

4 · COMING OF AGE IN VIENNA:
DIE ENTFÜHRUNG AUS
DEM SERAIL

by Thomas Bauman



NN A :

A U S

A I L

as Bauman

The young Mozart who arrived at Vienna in the entourage of Archbishop Colloredo in March 1781 was not the same Mozart who witnessed the triumph of his first great Viennese opera, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, sixteen months later. Changes on all fronts challenged him, especially those that came in the wake of his dismissal from the archbishop's service and his betrothal to Constanze Weber, two events that placed greater strains than ever before on his relationship with his father.

Mozart's concern during his first months in the imperial capital was to establish a fruitful musical relationship with the Viennese. Performances of his music enjoyed much success, he was befriended by influential nobles such as the countess Thun, and the court took immediate notice of him with a request for a new German opera for the National Singspiel. Barely a month into his stay, he was already thinking of returning for the Lenten season in 1782: "It is up to you alone," he told Leopold, "not the archbishop—for if he won't allow it, I'll go anyway."¹ The city acted as a catalyst in emboldening Mozart to distance himself from Colloredo, little esteemed in Vienna and a sour employer who looked on Mozart's attempts to win recognition there as acts of insubordination. Mozart went so far as to propose that Leopold and Nannerl move to Vienna as well, in effect loosing the last of the ties binding him to his provincial birthplace.

With a combination of ingenuousness and cunning (to which he resorted on other occasions as well), Mozart prepared his father through his letters for his eventual dismissal from Colloredo's service. But when it finally came that May, Leopold's reaction was much more strongly negative than Mozart had anticipated. The young man defended his actions repeatedly to Leopold by turning the entire

1. "nur auf sie kömmt es an, nicht auf den Erzbischof — denn will er es nicht erlauben, so gehe ich doch, es ist mein unglück nicht, gewis nicht!"; letter of 28 April 1781.

affair into a point of honor. And when Leopold censured rather than seconded his motives, Mozart was stung: "I must confess to you that in not a single feature of your letter do I recognize my father!—A father, perhaps, but not the best, most loving one, concerned for his own honor and that of his children."²

High-minded protestations of wounded honor, however deeply felt, were not the only issue. Mozart's letters also reveal the break's deeper, traumatic effects on his self-esteem. What had galled him most in his confrontation with the archbishop was Colloredo's having called him a *Fex* (cretin), a vilification he repeated to Leopold on several occasions. For many months Mozart continued to sustain the deepest resentment against both Colloredo and Count Arco, who had done the honors in ejecting him from his employer's presence. Mozart described Arco's actions bluntly on 13 June: "He threw me out the door and gave me a kick in the rear. Now, in plain German that means that Salzburg isn't for me anymore, excepting only the opportunity of giving the count a kick in the rear in return, even if it should happen in the open street."³ In his next letter, Mozart asked Leopold to take custody of a walking stick he had left at Salzburg,

and carry it at the ready whenever possible. Who knows whether by your hand it can take revenge on Arco on behalf of its former master—of course, only accidentally or by chance, you understand. That hungry ass will not escape my palpable discourse, even if it takes twenty years—for to see him and to put my foot to his rear are assuredly one and the same.⁴

Four days later the form of retaliation had accrued interest: "He can expect without fail a foot in the rear from me, and a box or two on the ear for good measure. For when someone insults me, I must have my revenge; and if I do no more than he did to me, it is only retribution and no punishment."⁵ A deep spiritual gulf separates the young man who wrote these words from the artist who shaped the high-minded conclusion of *The Abduction from the Seraglio* a year later.

2. "Ich muss ihnen gestehen, dass ich aus keinen einzigen Zuge ihres briefes, meinen vatter erkenne! — wohl einen vatter, aber nicht, den Besten, liebvollsten, den für seine eigene und für die Ehre seiner kinder besorgten vatter"; 19 May 1781.

3. "da schmeist er mich zur thüre hinaus, und giebt mir einen tritt im hintern. — Nun, das heisst auf teutsch, dass Salzburg nicht mehr für mich ist; ausgenommen mit guter gelegenheit dem H. grafen wieder ingleichen einen tritt im arsch zu geben, und sollte es auf öffentlicher gasse geschehen"; 13 June 1781.

4. "mithin bitte ich sie den stock mir zu liebe zu behalten. — man braucht hier stöcke, aber wozu? — zum spatziere gehen, und dazu ist Jedes stöckchen gut; also stützen sie sich darauf anstatt meiner; und tragen sie ihn wenn es möglich beständig — wer weis ob er nicht durch ihre hand bey dem Arco seinen vormaligen herrn rächen kann. — doch das versteht sich accidentaliter oder zufälligerweise; — Mein handgreiflicher Discours bleibt dem hungrigen Esel nicht aus, und sollt es in zwanzig Jahren seyn. — denn, ihn sehen, und meinen fuss in seinem Arsch, ist gewis eins"; 16 June 1781.

5. "— zum schlusse aber muss ich ihm doch schriftlich versichern dass er gewis von mir einen fuss im arsch, und noch ein paar ohrfeigen zu gewarten hat; — denn, wenn mich einer beleidigt, so muß ich mich rächen; und thue ich nicht mehr als er mir angethan, so ist es nur wiedervergeltung und keine strafe nicht"; 20 June 1781.

"Salzburg isn't for me anymore." Sooner than expected, Mozart had cast his lot with the imperial city, and almost at once an anxiety to identify with Vienna and please Viennese ears took hold of him. "Ich kenne die Nation" ("I know the nation"), he claimed on 19 September, and by 3 November he was talking about "wir Wiener" ("we Viennese"). Further, Mozart foresaw right away that his reputation as a composer in Vienna would depend heavily on the opera sought from him by the court. The greatest corps of singers on any German stage were to perform it at the Burgtheater, Vienna's elite playhouse, physically as well as administratively an extension of the imperial court. The theater's elegant façade, dwarfed by the Imperial Riding School, was captured in an engraving of 1783 by Carl Schütz (Fig. 5).

Although only a child when he wrote his first opera for the Viennese (*La finta semplice*, composed at the age of twelve), Mozart no doubt retained memories of the cabals among Vienna's composers and singers, mainly Italian, that ultimately prevented its performance. The situation was more favorable in 1781. There was no Italian company of singers, only a wing of the National Theater devoted to opera in German. Eventually the charge of providing Mozart with a libretto had befallen the director of the German opera, or National Singspiel—Gottlieb Stephanie the Younger, a mediocre actor, competent playwright, and versatile adapter of texts for the German operatic stage. Ties of friendship bound Stephanie to the Mozarts from their earlier visits to Vienna, and despite a reputation for underhandedness he remained a warm supporter of Wolfgang's.

Mozart had only one serious rival among local composers for the German company—Ignaz Umlauf, who had set the enterprise's inaugural opera, *Die Bergknappen* (1778), and who served under Antonio Salieri as its musical director. Salieri himself had provided a lone opera in German for the National Singspiel, *Der Rauchfangkehrer*, which was given its premiere on 30 April 1781, shortly after Mozart's arrival in Vienna. It enjoyed a more than respectable total of thirteen performances before being dropped from the repertory with the appearance of *The Abduction* in July 1782. After completing the opera—possibly at the behest of the emperor—Salieri took no further interest in the German company.

