production, so older fare already in the repertory had to fill out three dreary months until Mozart's opera was ready.