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FEMALE CHARACTERS IN SERAGLIO GENRE: CHANGING SOCIAL MILIEU AND PUBLIC SPACE FOR WOMEN DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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SUMMARY. With a harem-abduction narrative, the eighteenth-century seraglio opera ostensibly focuses on a male protagonist, or seemingly celebrates the Oriental male ruler as an enlightened monarch who conveys the Enlightenment messages. It is, nonetheless, the female characters that seraglio opera features prominently as they take initiative in a harem escape. Highly contrasting themselves with the prevalent contemporary sentimental heroine type, they unmistakably exhibit compelling stage presence and dominance over feeble or ineffectual male characters. Pasha Selim in Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* is, for instance, a mere speaking role stripped of eloquence expressed in singing. In Haydn's *L'incontro improvviso*, female characters' actions propel the seria side of the narrative, thus negating stereotypical notions of Oriental women: languorous, sensual or submissive beings. This paper argues that such a portrayal of women in seraglio genre reflects the changing social landscape during the Enlightenment: the burgeoning voice for and evolving views of women; the composers' embracement of Enlightenment *zeitgeist*; and the societal recognition of women's merit and power cultivated at public spaces such as salons or Freemasonic lodges during a century of sweeping socio-political currents.

Keywords: seraglio opera, women, sensibility, public space. Freemason, Enlightenment

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Introduction

In seraglio opera, Janissary music and *alla turca* topos[2] seemingly convey the impression of masculinity. The harem setting of seraglio opera also contributes to the assumption of the male-orientedness and the stereotypical notions of Oriental women as docile and submissive. Female protagonists in many seraglio operas, however, prove otherwise acting counter-stereotypically in their interactions with male counterparts. The latter do not exhibit the same level of determination or initiative as their harem-confined lovers do, despite the impression of male initiative in a harem-escape attempt as connoted in "abduction", for instance, in Mozart's seraglio opera, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782, *Abduction from the Seraglio*, K. 384. *Entführung* hereafter). In Haydn's *L'incontro improvviso* (1775, *Unexpected Meeting*, Hob. XXVIII:6. *L'incontro* hereafter), the hero is likewise rendered as a foil to the strong-willed heroine, Rezia, to whom even the Sultan is "more slave than master" (No. 28, Recitative).[3] Rezia's "unwomanly" gender-bending actions also reject the presumptions about Oriental women as mentioned above. Her numbers, accordingly, do not contain any *topoi* that typically suggest Oriental females' sensual images such as chromatic lines or pleasurable melody.

More notably, the male rulers' presence in the two operas is weak or almost null despite the definitive authority they exercise in the finale in delivering the Enlightenment messages of reason and tolerance. The Pasha Selim in *Entführung* plays only a speaking role; he is unable to express himself in singing when interactions, thoughts and feelings are sung not spoken in opera. The Sultan in *L'incontro* appears on the stage only in the last scene singing a portion of a single recitative about the pardon he grants to all. On the contrary, the heroines' dominant stage presence and moral authority are unmistakably exhibited throughout the two operas, especially in their elaborately structured and technically formidable arias that convey their determination and defiance. In "Martern aller Arten", one of the longest and most technically daunting arias to sing in operatic genre, Konstanze absolutely overwhelms the Pasha as shall be discussed. In *L'incontro*, it is female characters' actions in their pursuit of

[2] Janissary music was performed by the military band of Osman Turks, especially by the Janissaries (sultan's elite royal bodyguards). It employed a great number of percussion instruments, many of which were incorporated in the Western orchestra over time. Europeans consciously imitated the music, thus the term, *alla turca* (in the style of the Turkish military band).

[3] All Translations of *L'incontro* are from the booklet in *L'incontro improvviso.* Recorded by Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne conducted by A. Dorati. CD (Lausanne, Switzerland, Philips, 1980).

freedom that move forward the opera's seria side of the plot. Rezia perseveres through a harrowing journey "moving sea and land" to end up in a harem but she never despairs or engages in self-pity. Rezia and Konstanze hence contrast themselves with sentimental heroines in phenomenally popular contemporary sentimental novels or operas.

To women, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment era was a period of radical changes that brought "nothing short of a new kind of society."[4] Women began to participate in social activities. With the rise of the middle class and the expanding reading public, there was, for instance, a significant increase of women writers; they were aspired to find their voice in literary fields. Many British female writers financially supported themselves as Elizabeth Inchbald or Charlotte Smith did which is a great feat for women to achieve during the deeply patriarchal era. The society also began to see women working as teachers or nurses, and some even ran schools.[5] This is a remarkable development from the previous era in which extremely few tenable professions were available for women. Public space and venues also began to open their doors to women serving "intellectually assertive" or "unsex'd females". Women's presence was particularly strong in salons where they were often organizing and guiding figures as *Salonnières*.