In the summer of 1781 Stephanie had just finished adapting a libretto for Umlauf, *Das Irrlicht*, and when confronted with the task of providing Mozart with a text as well he turned to the same source—the Leipzig businessman Christoph Friedrich Bretzner, perhaps the most popular writer of German opera texts of the day. There is no evidence that Mozart had anything at all to do with the selection of the text, Bretzner's most recent libretto, *Belmont und Constanze, oder Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, performed earlier that year at Berlin with music by Johann André. Stephanie hoped that the festivities in honor of the projected visit in mid-September by the Russian grand duke Paul Petrovich and his wife, the duchess of Württemberg, would offer an advantageous occasion for him to set his friend Mozart's talents before the court. Mozart began composing hurriedly but then learned in late August that the visit had been delayed until the end of the year and in addition that

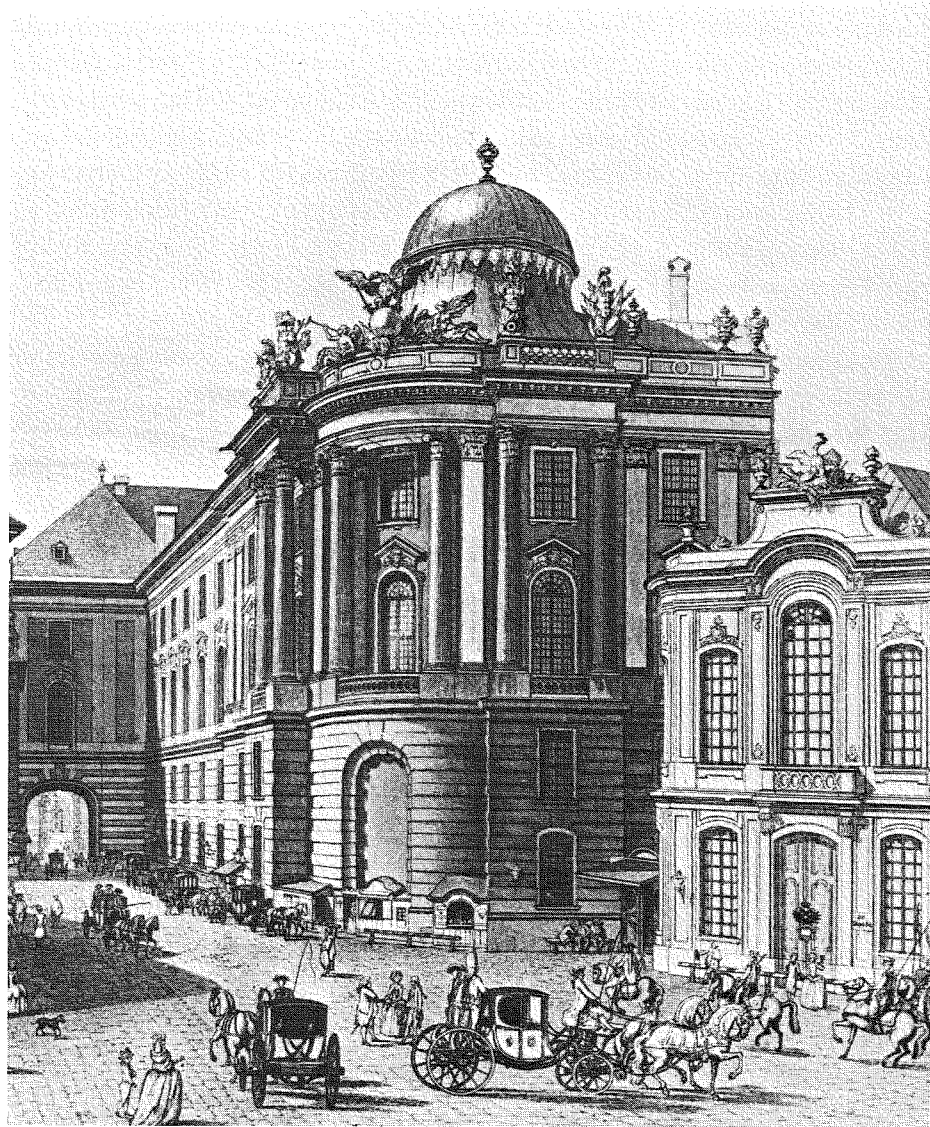


FIGURE 5
Schütz: The Michaelerplatz,
Vienna, in 1783; at right, the
Burgtheater

the court had decided to mark it with revivals of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* and *Alceste*. In the end, *The Abduction* had to wait until mid-July 1782, almost a year after its inception, to achieve its premiere with the National Singspiel. No other Mozart opera had such a lengthy gestation.

Without the delays occasioned by the Russian visitors and other factors, we would probably have in *The Abduction* today a much slighter work. Stephanie was a busy man at the time the project was hatched, and it is difficult to imagine that under such a pressing deadline he would have undertaken the significant poetic changes in Bretzner's libretto that Mozart eventually exacted from him. The more leisurely pace of composition gave Mozart an opportunity not only to create a more substantial opera, but also to write three important letters to his father in late September and early October—offering us a rare glimpse into his aesthetic of dramatic music at the time. These letters are so often quoted in the literature that we need only summarize them here.

Prior to the first, dated 26 September 1781, Mozart had sent Leopold excerpts of the overture and the numbers in act 1. In the letter, he describes the changes he and Stephanie had undertaken. The changes were motivated as much by concern for the singers of the roles involved—Johann Valentin Adamberger (Belmonte) and Ludwig Fischer (Osmin)—as by any dramatic need to develop these characters. Mozart describes an aria for each man ("Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen" for Fischer and "O wie ängstlich" for Adamberger) at a level of detail scarcely encountered elsewhere in his letters. When he mentions the various "Turkish" pieces he had completed so far—the overture, first Janissary chorus, and the drinking duet in act 2—he invariably makes mention of Viennese partiality for this style, a partiality that had received recent gratification at the Burgtheater with a revival of Gluck's *Die unvermuthete Zusammenkunft, oder Die Pilgrime von Mekka* (originally *La rencontre imprévue*).

From the same letter we also learn of Mozart's need to work quickly once he had set about an operatic project in earnest. In the next, written on 6 October, Mozart describes not only his continued impatience over Stephanie's slow labors on needed changes, but also the speed with which he had composed the first numbers:

Now I shall soon lose patience, for I can compose nothing further for the opera. Granted that in the meantime I am writing other things, still, the passion is there, and for what would otherwise take me two weeks I would now need only four days. I composed the aria in A for Adamberger, the one for Cavalieri in B-flat, and the trio all in a single day—and wrote them out in another one and a half.⁶

6. "Nun verliere ich aber bald die gedult, dass ich nichts weiter ander opera schreiben kann. — ich schreibe freylich unterdessen andere sachen — Jedoch — die Passion ist einmal da — und zu was ich sonst 14 Tage bräuchte würde nun 4 tage brauchen. — ich habe die aria ex A vom adamberger, die von der Cavallieri ex B, und das Terzett in einem Tage Componirt — und in anderthalb tägen geschrieben"; 6 October 1781.

