



Program Notes

for kids

Mozart Birthday Bash
Saturday, January 16, 2016
8:00 p.m.
Michigan Theater

Mozart *Abduction from the Seraglio*



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born January 27, 1756 in Salzburg Austria | Died December 5, 1791 in Vienna, Austria

Family & Career

Mozart's parents were Leopold Mozart, a composer and music teacher, and Anna Maria Mozart. He was the youngest of 7 children, but only Wolfgang and his sister Maria Anna lived past infancy. Mozart was a musical prodigy. When he was five years old, he was already composing and performing for kings and queens. Mozart's father took his kids all across Europe to perform. Mozart married a singer named Constanze Weber in 1782. They had 6 children, but only two lived past infancy.

Mozart was as famous in his own lifetime as he is today. He composed all the time - while eating, while visiting with friends, while playing pool - and finished compositions very quickly. But he was very frustrating to work with: he usually put things off until the last minute and did not manage money well. After Mozart died at the age of 35, the composer Joseph Haydn said that the world "will not see such talent again in 100 years".

Music

Despite his short life, Mozart wrote over six-hundred pieces of music, including twenty operas and more than forty symphonies. It would take more than eight whole days to listen to all of Mozart's music.

Abduction from the Seraglio

What kind of piece is this?

This is an *opera*: a dramatic work where singers, accompanied by an orchestra, act out a story using sung words. Operas usually include all the elements of spoken theater - acting, scenery, costumes, dance - but the actors sing instead of speak the words.

This opera is a type called *singspiel*, which in German literally means sing-speak. It is an opera

Fun Facts

Mozart wore an apron when composing to keep the ink from his pen off his clothes. Pens during Mozart's time were much messier than they are today.

Mozart loved animals. He sent his family dog, a terrier named Bimperl, notes from all over Europe when he was on tour. In London, he once broke off a concert to run after a cat that had wandered in.

When Mozart wanted to sound Italian, he called himself "Wolfgang Amadeo," and when he wanted to sound French, it was "Wolfgang Amad e."



18th century painting of a Sultan's Seraglio by Jean-Baptiste van Mour.

Listen for...

When Joseph II first heard the opera he said, "There are too many notes. Just cut a few and it will be perfect." Mozart replied, "There are just as many notes as there should be." What do you think? Did Mozart write the right number of notes?

The Pasha Selim is the only character who does not sing in the opera. Why do you think Mozart did this?

Mozart included some instruments that are supposed to sound "Turkish." Listen for piccolo, bass drum, cymbals and triangle, which signal that the opera is taking place in an exotic location.

with a German *libretto*, or words. Unlike most operas, singspiel include spoken words between the songs, like in a musical. Singspiel are usually comic or romantic and often contain elements of magic or fantasy.

When was it written?

Mozart wrote this opera in 1782 at the request of the Emperor Joseph II. Italian opera was popular in Vienna at the time, but the Emperor wanted to hear opera in his own German language. This opera turned out to be really popular.

What is it about?

The opera is a silly story of two men rescuing their fiancées from a powerful man called a Pasha. It takes place in the 18th century in the Ottoman Empire (now Turkey).

The characters are:

- *Belmonte*: the hero, a Spanish nobleman
- *Pedrillo*: Belmonte's servant
- *Constanze*: Belmonte's fiancée
- *Blondchen*: Konstanze's English maid and Pedrillo's fiancée.
- *Selim*: A *Pasha*, or powerful man, in the Ottoman Empire; the bad guy who is holding Pedrillo, Konstanze and Blonde captive
- *Osmin*: Selim's servant

At the beginning of the opera, we find out that Pedrillo, Constanze and Blondchen were kidnapped by pirates and are being held captive by the Pasha Selim. Belmonte tries to get information from Osmin about where they are being held, with no luck.

Belmonte and Pedrillo then find each other and vow to rescue their fiancées from the *Seraglio*: the sequestered

living area for women in an Ottoman household.

Meanwhile, Selim is trying to get Constanze to fall in love with him and Osmin is trying to get Blondchen to fall in love with him. Both women are loyal to their fiancées.

Pedrillo tricks Selim into hiring Belmonte as an architect. By doing this, he can get Belmonte into Selim's home. Then Pedrillo gets Osmin drunk so that he can sneak Belmonte into the Seraglio. The two couples are reunited!

When Belmonte and Pedrillo try to sneak the two women out of the Seraglio, Osmin catches them. The Pasha decides he is going to kill Belmonte when he finds out he is the son of his sworn enemy. But then the Pasha has a change of heart and releases all four of them.

Outline of the Songs of the Opera

Songs can be arias (sung by one person), duets (sung by two people), or choruses (sung by a group). This outline explains what the characters are singing about throughout the opera. Follow along with the opera here or with the surtitles: the words projected above the stage.

Act I

Belmonte, having finally entered the place where his love, Constanze, is being held captive, sings about how excited he is to see her again.

Osmin sings a song while picking figs, not realizing Belmonte is watching. His song is about kissing your love and making them happy.

Osmin explains why he doesn't like Pedrillo. It turns out that it is mainly because Osmin and Pedrillo are both in love with Blondchen.

Belmonte enters after Osmin leaves and happily reunites with Pedrillo. Together they vow to rescue Constanze and Blondchen.

The **Chorus** sings to the mighty Pasha Selim as he appears with Constanze.

Constanze sings about her love for Belmonte.

When **Belmonte** and **Pedrillo** try to enter the palace, **Osmin** tries to block their way, but they hurry past him.

Act II

Blondchen refuses Osmin's love and reminds him that tenderness and kindness are the ways to a woman's heart.

In a duet between **Osmin** and **Blondchen**, Osmin warns her that she must keep away from Pedrillo.

Constanze enters and sings a sad song about love and the loss of happiness with Belmonte.

After Constanze leaves, Pedrillo comes to **Blondchen** and tells her that Belmonte has come and is planning to rescue them. **Blondchen** is very happy.

Constanze doesn't know that Belmonte has arrived when Pasha Selim tells her that she must now agree to love him. **Constanze** tells him she will never love him.

Pedrillo invites Osmin to drink hoping that he will get drunk.

Pedrillo and **Osmin** sing a duet praising Bacchus, the Roman God of Wine.

Belmonte sings about his joy and love upon seeing Constanze.

Constanze sings about her joy. She is reunited with Belmonte. Belmonte and Pedrillo both ask whether their respective fiancées have remained faithful during their separation.

Act III

Belmonte sings that love is the source of his strength and that he will rely on its power as he and Pedrillo plan to steal the women back from the Pasha.

Pedrillo sings a song to signal to the ladies to get ready to leave. It describes a girl who is caught by the Moors and how a knight came to rescue her.

Osmin catches Belmonte, Pedrillo and the women.

Belmonte blames himself for putting Constanze in danger.

Constanze forgives Belmonte and says that at least they will be together in death.

Pasha Selim decides to release Belmonte and his friends, rather than kill them. **Belmonte** sings about how grateful he is that the Pasha is letting them all live.

Osmin is angry and wants them all to die.

Chorus: Everyone praises Pasha Selim and rejoices.