This paper demonstrates how the two operas by Enlightenment-influenced composers present a portrait of women in the eighteenth-century European societies through female characters. In arguing about women in seraglio opera as reflecting changing social milieu during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, this research focuses on Haydn's *L'incontro* and Mozart's *Entführung. L'incontro* is an ambitious forty-seven number opera that has been neglected and naturally few studies have been done on the unique character, Rezia. As for Konstanze in Mozart's *Entführung*, while much is written about the opera and the heroine's notoriously difficult aria, "Martern aller Arten", the character has not been explored in the social context of the era regarding women.

Not in the Sentimental Mold: Women's Changing Social Status

L'incontro concerns the Persian Princess, Rezia, a lover of Prince Ali who has fled to Persia from his villainous brother. When Rezia is forced to

[4] Lowe, Melanie, Olivia Bloechl, Jeffrey Kallberg, Eds., "Difference and Enlightenment in Haydn's instrumental music" in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 136.

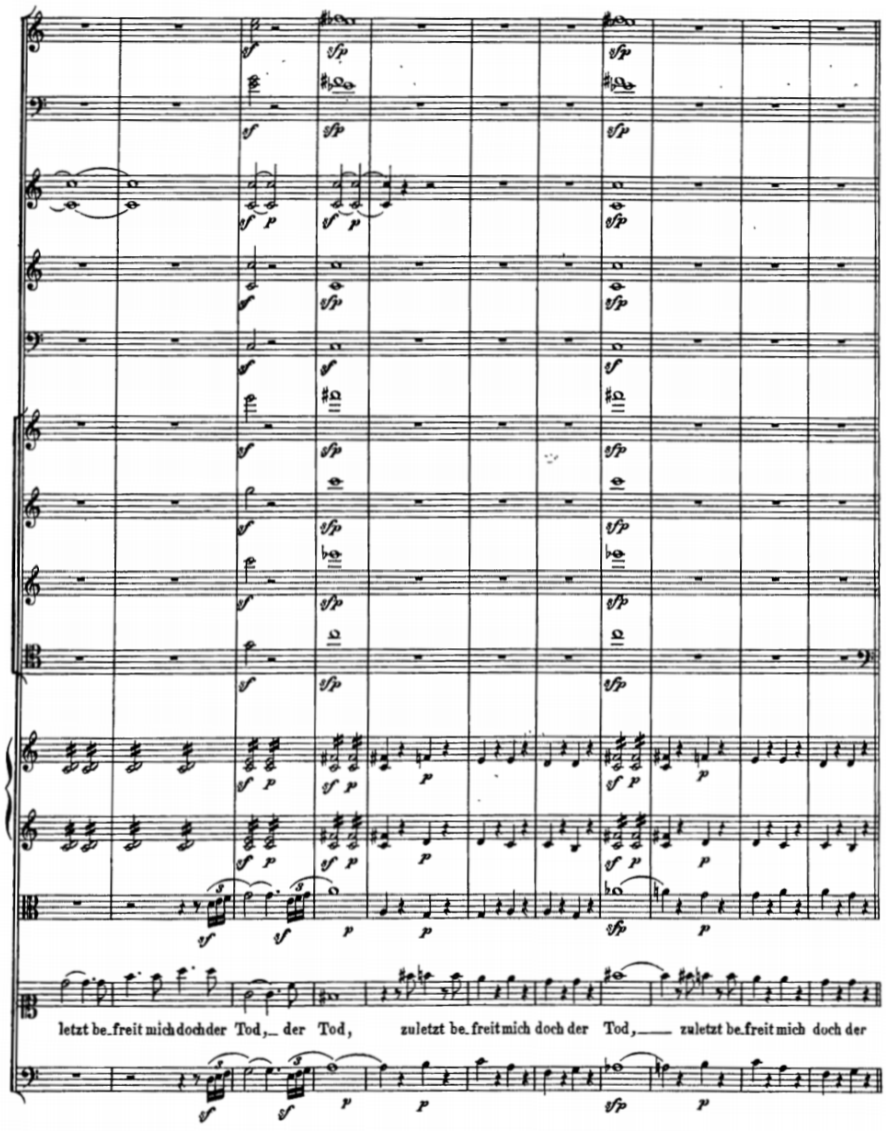
[5] O'Brien, Karen, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 10.

marry against her will, they elope only to be captured and separated. Rezia is then abducted by pirates and sold with her two maids to an Egyptian Sultan who falls in love with her. Rezia and Ali reunite eventually and try to escape from the Sultan's harem which fails due to the betrayal of the Calender, a fake "holy" mendicant. However, their love and devotion move the Sultan, and he pardons them, punishing the Calender instead. Praises for the wise ruler and a joyful celebration follow.