In a letter (now lost) that Mozart received shortly thereafter, Leopold included some remarks criticizing the poetic texts of the excerpts his son had sent him. Mozart replied on 13 October with a measured defense of both Stephanie and Bretzner, but it is worth noting that in so doing he does not resort to even a hint of patriotic sensibilities about German opera (which he uttered freely at other times, for example on the demise of the National Singspiel). It was opera in the broadest sense that engaged him when, in the throes of creativity, he turned for a moment to aesthetic contemplation of his art. Indeed, there is more than a tinge of exasperation at the insularity of the two poets. Even good German librettists such as these, Mozart seems to imply, had a shaky sense of how to write for music. In Constanze's first aria he had had to change Bretzner's ungainly expression "doch im Hui" ("but in an instant") to "doch wie schnell" ("but how quickly"): "I don't know what our German poets are thinking about," he wrote to Leopold. "Even if they don't understand the theater as far as opera's demands are concerned, they at least ought not to have people speak as if pigs stood before them—'Hui, sow!'"⁷

Mozart's famous, seemingly counter-Gluckian dictum, "In an opera the poetry must at all costs be the obedient daughter of the music," was written in the context of this aria. Narrowly construed, the statement is about the relationship of poetic texts to the music that clothes them, not about the priority of music as the engine of dramatic power. Mozart points to the universal popularity of Italian comic operas despite their wretched librettos not to illustrate the irrelevancy of a well-planned drama to success in the genre, but rather to plead for an even better kind of opera in which the plot is skillfully worked out. He had already praised Bretzner's libretto and Stephanie's plays for their soundness of construction. What these men had yet to learn, in Mozart's view, was how to shed their poetic rules and achieve fluency and consistency in writing verses that helped rather than hampered the composer. Mozart even goes so far as to disparage the use of rhyme in musical verses: it is not heard in performance, to begin with, and it can lead the poet to words and images that hamstring the composer.

But the composer's control over the shape and tone of an opera was not absolute. Mozart's *Abduction* letters reveal the sway held by the leading singers in the National Singspiel troupe. Constanze's first aria was "sacrificed somewhat to the flexible throat of Mad:^{selle} Cavalieri"; Belmonte's A-major aria in act 1, a personal favorite of Mozart's, was "written entirely for Adamberger's voice"; and the role of Osmin was expanded not for dramatic purposes but to take advantage of Ludwig Fischer's high standing with the Viennese public. If Mozart's comments in these letters are taken as his operatic aesthetic, it is an aesthetic that one cannot possibly

7. "das hui — habe ich in *schnell* verändert also: *doch wie schnell schwand meine freude* etc: ich weis nicht was sich unsere teutsche dichter denken; — wenn sie schon das theater nicht verstehen, was die opern anbelangt — so sollen sie doch wenigstens die leute nicht reden lassen, als wenn schweine vor ihnen stünden. — hui Sau; —"; 26 September 1781.

divorce from the practical realities of the first cast and first audience for which Mozart composed an opera.

In these letters Mozart deals almost exclusively with the first act, the least problematic of the three and the one left almost exactly as Bretzner had originally conceived it.⁸ Bretzner's exposition, in fact, had worked perfectly to establish the main characters, which in the case of the National Singspiel meant the main singers: Adamberger, Cavalieri, and Fischer. As in *Idomeneo*, the first, expository act ends in the opera's keynote with trumpets and drums: "The conclusion will make quite a bit of noise—and that's really everything the close of an act should be. The more noise, the better; the shorter, the better—so that people don't grow too cool to clap."⁹

Later on, Mozart abandoned the three-act scheme found in both *Idomeneo* and *The Abduction* in favor of two- or four-act plans. The central pole around which these later dramas turn, an extensive finale of complication at the midpoint of the action, is missing in both earlier operas as well. *Idomeneo* belonged to a genre in which the finale had yet to gain currency. While in comic opera the Italians, and more lately the French, had made significant strides in developing multisectional, dramatically kinetic internal finales, German opera had only just begun similar explorations. For a composer like Mozart, then, finding a suitable means of bringing act 2 of *The Abduction* to a close posed some difficulty. When Bretzner had written *Belmont und Constanze* in 1780, he was as yet unpracticed in Italian ways. Although he did move far beyond northern norms in planning the abduction scene itself in the style of an opera buffa finale (even including a pantomime episode), he failed to put it where any competent Italian librettist would have placed it in a three-act plan—at the end of the second act. Instead he put it where logical plot development in a spoken drama suggested it be placed—in the middle of the third act. Mozart at first wanted this episode moved back to the end of act 2 (letter of 26 September), but that would wholly eviscerate act 3, and as his previous opera, *Idomeneo*, illustrates, Mozart was very far from regarding the last act as a throw-away. So he persuaded Stephanie to break the abduction scene down into prose and three arias, and to develop the quartet-finale we have today out of one of Bretzner's episodes in act 2.

As Mozart's later comic operas demonstrate, ensembles were essential to the creation of musical continuity in his art. In *The Abduction*, however, despite his and Stephanie's best efforts, dramatic weight could not be shifted onto such num-

8. Mozart asked for only two alterations from Stephanie — to change the brief opening monologue for Belmonte into a little aria, so the play might begin with music rather than speaking, and to refashion his first encounter with Osmin from dialogue to duet.

9. "und der schluss wird recht viel lärmern machen — und das ist Ja alles was zu seinem schluss von einem Ackt gehört — Je mehr lärmern, Je besser; — Je kürzer, Je besser — damit die leute zum klatschen nicht kalt werden. —"; 26 September 1781. By *schluss* Mozart refers to the final Allegro assai section in cut time, not to the entire trio, although in point of fact next to the Janissary chorus it is the shortest number in the first act.

bers to a sufficient degree. Bretzner had developed his plot well—too well, in fact. What the Viennese adapters of his drama were able to contrive here and there in the plan simply could not be sustained across entire acts, especially inasmuch as one of the principals, Pasha Selim, does not sing at all, and the chief dramatic event—the abduction—takes place with minimal musical aid. As a result, *The Abduction* remained, musically speaking, more a drama of character than one of situation. An early-nineteenth-century Viennese analyst of the opera fittingly chose to proceed through it character by character, rather than number by number as nearly all modern commentators do.¹⁰ For the opera's first audiences as well, one suspects, it was the uniqueness and psychological depth of the individual portraits, set against a noisy background of "Turkish" music, that made the opera the one great success of the National Singspiel enterprise.

The idea that the music of an opera ought to strive for a distinctive voice, that it should somehow convey the character of the principal personages or conflicts, was not new to Vienna. In 1768, Joseph von Sonnenfels had invoked the term *characteristic* in celebrating Gluck's music to *Alceste*: "In my opinion I should like to call Gluck's style of composition the *characteristic* style, and to wish greatly that it might find as many followers among composers as it has won admirers among music lovers whose sensibility has not been spoilt by the sybaritic harmony of Italian music."¹¹ At the time he was working on *The Abduction*, Mozart uttered a damning opinion of the music to Umlauf's new opera, *Das Irrlicht*, for precisely the same reasons:

He wrote it in one year; but you must not believe that it is good just because (between you and me) he spent an entire year on it. This opera (still between us) I should have taken for the work of fourteen or fifteen days. Especially since the man must have learned so many operas *by heart*! And then all he had to do was write them down—and that's surely the way he wrote it. Just listen to it!¹²

10. This review, "*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*: Ein deutsches Singspiel in 3 Aufzügen," signed simply "F. Ungarese," first appeared in the *Zeitung für Theater, Musik und Poesie* 3 (1808): 361–65 on the occasion of a revival of Mozart's opera at Vienna. It was plagiarized virtually in toto in Georg Nikolaus von Nissen's *Biographie W. A. Mozarts*, ed. Constanze von Nissen (Leipzig, 1828), Anhang, pp. 77–85.

11. "Nach meiner Weise möchte ich die Setzart Glucks, die *characteristische* nennen, und wohl sehr wünschen, daß sie unter den Tonkünstlern so viele Nachfolger fände, als sie sich unter den Liebhabern der Musik, deren Gefühl durch die sybaritische Harmonie der italiänischen Tonkunst nicht verwöhnet ist, Bewunderer erworben hat"; Joseph von Sonnenfels, *Briefe über die wienerische Schaubühne aus dem Französischen übersetzt* (Vienna, 1768), pp. 47–48.

12. "der umlauf muss auch mit seiner fertigen opera warten — die er in einem Jahre geschrieben hat; — sie dürfen aber nicht glauben, dass sie deswegen gut ist | : unter uns gesagt : | weil er ein ganzes Jahr dazu gebraucht hat — diese opera | : aber unter uns : | hätte ich immer für eine Arbeit von 14 bis 15 tage gehalten. — besonders da der Mann so viele opern muss *auswendig* gelernt haben! — und da hat er sich Ja nichts als niedersetzen dürfen — und — er hat es gewis so gemacht — man hört es Ja!"; 6 October 1781. Ironically, the dilettante Zinzendorf passed a similar judgment on *The Abduction* after a performance on 30 July 1782: "opera dont la musique est pillée de differentes autres [auteurs?]" (Deutsch, *Dokumente*, p. 180).

Within the gallery of musical characterizations in *The Abduction*, Osmin has, perhaps not unjustly, loomed as the capital figure. So magnetic a personality has, inevitably, attracted attention to the opera's comic genius and away from the serious pole represented by the lovers. Without slighting the importance of Osmin as a watershed in Mozart's art, we shall turn our attention here to the serious pair of lovers, Belmonte and Constanze. It is with them that two major issues touching the opera can be addressed: the relationship of serious and comic style in Vienna at the time, and Mozart's involvement with refashioning Bretzner's dénouement.

During Mozart's first months in Vienna, he professed to have a fairly clear idea of how the Viennese distinguished comic and serious styles in opera:

Do you think, then, that I would compose an opéra-comique in the same way as an opera seria? However little playfulness there should be in an opera seria, and however much of the learned and reasonable, just so little of the learned must there be in an opera buffa, and so much more of the playful and comic.

I can't help it if in an opera seria people wish to have comic music as well; here, however, one distinguishes very clearly in this matter.¹³

Yet Mozart failed to follow his own advice when he set about composing *The Abduction* six weeks later. He had no doubt witnessed by then the mixture of serious and comic that characterized offerings at the Burgtheater during that period. Comedies, as one might expect, loomed large, in both the spoken and sung repertoires. Yet the tragic muse was by no means out of fashion at Vienna during the 1780s, nor were pieces of mixed genre (Table 3). It is true that Joseph II harbored a well-known antipathy toward opera seria as boring, unnatural, and above all expensive, but he was easily persuaded to honor his Russian guests at the end of 1781 with new productions of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* (translated into German) and *Alceste* (done in the original Italian version). Indeed, their restrained, dignified style—"characteristic" rather than "sybaritic," to use Sonnenfels's terms—proved so popular that the court decided to revive *Orfeo ed Euridice* as well.

For the less expensive spoken stage, Joseph went to great lengths to secure the greatest tragic actors in Germany, such as Friedrich Ludwig Schröder and Johann Brockmann. In a memorandum to the directors of the theater issued on 8 February 1782, he ordered that a prize be offered for "the best and most faithful translations into Alexandrines of the foremost and finest authors, namely Corneille, Racine,

13. "— glauben sie denn ich werde eine Opera Comique auch so schreiben wie eine opera Seria? — so wenig tändelndes in einer opera seria seyn soll, und so viel gelehrtes und vernünftiges, so wenig gelehrtes muss in einer opera Buffa seyn, und um desto mehr tändelndes und lustiges.

"dass man in einer opera Seria auch komische Mussick haben will, dafür kann ich nicht; — hier unterscheidet man aber in dieser sache sehr gut"; 16 June 1781. It is symptomatic of Mozart's cosmopolitanism, as well as of the stylistic eclecticism of *The Abduction*, that he uses French, Italian, and German designations for comic opera interchangeably in this passage ("Opera Comique," "opera Buffa," "kommische Mussick").

and Voltaire."¹⁴ The tragedies actually performed by the National Theater were not of the French classical sort Joseph hoped to foster, but comprised original German works, several Austrian ones, and a large number of translations and adaptations from the English (including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Richard the Third*, and *Romeo and Juliet*). The offerings also made room for serious genres such as the *drame* (called simply "Schauspiel" in German), the melodrama, and the dramatic ballet.

In assessing the imperial stage a few years later, Johann Pezzl remarked of local taste, "In general it seems that the German public has a greater appetite for variety than its neighbors."¹⁵ A list of the most popular pieces at the Burgtheater during Mozart's first year in Vienna illustrates this point (Table 4). Noteworthy in this list is the popularity of opera relative to spoken works, a nearly universal state of affairs on German stages that mixed spoken and sung repertoires. Also typical of the best German stages is the variety of types and styles: serious, sentimental, and comic works mixing Italian, French, and German traditions. For a young and ambitious composer, Vienna offered a perfect venue in which to attempt a work that drew on all of these.

The Colloredo episode had faded as Mozart began work on *The Abduction*, but soon another crisis arose to occupy its place. In early May 1781 Mozart had rented quarters from the Webers, and by midsummer Viennese gossip about his disporting with the three daughters had gotten back to Leopold, who ever since Mozart's infatuation with Aloysia Weber at Mannheim in 1778 had regarded the family with a mixture of suspicion and contempt. Mozart parried the reports Leopold had received with assurances that for him marriage represented a positive evil. Six months later he was writing precisely the opposite. Marriage was now exactly what he needed, and the only sane head in the Weber household, Constanze, was his chosen one. He made her out a martyr and asked his father's blessing on the match, "that I might rescue this poor one."