In a similar plot, Konstanze in *Entführung* is also confined with her maid, Blondchen, in the Turkish harem of the Pasha Selim. In love with Konstanze, the Pasha initially treats her most affectionately. Seeing no signs of requital and facing Konstanze's defiance, however, the Pasha threatens her with manifold tortures, triggering Konstanze to launch into her long aria, "Martern aller Arten". Expressing her scorn for the physical pain from "tortures of all kinds" ("martern aller arten"), the captive heroine stands up for herself confronting him as the whole aria reaches a tour-de-force, bravura end. The grand aria bestows upon the heroine a dignified aura as it vividly conveys one harem-confined woman's challenge to an authority and the male ego. At the end of the aria, she utters the word, "Tod" (death) twelve times, mostly in emphatic *sforzandos*. The character's ferocious determination is illustrated by the increasing harmonic intensity which climaxes with a clashing diminished seventh chord at every "Tod": "Willingly , unflinchingly I choose every pain and grief./ Well then, command, coerce me,/ Roar, fulminate, rage,/ Death will liberate me in the end"[6] (e.g. 1).

[6] All translations of *Entführung* are from Nico Castel's *The Libretti of Mozart's Completed Operas*, vol. 1, New York, Leyerle Publications, 1997.

E.g. 1



Mozart, *Entführung.* no. 11, Aria, "Martern aller Arten" ("Tortures of All Kinds"). Reproduced with permission of the rights holder, Dover Publications

Thomas Bauman notes that writing this aria, Mozart made a significant change to Christoph F. Bretzner's original libretto which does not have any confrontation between Konstanze and the Pasha by this point.[7] With this change, Mozart creates a highly momentous scene for the heroine: her daring challenge to the Pasha alters the hierarchy between the two as the Pasha is rendered utterly powerless, particularly due to his lack of a singing voice. In the following act, Konstanze finally reunites with her lover, Belmont. Blondchen also meets Pedrillo who lives as a slave in a different part of the Pasha's estate. A brief euphoria is followed by a highly tense and awkward moment as the men question their partners' fidelity during their separation: "Are you really worth it?" Konstanze is astonished by Belmonte's doubt. Blondchen, the outspoken, no-nonsense woman, responds to Pedrillo's blunt question with a slap on his cheek: "You fool, have you gone mad?/ It might be better/ If you had turned the question around!" (Act 2, scene 9, Quartet). Such a probing by the male characters shows men's penchant for measuring women's worth by their "female intactness". It is not their lovers' well-being or safety that the two men inquire about. First and foremost, they need to know if the two women have preserved their chastity; if they are "undefiled" and thus "worth it" since "no exertion can wash the stain away,"[8] once a woman is "defiled". No question is raised on the two men's fidelity since premarital virginity and conjugal fidelity were required only of women.

In this regard, Rezia in *L'incontro* is an exceptional character: *she* tests her man, to be "completely convinced of [his] fidelity" (No. 27, Recitative). And hers is a rigorous scrutiny, unlike the above timid, one-question inquiry by Belmonte and Pedrillo. When Ali is spotted in Cairo, Rezia dispatches her maid, Balkis, in an attempt to seduce him before the long-awaited reunion. After an initial decline, Ali reluctantly follows Balkis at the urging of Osmin, his servant. Rezia thus brings her lover to her residence, the very Sultan's harem, in which Ali is further subjected to temptation. Rezia's action shows a remarkable gender reversal which is rarely seen in eighteenth-century opera or literature in which female characters are invariably portrayed as virtuous when keeping their "female boundaries". They are praised when suffering quietly and stoically from philanderings and abuses by their lovers or husbands. Rezia's actions also reject the stereotypes of Oriental women whose total submissiveness was of great interest to Westerners among

[7] Bauman, Thomas, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail.* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 77.

[8] Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Ed., Eileen Hunt Botting. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014 (Original work published 1792), p. 99.

various differences between the West and the Orient.[9] Her trajectory throughout the opera challenges such assumptions or inaccurate images of Oriental females whose allure was greatly exaggerated in various Western paintings, for instance, as seen in Boucher's, Ingres's or Delacroix's among others. Operas similarly reveal pervasive distortions in portraying them as either irresistible beauties or seducers such as Turandot, Thais or Delilah: it is indeed "the Orient fabricated by Orientalism."[10] The unconventional female characters in *L'incontro* and *Entführung* mirror the contemporary social changes regarding women and their social status during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. As advocacy for women's rights gained momentum, societal attitudes toward women, views of marriage, and interactions between men and women were also changing favorably to women. Lawrence Stone writes that parental control over their children's marriages was greatly curtailed in the second half of the eighteenth century; an increasing number of unmarried women participated in various social gatherings with or without parental accompaniment which offered them opportunities to select potential spouses.[11]