Not a single letter from Leopold to Mozart is preserved from this or any of his subsequent years in Vienna, but Wolfgang's responses leave no doubt that Leopold's earlier displeasure at his son's dismissal from Colloredo's service was but a mild prelude to his icy anger over the liaison with Constanze Weber. And although pressures from several quarters were urging an early marriage on Mozart—not the

14. The prize offered was not inconsiderable—fifty ducats and the receipts from the third performance: "dass man demjenigen 50 Ducaten samt der 3^{ten} Einnahme übergeben wolle, welcher von den hier benannten französischen Trauerspielen von den ersten und besten Autoren nämlich von Corneille, Racine und Voltaire die beste und getreueste Übersetzung in alexandrinischen Versen einschicken wird"; *Joseph II als Theaterdirektor: Ungedruckte Briefe und Aktenstücke aus den Kinderjahren des Burgtheaters*, ed. Rudolf Payer von Thurn (Vienna, 1920), p. 28.

15. "Und überhaupt scheint das deutsche Publikum mehr Hunger nach Mannigfaltigkeit zu haben, als seine Nachbarn"; Johann Pezzl, *Skizze von Wien: Ein Kultur- und Sittenbild aus der josephinischen Zeit*, ed. Gustav Gugitz and Anton Schlossar (Graz, 1923). Pezzl observes that the British even after two hundred years have not tired of repeating Shakespeare's plays, nor have the French for nearly one hundred fifty years with the works of Corneille, Racine, and Molière. What can the Germans offer? They don't have enough good plays to fill even fourteen evenings.

least of them the notoriety the relationship gained among Viennese gossips—he waited until after the triumphant premiere of *The Abduction* had made his fortune with the Viennese secure to ask Leopold directly for his permission to marry Constanze.

After Mozart's announcement in December of his intention to wed, only scattered references—with a minimum of detail—indicate resumption of work on *The Abduction*. We find in the letters of early 1782 scarcely a trace of the earlier shoptalk

TABLE 3.
National Theater and National Singspiel Performances
in the Burgtheater, January 1781–July 1782

<i>Spoken Categories</i>	<i>Number of Performances</i>	<i>Musical Categories</i>	<i>Number of Performances</i>
Comedies	273	Operas	153
Tragedies	62	Melodramas	4
Dramas	44	Ballets	14

Source: Franz Hadamowsky, *Die Wiener Hoftheater (Staatstheater) 1776–1966, Teil 1: 1776–1810* (Vienna, 1966).

TABLE 4.
Most Frequently Performed Works
at the Viennese National Theater, January 1781–July 1782

<i>Title</i>	<i>Author-Composer</i>	<i>Original Category</i>	<i>Times Performed</i>
<i>Die eingebildeten Philosophen</i>	Bertati-Paisiello	opera buffa	18
<i>Der Rauchfangkehrer</i>	Auenbrugger-Salieri	komische Oper	13
<i>Iphigenie auf Tauris</i>	Guillard-Gluck	tragédie lyrique	11
<i>Das öffentliche Geheimniss</i>	Gozzi	fiaba [fable]	11
<i>Die unvermuthete Zusammenkunft</i>	Dancourt-Gluck	opéra-comique	10
<i>Zemire und Azor</i>	Marmontel-Grétry	opéra-ballet	9
<i>Alceste</i>	Calzabigi-Gluck	tragedia per musica	7
<i>Das Irrlicht</i>	Bretzner-Umlauf	komische Oper	7
<i>Die pücefarbnen Schuhe</i>	Stephanie-Umlauf	komische Oper	7
<i>Wahrheit ist gut Ding</i>	Schletter	Lustspiel	7
<i>Das Loch in der Thüre</i>	Stephanie the Younger	Lustspiel	7
<i>Monsieur Fips</i>	Stephanie the Younger	Lustspiel	7
<i>Die heimliche Heyrath</i>	George Colman	comedy	7

Source: Franz Hadamowsky, *Die Wiener Hoftheater (Staatstheater) 1776–1966, Teil 1: 1776–1810* (Vienna, 1966).

that might illuminate such matters as the decision to add Cavalieri's controversial *aria di bravura* "Martern aller Arten" at the heart of the drama, to create a new finale for act 2, and to substitute a new dénouement at the end of act 3.

These changes demanded much more than a simple extension of the tone set in act 1. Belmonte, it is true, was already fully and completely drawn in his two arias, and the fact that one or the other of his further solo numbers in acts 2 and 3 is almost always omitted suggests how little they contribute to filling out his character. Constanze was another matter. Her first aria in act 1 (No. 6, "Ach, ich liebte") establishes her voice more clearly than her emotional nature, as Mozart himself half admitted in describing it as an "Italian bravura aria" written for Cavalieri's "flexible throat." Like many numbers in the opera, it follows a slow-fast pattern, but here the first part of the text, initially set to the rather short-breathed principal theme of the Adagio, comes back in the midst of the turmoil of the Allegro, minimizing its potential for emotional depth ("Ah, I loved, was so happy, and did not know love's pain!").

In her two demanding arias sung back to back in act 2 (Nos. 10 and 11), Constanze comes into clearer focus, and in stronger colors. The sorrow (*Kummer*) present only in the text of her earlier aria informs every feature of both "Traurigkeit" itself, one of the high points in Mozart's life-long association with the profound pathos of g minor, and the obbligato recitative Mozart had Stephanie write as preparation for it. With this recitative a new tone enters the opera: for the first time we hear unmistakable accents of Mozart's seria style. The recitative's drooping pairs of slurred seconds become the chief ingredient of the aria that follows. Here Mozart achieves marvels of flexibility in phrasing, and he also enriches the orchestra's role considerably, especially in his writing for the winds (including two basset horns). Scarcely has the glow of this portrait of deepest sorrow subsided when "Martern aller Arten," in a burst of C major, reveals to Selim's astonishment—and ours—an unsuspected dimension to Constanze's personality.¹⁶ The pasha's words on Constanze's exit offer a clue to what Mozart and Stephanie may have meant to convey with this controversial aria, bearing in mind that the entire episode—prose and poetry—was added expressly to accommodate this final tour de force for Cavalieri:

"Is this a dream? Where has she suddenly gotten the courage to behave so toward me? Does she perhaps hope to escape from me? Ha! That I shall guard against! (He starts to leave.) But that can't be it, for then she would dissemble, try to lull me to sleep. —Yes! It is despair!"

After a well-earned rest, Constanze will need every bit of this bravura born of despair in her next two musical numbers, both of them ensembles that focus on

16. The point touched on briefly here is developed further in my study *W. A. Mozart: "Die Entführung aus dem Serail"* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 77–85.



Catarina (Egalieri)



Valerius Adamberger

FIGURE 6

The first Constanze and Belmonte

her relationship with Belmonte. To judge from contemporary profiles in silhouette of the two original singers, she cut a figure at least as imposing as his (Fig. 6).