Entführung reflects such changing courtship practices and the contemporary discourse of romantic love. While refraining from "conquering" Konstanze, the Pasha crudely attempts to force her to reciprocate his love. His imposition of affections was clearly against voluntary love and Konstanze rejects it. Rezia in *L'incontro* gives up her royal status by eloping with a man she chooses to love. With the fundamental Enlightenment ideal of liberty gradually embraced by many, the notion of a mutual commitment between men and women began to take hold. Rezia's expectation and demand of Ali's fidelity can be understood in such a social context. She tells him, in no uncertain terms, "believe me that I do not know if I wanted to see you again had another been able to delight you". Ali's immediate expression of understanding when Rezia confesses her seduction scheme is also significant as reflecting the changing male attitude towards women: "I should have deserved to lose you forever" (No. 27, Recitative). The discussion ends there and then. Belmonte is also an atypical male character demonstrating the changing male-female dynamic. Realizing that he wronged Konstanze by his inquiry of her "worth", he asks for her pardon. At Konstanze's silence, he goes on his knees pleading her to forgive him.

[9] Harvey, David Allen, *The French Enlightenment and Its Others,* New York, Palgrave, 2012, p. 27.
[10] Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, New York, Vantage Books, 1979, p. 179.
[11] Stone, Lawrence, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*. New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1983, p. 271.

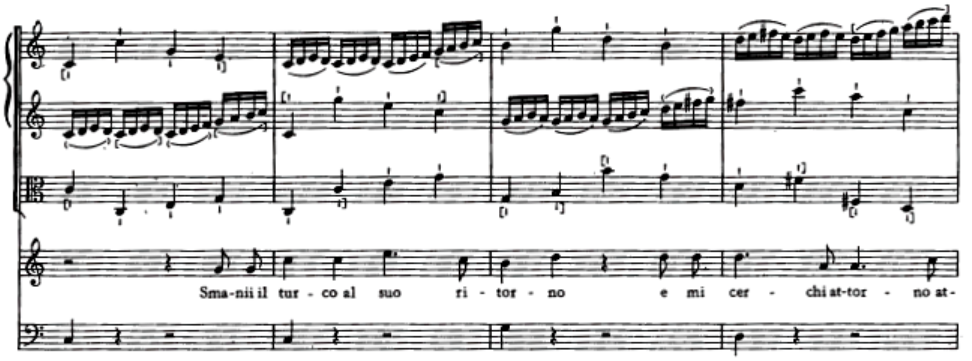
No longer, Enlightenment women's rights advocates contended, should only women be expected to maintain their chastity or conjugal fidelity. "Virtue" to them is more complex than an ingénue's preservation of her virginity, as promoted in the sentimental genres. Sentimental heroines encounter harrowing misfortunes in their tortuous path to remain chaste and faithful to their men as seen in Cecchina in *La buona figliuola* (*The Good Girl*) and Sandrina in Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* (*The Pretend Garden-Girl*). Grieving through their painful journey, they garner enthusiastic emotional responses in sympathy from the audience. Captured by pirates, sold to the Sultan's harem and later arrested by the Sultan's officers after an escape attempt, Rezia still remains hopeful, never despairing or sighing. Her calm resolve and bold actions eventually help bring freedom to all. With Rezia as a central character, therefore, *L'incontro* is certainly not an opera that encourages women to indulge in sentimentality, making them "feel rather than think" which "prevents intellect" as Mary Wollstonecraft writes in her criticism against the culture of sensibility of her era.[12]

Women's adversities and their despair over men's sexual advances often only further enhance male fantasy and desire of the abuser. The Pasha in *Entführung* is thus more bewitched by Konstanze's pain: "[h]er grief... enchant my heart all the more, and make her love even more desirable" (Act 1, scene 8, Dialogue). The Pasha's affection for Konstanze is apparent from various scenes and he grants her "love and liberty … more than any other woman" (Act 1, scene 7, Dialogue). He is therefore astounded and feels betrayed by Konstanze's defiance and refusal to "love" him as expressed in "Martern aller Arten". The aria reveals the ironic stature of the Pasha: a powerful ruler for whom all the "fiery songs are resounded" (No. 5, Chorus), but a vulnerable and effete man. Konstanza's aria creates considerably awkward moments for him. In terms of the sheer length, number of musical instruments and musical layout, the full-fledged concerto-style aria is an astounding work. The long introductory ritornello (lasting over two minutes) and the many elongated parts are alternately played by solo concertante instruments (flute, oboe, violin and violoncello). Konstanze, in the meantime, creates a torrent of sound and fury. The Pasha finds himself utterly helpless, simply standing there for about ten minutes that can feel like an eternity on stage. This is an absolutely unbecoming scene to the Pasha, a damaging moment that reverses the male-female dominance. Konstanze's commanding presence and influence on him make it clear that the Pasha is an antithesis of the strong heroine.