The first of these ensembles represents the most substantial expenditure of poetic energy that Mozart demanded from Stephanie—the new quartet-finale for act 2. Stephanie took a passing prose episode in Bretzner's version, in which jealous suspicions about the women's behavior during their captivity momentarily seize Belmonte and Pedrillo, and expanded it into a miniature drama of doubt, protestation, regret, and forgiveness. Like more extensive finales, this one involves both serious and comic characters, and in consequence the resolution of the conflict demanded a mixture of light and shade (Blonde's box on the ear in reply to Pedrillo and Constanze's dignified incomprehension in the face of Belmonte's jealous doubts) as yet unheard of in the opera. The admixture makes possible the amalgamation of the sublime and humane heard in the glorious Andantino, "Wenn unsrer Ehre wegen"—a transfigured recomposition of "Placido è il mar" in *Idomeneo*, hearing which we catch a first intimation of the hymnic humanism that pervades *The Magic Flute*.

Ehre (honor) is the byword of the lovers' moral, and so too of Mozart's fluctuating world during his first year in Vienna. On 16 May 1781 he had summed up his goals in Vienna in a letter to Leopold: "Honor, fame, and money" ("Ehre, Ruhm und Geld"). Under Count Arco's foot, however, the first of these suffered a stinging blow that engendered the dark thoughts of revenge discussed earlier. This state of mind remained with Mozart even after he had begun work on *The Abduction*. A

week into the new project he related to Leopold a story that was all the talk in Vienna, where it was known as "die tyroller geschichte" ("the Tyrolean story"). An acquaintance from Mozart's Munich days, a nobleman named Wiedmer, had organized a theatrical company, which he had taken to Innsbruck. A certain Baron Buffa insulted Wiedmer there on a public street, and to such a degree that the impresario answered him with a blow to the head. Wiedmer was arrested, taken to the local house of correction, and beaten so severely that he remained bedridden for three weeks. Mozart, who seldom retailed such stories in his letters to Leopold,¹⁷ took a keen interest in the poor man's cause:

If I were Wiedmer, I would demand the following satisfaction from the emperor. He [Buffa] would have to be given fifty [blows] in the same location, and I would have to be present—and then he would have to give me 6,000 ducats. And if I could not attain this satisfaction, then I would not want any, but rather on the next available occasion I would stick my dagger through his heart.¹⁸

Over the next eight months this unhappy obsession with revenge, born of his own experiences, was somehow exorcised. Perhaps he was able to externalize it in his opera through the classical dramatic avenue of making vice laughable, that is, by way of the very incarnation of rage, Osmin. Yet *Ehre* lies beyond the surly old overseer's sphere. It belongs rather to Belmonte and to Pasha Selim, and nowhere more clearly than in their grand confrontation after the failure of the abduction attempt in act 3.

Bretzner had conceived this final scene as follows. Brought before the pasha, Belmonte and Constanze vie for the privilege of dying for the other's sake. Selim assures them with icy sarcasm that they will both have their wish. He is almost moved by their rapturous duet on the prospects of expiring in each other's arms, but the arrival of Pedrillo and Blonde rekindles his anger, and he orders all four strangled. As the sentence is about to be carried out, Constanze utters Belmonte's name. Astonished, Selim quickly discovers that Belmonte is his own son, left in a Spanish monastery when only four years old. Over Osmin's protestations, all four are freed in a scene of tearful reunion.

17. Less than a year earlier, however, in the postscript to a letter of 30 December 1780, Mozart passed on the rumor (false, as it turned out) about how the great castrato Marchesi had been forced to take poison at Naples by henchmen of a rival for the affections of the duchess. Like the letter under discussion here, this one also contains Mozart's thoughts on how he, were he in the same situation, would try to extract a Mosaic eye for an eye: "but since [Marchesi] was an Italian coward, he died *alone* and let his murderers live in peace and quiet. I would at the very least (in my room!) have taken a couple of them into the next world with me, if it were really a question of having to die" ("weil er aber ein Welscher hasenfuss war, so starb er *allein* — und liess seine herr Mörder in Ruhe und frieden leben — ich hätte wenigstens | : — in meinem Zimmer! : | ein paar mit mir in die andere Welt genommen, wenn es schon gestorben hätte seyn müssen").

18. "— wenn ich *Wiedmer* wäre, ich würde von kayser folgende Satisfaction ver=langen. — er müste auf den Nämlichen Platz 50 aushalten, und ich müsste dabey sein — und dann müsste er mir erst noch 6000 ducatten geben. — und könnte ich diese Satisfaction nicht erlangen, so wollte ich gar keine, sondern stechte ihn mit der nächsten, besten gelegenheit den degen durch das herz"; 8 August 1781.

Stephanie and Mozart decided to make several changes in this plan. At the moment of confrontation, the pasha discovers not his long-lost son, but the son of his worst enemy, the man who brought about his ruin and forced him to leave Spain. Initially, Selim determines to deal with Belmonte just as the young man's father had dealt with Selim. He and Osmin leave to contemplate appropriate tortures for the hapless pair, who in turn are left alone onstage to sing the new recitative and duet that Stephanie and Mozart created for them (No. 20). When Selim returns, he has mastered his thirst for revenge; in a final act of austere magnanimity he forgives and releases the lovers.

Johann Schink, who witnessed the premiere of *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, complained that the substituted scene, though nobler than Bretzner's, was also "incomparably more unnatural."¹⁹ By his own admission, Schink was evaluating the work mainly as a spoken drama, and from this perspective the charge carries some merit, particularly since Selim's ruminations remain his private affair, carried on offstage. The lovers and what they sing dominate the scene, not Selim and what he speaks. This primacy of the serious pair's final emotional development in the opera would have been impossible had Bretzner's duet been retained. Indeed, Schink's complaint notwithstanding, what Stephanie asks Belmonte and Constanze to sing to each other alone onstage is psychologically much more "natural" than what Bretzner's lovers sing in the presence of the pasha. Bretzner sketches two lovers sinking into their grave smiling and embracing, anticipating the joy and bliss of wandering Elysium's peaceful fields hand in hand. Stephanie presents the Belmonte we have been seeing throughout the opera: a mixture of anxiety and ardor in act 1, passionate and yet weakened by jealous fears in act 2. Now, at the crux of the drama, Belmonte torments himself with the realization that he has brought about Constanze's destruction. She, however, uses the inner strength she had shown us in act 2 to calm his troubled soul with a higher vision: he is to die for her sake—should she not also die with him? Their only aim, they realize, was to live for each other; for one to live without the other would be endless pain. And so they welcome their common fate.

The principal virtue of Stephanie's text lies in the fact that what was the point of departure for Bretzner's duet has been made the psychological goal achieved by Belmonte and Constanze only in the closing section of their recitative and duet. This must have been Mozart's doing. He had already taken an active role in asking for every other change or addition made to the opera's poetic texts,²⁰ and the se-

19. Johann Friedrich Schink, "Die Entführung aus dem Serail: Komische Oper in drei Aufzügen, von Bretzner, die Musik von Mozart," in *Dramaturgische Fragmente* (Graz, 1782), 4:1002. Schink adds that this sort of gesture is still common coin in Vienna, although out of fashion nearly everywhere else. The entire review is reprinted in Deutsch, *Dokumente*, pp. 185–86.

20. In a letter of 26 September 1781 to Leopold, Mozart relates how he and Stephanie wrote Osmin's aria, "Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen": "— die aria hab ich dem H: Stephani ganz angegeben; — und die hauptsache der Musick davon war schon fertig, ehe Stephani ein Wort davon wuste." Dent (*Mozart's Operas*, p. 73) translates as follows: "I have given Herr Stephanie the aria complete, and most of the music was ready before he knew a word about it." So translated, the passage seems to imply that Mozart

TABLE 5.
Plan of No. 20, Recitative and Duet in *Die Entführung*

	<i>Recitative</i>	<i>Andante</i> (3/4)		<i>Allegro</i> (C)		
lines:	1-12	13-24	13-24	25-30	31-35	31-35
sections:		A ₁	A ₂	B	C ₁	C ₂
keys:	F (E ^b) →	B ^b F (B ^b)	E ^b F →	B ^b		
			(V)			

quence of affects that Stephanie's text provides here fits precisely the musical structure Mozart employed in the recitative and duet (Table 5).

The recitative explores the dominant and subdominant by way of preparation for the main tonality of B-flat. This arrives with the Andante, patterned like a cavatina but without recapitulation or tonal closure in the tonic. The first half moves to the dominant, as one would expect; the second, however, skirts the tonic and settles instead into E-flat, followed by a broad preparatory passage on F. Reasserting B-flat is the task of the concluding Allegro, especially in the characteristic enhanced repetition of the cadenzalike setting of the final stanza (C₁ C₂). Stephanie's text is tailored precisely to this scheme. Belmonte's anguish and Constanze's calm resolve fall into the two main tonalities of the recitative. The same emotions (and tonalities) mark the Andante. It is only in the closing Allegro that the lovers' resolve to face death together is at last anchored in the tonic. Belmonte and Constanze finish this duet a matured, calmly heroic pair and thus, by the canons of opera seria, worthy objects of the clemency Selim bestows on them.

Mozart lavished the opera's noblest music on this recitative and duet. It bears a strong kinship not only with the seria features heard earlier in *The Abduction*, but also with motifs explored in Mozart's greatest achievement in serious opera, *Idomeneo*. The opening recitative complements the equally beautiful obbligato recitative preceding Constanze's g-minor aria, "Traurigkeit." Both move at a dignified Adagio pace and open with a bare sixth suggestive at once of the agitation proper to such numbers in serious opera. Perhaps most striking is Mozart's use of the same

handed Stephanie his music for the aria, and the poet then concocted a text to put under it as best he could. Emily Anderson (*The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, rev. ed. [London, 1985], pp. 768-69), with characteristic freedom, comes much closer to its more probable meaning with a different interpretation: "I have explained to Stephanie the words I require for the aria—indeed I had finished composing most of the music for it before Stephanie knew anything whatever about it." Both translations take liberties with Mozart's verb *angeben*. Especially when accompanied by *ganz*, *angegeben* is best rendered as "specified." A careful, if not entirely elegant, translation ought to read: "I have given Stephanie complete specifications for the aria—and the substance of the music for it was already finished before Stephanie knew a word about it." On this reading, and taking the order of the two clauses into account, the letter implies that Mozart first provided Stephanie with a detailed outline of the text—its content, its stanzaic structure, and probably its metric characteristics as well—and then proceeded to finish (that is, write down) the music while Stephanie set about writing a text to Mozart's specifications.

rising four-bar chromatic bass line in each, linking Belmonte's "Pein" with Constanze's "Leiden" (Ex. 4.1A-B). Both these passages point toward the same elemental tonality: d minor, Mozart's key of death. The deceptive cadence that evades this goal in Ex. 4.1A introduces Constanze's resolute, calming presence in response to

EXAMPLE 4.1A-B.

A: *Entführung*, No. 20, Recitative

B: *Entführung*, No. 10

A

7

Vlns. *f* *p*

Vla. *f* *p*

BELMONTE

Hat sich denn al-les wi-der mich ver-schwo-ren! Ach! Kon-stante! durch

Bassi *f* *p*

10

fp *p*

mich bist du ver-lo-ren! Welch ei-ne Pein!

fp *p*

B

14

Vlns.

Vla.

CONSTANZE

ban-ger Sehn-sucht Lei-den, ban-ger Sehn-sucht

Bassi

EXAMPLE 4.1B, *continued*

17

sf *p*

Lei - den woh - nen nun da - für in der be - klemm - ten Brust.

sf *p*

Belmonte's pained self-reproach. In the passage following this example, the plunging seventh outlined by the violins at the start of the recitative disappears, and sustained chords in the strings move to the ethereal comfort that an entire century of opera had invested in E-flat major. "Engelsseele!" sings Belmonte in response to his beloved, his plunging figure now softened momentarily in Constanze's key of superlunary consolation.

A similar pattern recurs in the Andante. Momentarily, Belmonte gathers courage, and a heroic strain from seria traditions links him to the young protagonist of *Idomeneo*. "Meinetwegen," Belmonte's incipit, recalls note for note Idamante's act 1 cry: "Non ho colpa!" (Ex. 4.2A–B).²¹ But then he relapses. In the continuation of this passage, a hint of the b-flat minor heard at the end of the recitative reasserts itself as Belmonte picks his way toward a hesitant dominant over an agitated tremolo in the strings. Again Constanze dispenses calm; an anticipatory A-flat in the first violins smooths the way into the rich harmonic terrain of D-flat and the sinking chromaticism that follows (Ex. 4.3). Not only is the chromatic language another echo of *Idomeneo*, but the specific harmonic relationship between Belmonte and Constanze had seen use in the original version of the A-major duet for Idamante and Ilia (No. 20a, "S'io non moro a questi accenti"): Idamante's opening statement moves tentatively onto the dominant, Ilia's reply ("No more sorrow, no more laments!") redirects things to flat III (C major) by way of the parallel tonic minor.²² Stephanie gave Mozart much more room to maneuver than had Varesco, and precisely by departing from Bretzner so as to give the two lovers contrasting sentiments. After her consolatory turn to D-flat, Constanze takes up Belmonte's agitation figure, with which he had reproached himself, and gives it a firmer pur-

21. The texts, of course, mean precisely opposite things: "Because of me [you are to die]," sings Belmonte; "I am guiltless!" Idamante protests. But the purpose of the lapidarian seria gesture common to both is to convey conviction in the singer's mind of the truth of what he sings. The contrast, if one is needed, ought to be drawn between Belmonte's assertive statement here and the mixture of hope and fear that informs both of his act 1 arias.

22. See pp. 47–49 for the complete text of the duet and a discussion of Mozart's fondness for this progression.

A

Andante

Str., WW. Str.

f sf p

BELMONTE

Mei - net - we - gen

Bsns. Bassi

f f p

EXAMPLE 4.2A-B.