[12] Wollstonecraft, Mary, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Ed. by Eileen Hunt Botting, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014 (Original work published 1792), p. 88.

Likewise, Rezia's strength is evinced in her formally imposing aria, "Or vicina a te" ("To Be Close to You"). The aria contains coloratura portions as expected in a seria aria, but unusually for a seria aria, it is not in *da capo* form. Haydn grants the heroine a sonata aria with an elaborate structure: the introduction opens with a long section and two different themes follow before development. After the development, recapitulation features each section of exposition in almost the same length as in their first appearance. In this aria, Rezia solemnly expresses her resolve for freedom as she looks forward to the imminent escape. The heroine then states defiantly, "Let the Sultan rave on his return and search high and low for me; he will find Rezia no more". Her determination is expressed in the many staccatissimo in the accompaniment (e.g. 2).

E.g. 2



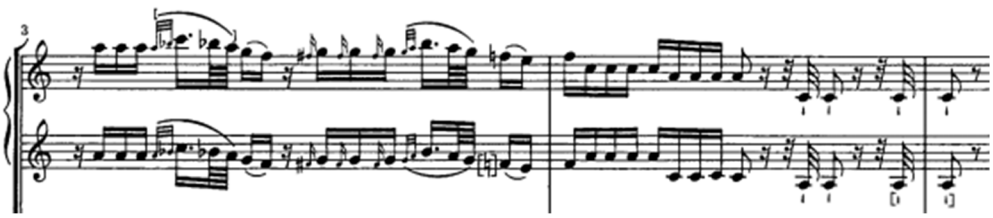
Haydn, *L'incontro improvviso.* no. 29, Aria, "Or vicina a te" ("To Be Close to You"), mm. 37-40. All Haydn score excerpts from *L'incontro* are reproduced with permission by Henle

The Sultan does rave on his return upon learning of Rezia's escape. However, his fury is expressed not by the Sultan himself onstage. The audience hears of the Sultan only through other characters describing him as mighty and ruthless, or how he is "at the feet of Rezia", his slave (No. 16, Dialogue). Even the male protagonist, Ali, suffers from a meager stage presence as a mere foil to the heroine. He is a far cry from an "abductor" protagonist who infiltrates a harem to rescue his lover. Ali manages to enter the harem only because of Rezia's scheme to lure him there in testing his fidelity as discussed above. He follows Rezia's lead when he is supposed to

abduct and rescue her from the Sultan's harem. Rather than attempting to solve problems, Ali escapes them and tries "to divert [him]self" by seeking solace in books (No. 23, Recitative). "Paralysed with terror" by the imminent arrest, he asks his servant, Osmin (not the menacing harem guard, Osmin, in *Entführung*), for advice on "what [they] must do" (No. 39, Finale). Belmonte in *Entführung* similarly expresses his reliance on Konstanze: "I rely upon your power;/ Consider what works/ Have been achieved by you!/ What all the world thinks impossible" (No. 17, Aria). He is also seen grieving his lot, "Oh heaven … restore my peace of mind … I have suffered too much!" (No. 1, Aria).

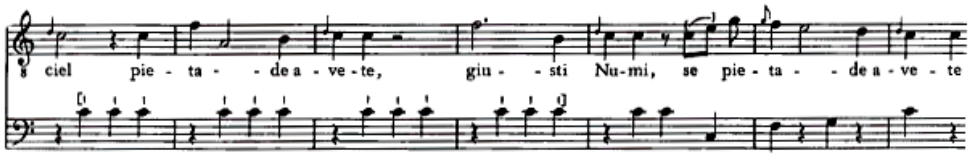
As displayed in many of his numbers, Ali follows the mold of a sentimental character rather than a gallant rescuer. The recitative, "Indarno m'affanno" ("In Vain I Strive"), shows Ali bemoaning how he is "abandoned, distressed, penniless and friendless"; he grieves, "Are you beating, my poor heart? … my spirit fails me, my soul despairs" (No. 13, Recitative, e.g. 3). His lamentation continues in the following aria, "Deh! se in ciel pietade avete" ("Ah! If in Heaven You Have Pity"): "my heart … weary of the blows of fate, will beat no more". He then beseeches the gods: "if in heaven you have pity, ye just gods, take back my life and my soul, give me back". Descending motions and pairs of appoggiaturas for "sighing" in his recitatives and arias suggest a strong sentimental tone, as the convention has it (e.g. 4).

E.g. 3



Haydn, *L'incontro improvviso*, no. 13, Recitative, "Indarno m'affanno" ("In Vain I Strive") (Adagio), mm. 3-5.

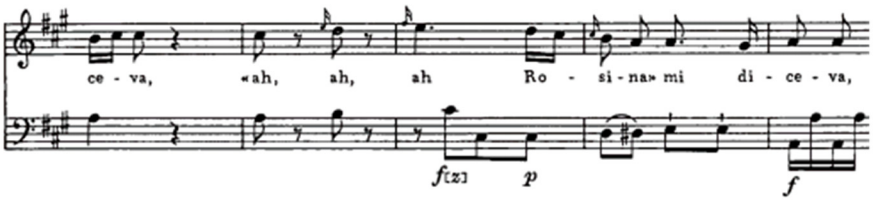
E.g. 4



Haydn, *L'incontro improvviso*, no. 14, Aria, "Deh! se in ciel pietade avete" ("Ah! If in Heaven You Have Pity") (Adagio), mm. 7-13.

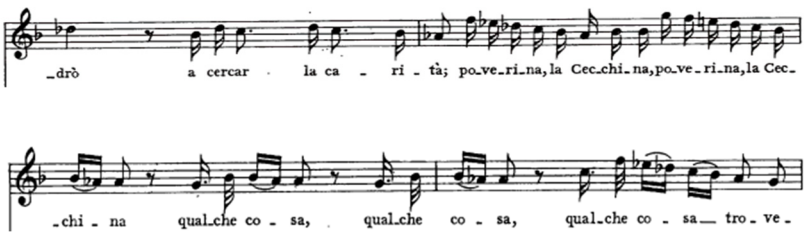
Such elements in Ali's numbers are pervasive in those of sentimental opera heroines. For instance, Rosina repeatedly expresses self-pity and bemoans her miserable life in her aria, "Con un tenero sospiro" ("With a Tender Sigh") in Haydn's *La vera costanza* (*True Constancy*) (e.g. 5); so does Cecchina in "Una povera ragazza" ("A Poor Girl") in Niccolò Piccinni's *La buona figliuola* (*The Good Girl*) (e.g. 6).

E.g. 5



Haydn, *La vera costanza.* no. 8, Aria, "Con un tenero sospiro" ("With a Tender Sigh") (Andante), mm. 22-26. Reproduced with permission of the rights holder, Henle

E.g. 6



Piccinni, *La buona figliuola.* no. 10, Aria, "Una povera ragazza" ("A Poor Girl") (Andantino), mm 35-38. Reproduced with permission by Taylor and Francis.

Ali's character traits and demeanor are highly contrasted with those of the harem women who demonstrate unflinching optimism even in their hopeless confinement: Blondchen never loses faith or despairs "as long as [she is] alive" because "she who always imagines the worst, finds herself in the middle of it" (Act 2, scene 2, Dialogue). She envisions Konstanze and herself as the first females ever to escape from the harem and return to homeland. Women in *L'incontro* express the same wish. Before the imminent escape, Rezia proclaims that she is no longer the Sultan's slave in the seraglio: "My aim is to see my country" (No. 31, Recitative). She is determined to "end [her] torment and to return in Liberty" (No. 41, Canzonetta). Balkis also sings of her resolve for freedom: "I hasten to gain sweet liberty and my sole delight … My heart throbs in my breast if I think of escaping, if I can exchange my servitude for a happier clime" (No. 32, Aria). And the "sweet liberty", they obtain eventually.

Women in Public Sphere

During the eighteenth century, places such as debating societies, salons, Freemasonic lodges or reading societies opened their doors to women. It was in the salon that women's participation was most prominent. Dena Goodman writes how men would meet to work on Enlightenment projects "only if women kept them from dominating and insulting one another, kept them within the bounds of polite conversation and civil society."[13] The salon saw women playing a prominent role, organizing events or working as guiding figures in a wide range of conversations on politics, society, culture or art. Discourses on theatrical performances were thus also a mainstay. *Entführung*, for instance, entered salon conversations with its wide success and the immensely popular soprano, Caterina Cavalieri, on whose "flexible throat" Mozart fully capitalized for the role of Konstanze, as he writes in his letter.[14] Haydn treasured the "most agreeable and happy gatherings" he had at salons during winter months before his return to "dreary solitude" of Eszterháza.[15] At those meetings, conversations were equally for all participants, regardless of their birth or social status. James Van Horn Melton

[13] Goodman, Dena, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment.* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994, p. 105.

[14] Nohl, Ludwig, Ed., *The Letters of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1769-1791)*, 2 vols, Trans, Lady Wallace, Philadelphia, Frederick Leypoldt, 1866, p. 319.