A: *Entführung*, No. 20, DuetB: *Idomeneo*, No. 2

B

Adagio maestoso

Str., WW. Str.

f p

IDAMANTE

Non ho col - pa,

Bsns., Bassi

f

EXAMPLE 4.3. *Entführung*, No. 20, Duet

Fl. a2

p

Cl. I

p

V. I

V. II

Vla.

CONSTANZE

Bel - - mont! du stirbst mei - net - we - gen! mei - net - we - gen!

Bassi

pose—to drive home her determination to die with him, capped by a definitive arrival in the dominant.

The clarinets emerge with a sweet anticipation of the lovers' joining together in thirds, at the same time recalling the tender figure with which the orchestra had helped Constanze plead her case to Pasha Selim in "Martern aller Arten" (Ex. 4.4A–B).²³ When the lovers at last accelerate into the duet's final Allegro, another reminiscence of *Idomeneo* appears. "Ich will alles gerne leiden" ("I will suffer everything gladly"), the lovers sing in a triumphant dissipation of the anguish that had beset Belmonte at the beginning of the recitative (Ex. 4.5A). Mozart had availed himself of the same stable motif to anticipate the words "Soggiorno amoroso" in Ilia's aria "Se il padre perdei" in *Idomeneo* (Ex. 4.5B).

Mozart's operas, we are beginning to perceive, speak to each other in uncanny ways, each reacting to and building on its predecessors. At times they also seem to resonate with Mozart's own life experiences. The mood of the recitative and duet for Belmonte and Constanze, for instance, offers a close artistic analogue to the composer's own situation at the time it was composed. The number must have been conceived and written very late in the compositional process. The text in the original printed libretto was apparently thrown together in some haste; an entire stanza in the opening recitative is missing, and elsewhere it does not agree with Mozart's autograph in several particulars. From Mozart's letters we can deduce that the duet was probably written between 7 May 1782, when he played the completed second act of the opera for Countess Thun, and 30 May, when he played her the third act and had already begun correcting parts for the first rehearsal, set for a few days later.

These were difficult times. Leopold had not softened in his attitude toward Wolfgang's prospective bride. Constanze's mother and her guardian, Thorwaldt, had been making life miserable for the young couple. At the end of April, Mozart and Constanze had suffered a falling out occasioned by his jealous reaction to her allowing a young dandy to measure her calves during a game of forfeits. Now, however, they were fully committed to marrying as soon as practicable, especially since Vienna was beginning to regard them as already married. Each was estranged from his or her lone surviving parent—Constanze was in fact soon to leave her mother and take lodgings with the baroness von Waldstätten.

The parallel with the young couple onstage might not have been as striking had Mozart retained both the duet and the dénouement of Bretzner's version, where the lovers sing their blissful acceptance of the fate awaiting them in front of the man who turns out to be Belmonte's own father. Instead, Mozart and Stephanie cleared the stage of everyone but the two beleaguered lovers, that Belmonte and

23. In his memorandum of 8 February 1782, Joseph II had taken steps to engage two virtuosos of the instrument, the Stadler brothers Anton and Johann, as clarinetists in the National Singspiel's orchestra. Mozart took full advantage of their talents, particularly in the penultimate numbers of each act—all three for the serious lovers, and all three in B-flat. See Payer von Thurn, *Joseph II als Theaterdirektor*, p. 30.

EXAMPLE 4.4A-B.

A: *Entführung*, No. 20, Duet

B: *Entführung*, No. 11

A

31 Cl.

Bsns. all ott.

Vlins.

Vlas. all ott.

CONSTANZE

Ed - le See - le! dir zu le - ben

BELMONTE

Ed - le See - le! dir zu le - ben

Hrns.

Bassi

B

93 Cl.

Bsns. all ott.

p dolce

Fl. *ad libitum* solo

Ob. solo

Vln. solo

Vc. solo *ad libitum*

CONSTANZE

Lass dich be - we - gen,

Bassi *p*

EXAMPLE 4.5A-B.

A: *Entführung*, No. 20, Duet

B: *Idomeneo*, No. 11

A

96 Cl. *p*

Hrns. a2 *p*

V. I

V. II

Vla. *tr*

BELMONTE

Ich will al - les ger - ne lei - den,

Bsns. *p*

Bassi *p*

B

27 Fl. *p*

Ob. *p*

Hrn. *p*

Vlns.

Vla. *p*

ILIA

sog - gior - no a - mo - ro - so

Bsn. *p*

Bassi *p*

Constanze might come to grips with their difficult situation and arrive at a common resolve alone.

The Mozart who composed this duet had suffered much in the year leading up to its creation, as had the lovers it portrays. But there is another, even deeper parallel: he had also embarked on a journey that had taken him beyond obsession with revenge on those who had wronged him a year earlier. And yet the power this emotion holds had not been forgotten. Instead, it was channeled into Osmin. This consummate musical personality among all of Mozart's operatic creations to date was drawn, we suggest, not by a simple observer of human nature, but by a participant in all its guises. At the same time, Osmin, unlike his creator, cannot free himself of its toils, and in the end even the frame of the vaudeville breaks down under his remorseless hunger for revenge. Spiritually, Osmin remains exactly who he was at the beginning of the opera, a fact fittingly captured in the return of his a-minor tirade, "Erst geköpft, dann gehangen." In the aftermath of this final storm, the lovers turn from their earlier conventional expressions of gratitude to the real moral of the story: "Nothing is as hateful as revenge."

In Carl Maria von Weber's opinion, with *The Abduction from the Seraglio* Mozart's artistic powers came of age.²⁴ If so, this fact appears most clearly in the composer's ability to identify not simply with his main characters, but with each of the personalities that shape the opera's course. Like all Mozart's operas, *The Abduction* was a child of circumstance, beholden to the conditions under which it was created for its virtues as much as for its shortcomings. Those circumstances should not exclude the parallel emotional coming of age Mozart experienced in his first sixteen months in Vienna. At the midpoint of this period, on 23 October 1781, he wrote the last of his letters to his cousin Maria Anna Thekla Mozart. Unlike the notorious earlier "Bäse" letters, it is serious and circumspect, without so much as a trace of off-color juvenilia. One passage in particular can be seen in retrospect as a summation of Mozart's first, turbulent months in the imperial capital: "In the meantime, as you probably know, many important things have happened to me, which have given me not a little to think about, and much vexation, sorrow, and care."²⁵

24. *Sämtliche Schriften von Carl Maria von Weber*, ed. Georg Kaiser (Berlin, 1908), p. 303. Weber published his discussion of *The Abduction* in conjunction with a production of the opera under his direction mounted by the Dresden Royal Court Theater in June 1818. An English translation of Weber's article appears in Carl Maria von Weber, *Writings on Music*, trans. Martin Cooper, ed. John Warrack (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 264–65.

25. "Es sind unterdessen, wie sie wohl wissen werden, viele wichtige sachen mit mir vorgegangen, wobey ich nicht wenig zu denken, und viele verdrüsslichkeiten, ärgernüss, kummer und Sorge hatte."