[15] Landon, H. C. Robbins, Ed., *The Collected Correspondence and London Notebooks of Joseph Haydn*, London, Barrie and Rockliff, 1959, p. 97.

attributes the equal contribution among instruments in Haydn's chamber music to the composer's exposure to Enlightenment "dialogical and egalitarian" salons during the 1770s and 1780s.[16]

Composed during the time of his salon participation in the 1770s, *L'incontro* indeed presents such a guiding figure in Rezia. Her leadership and resourcefulness in the harem-escape attempt are unmistakable as she plans everything for all to reach Persia. Even at the joyful news of Ali's presence in Cairo, she immediately regains her self-control from excitement and directs people for their tasks in preparation for the escape: "To work, my friends!/ We need to plan together/ for the outcome of my still confused happiness./ Meantime go before me. Dardane, to my room: Balkis, follow me to the fountains in the garden" (No. 11, Recitative). To finance the journey, Rezia "already possesses half of the Sultan's purse" and prepares to "make use of the jewels … [which] should suffice for the journey" (No. 37, Recitative). Rezia and her group manage to slip out of the harem "causing the devil of a commotion," but all to no avail due to the Calender's betrayal for a hefty reward. When all are in panic after the arrest, Rezia calms them down and lifts up Ali's spirit ("Courage, prince!"). A Sultan-issued death warrant is presented to everyone. Ali is then ordered by an officer to read another paper that announces, in a dramatic turnaround, pardons for all and the punishment of the treacherous Calender, instead. The ruler concludes the opera restoring order as expected in opera buffa; he benevolently unites Ali and Rezia "in an everlasting bond" and lets his "kingdom be filled with pomp and rejoicing" (No. 46, Recitative).

Similarly, the Pasha in *Entführung* is a changed man as the finale exhibited. Konstanze's presence has positively affected the Pasha as revealed in the two characters' dialogues which become enlightening sessions for him. She cautions him that he is truly to be pitied, if he lets love be commanded: "You imprison the objects of your desire … and are content your pleasures to satisfy" (Act 2, scene 3, Dialogue). The Pasha ultimately learns of a woman's "misery beyond all names of misery in the condition of being forced to consent."[17] Restraining his baser instinct, the Pasha therefore overcomes his desire to "conquer" Konstanze in none other than his own harem. The heroine's influence on the Pasha is manifest especially in his pardoning of Belmonte who turns out to be the son of his archenemy. Freeing Belmonte, the Pasha thus frees himself as well from the burden of hatred.

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[16] Horn, Melton James Van, School, Stage, Salon: Musical Cultures in Haydn's Vienna. *The Journal of Modern History*, 2004, 76, no. 2, p. 277.

[17] Wollstonecraft. Mary, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Ed. Eileen Hunt Botting. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014 (Original work published 1792), p. 99.

If gatherings in such venues as salons or debating societies offered a forum for educated women from higher social classes and satisfied their intellectual curiosity, it was the Freemasonic lodges that provided women from broader walks of life a space outside the confinement of their domestic life. The Freemasons' prohibition of female membership was increasingly criticized and masonic lodges, exclusively for men since their inception, began to admit women in many European countries, starting with French lodges.[18] The decision to accept females deeply polarized lodge members either supporting or vehemently protesting. Proving the naysayers' common assumptions about women wrong, female masons became a distinguished presence elevating their masonic status. Freemasonic lodges, the "havens of equality", became a place where "large numbers of women first expressed what we may legitimately describe as an early feminism."[19]

It was in Britain where the strongest voice for women was heard and where advocates critiqued women's subordination and inequality between men and women. In 1694, Mary Astell proposed women's colleges in the first part of her book, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, demanding education for women who was "denied the faculty of Thinking" when "GOD has given as well as Men intelligent Souls."[20] Astell's arguments were reverberated in some male writers' remarks. Condemning the "barbarous custom" of his "civilized Christian country" that denies women education, Daniel Defoe writes: "We reproach [women] every day with folly and impertinence … had they the advantages of education equal to us, they would be guilty of less than ourselves."[21] It is therefore significant that Blondchen in *Entführung* is specifically indicated as being "English". The outspoken Blondchen emphasizes her "Englishness": "I am an Englishwoman, born to be free" (No. 8, Dialogue). Even the villainous macho guard of the Pasha, Osmin (not Ali's servant, Osmin, in *L'incontro*), is powerless when dealing with Blondchen who embodies the new eighteenth-century British model of the independent, outspoken women. Osmin desperately tries various tactics to tame her. Never one to mince words, Blondchen crushes him at every unwanted approach. By specifying Blondchen's nationality as English, Mozart, the

[18] Allen, James Smith (2003). "Sisters of Another Sort: Freemason Women in Modern France, 1725–1940", *The Journal of Modern History*, 2003, 75, no. 4, p. 800.

[19] Burke, Janet M. and Margaret C. Jacob, "French Freemasonry, Women, and Feminist Scholarship", *The Journal of Modern History*, 1996, 68, no. 3, p. 540.

[20] Astell, Mary (1694). *A serious proposal to the Ladies.* London, Richard Wilkin, 1697, p. 52-53. Accessed January 12, 2017. *https://ia800207.us.archive.org/5/items/seriousproposalt00aste/seriousproposalt00aste.pdf*

[21] Defoe, Daniel, *An Essay Upon Projects*. London, Cassell & Company, 1887 (Original work published 1697), p. 230. Accessed January 23, 2018 *http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4087/4087-h/4087-h.htm.*

"most exuberant Anglophilia,"[22] underscores the country's active embrace of Enlightenment; and by associating strong, "unruly" women with Britain, he mirrors the British women's assumed confidence and their work to improve women's lives.

The impact of Enlightenment thought was powerful enough to change people's socio-political outlooks. Active advocates of the Enlightenment or not, artists and writer reflected its tenets in their works. Haydn's involvement in the Enlightenment was not as direct and active as Mozart's; nonetheless, the widespread social and intellectual wave erupting in Europe much affected him. His large library with books by Enlightenment writers[23] and initiation into Freemasonry attest to his desire to keep abreast of the current Enlightenment culture. Moreover, joining the Freemasonry, Haydn flouted the anti-Freemasonry policies of the Catholic church, of which he was a devout member. In spite of general impressions of "Papa Haydn" as a conservative Catholic satisfied with the status quo, the wheelwright's son was apparently acutely aware of severe economic, social disparity among classes determined by accident of birth. Haydn's letters reveal his resentment against Nikolaus II, Eszterházy, who addressed him "like a lackey, in the third person" and under whom he "didn't know if [he] was Kapellmeister or Kapell-servant."[24] Regarding the social reality in the gap between men and women, Haydn also points out in his notebook: "[i]f a woman murders her husband, she is burned alive, whereas the husband, on the contrary, is hanged."[25]

As for Mozart, he was an enthusiastic Freemason who moved up two masonic levels to become a Master. A devoted follower of the Enlightenment ideas, he embodies the *zeitgeist* of the era, being aspirational, confident and relatively free from traditional aristocratic sponsorship as a composer. Mozart's pieces indeed reflect his progressivism as a Freemason as in *Kleine Freimaurer-Kantate* (*Little Masonic Cantata*, K. 623), *Maurerische Trauermusik* (*Masonic Funeral Music*, K. 477), *Die Maurerfreude* (*The Mason's Joy*, K. 471) and most prominently in *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*, K. 620). In *Le nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*, K 492), the composer of "radical energies"[26] depicts the oppressed class completely outsmarting and humiliating the ruling class. It is therefore not surprising that Haydn and Mozart created heroines like Rezia and Konstanze who demand for an equal footing with men and resist authority.

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[22] Brophy, Brigid, *Mozart the Dramatist.* New York, Da Capo, 1998, p. 223.

[23] Schroeder, David, "Haydn and Gellert: Parallels in Eighteenth-Century Music and Literature". *Current Musicology*, 1983, no. 35, p. 7.

[24] Landon, H. C. Robbins, Ed., *The Collected Correspondence and London Notebooks of Joseph Haydn*. London, Barrie and Rockliff, 1959, p. xxiv.

[25] Ibid, p. 137.

[26] Solomon, Maynard, *Mozart: A Life*, New York, Harper, 1995 p. 356.

Conclusion

Unlike opera seria—nobility opera with lofty themes—buffa generally mirrors contemporary society, portraying a broad range of social occurrences or ideas. Caryl Clark attributes buffa's "meteoric rise" during the eighteenth century to its reflection of societal realities, hence appealing to the rising middle class that could attend the theater along with the aristocrats, as long as they could pay.[27] As buffa operas, *Entführung* and *L'incontro* indeed serve beyond providing mere entertainment. They embody the Enlightenment era's progressive social atmosphere and forward-looking attitudes toward various issues that spread and inspired people to challenge conventional ideas. The Enlightenment tenets provided an ideological and intellectual foundation for such a rethinking of established social norms. Fully assumed inferior to men, lacking reason and possessing no rights to property, women in the eighteenth century were forced to be dependent on their husbands and confined to a primarily domestic realm. Any woman engaging in a public space was often outright vilified; a woman's education was only to prepare her to be a good wife and a good mother. However, with the status of women in relation to men improved, women's public profiles and social positions were growing in various fields. Formerly exclusive male organizations such as Masonic lodges could no longer contradict their own claimed values of universal brotherhood and equality by excluding women.

Such social shifts are encapsulated in various operatic works. With sung text, actions and visual effects, operas can be an effective vehicle for messages and often mirror a composer's world view. Haydn and Mozart portray their female characters, accordingly in *L'incontro* and *Entführung* concretizing the Enlightenment ideals of liberty and equality. Composed after Mozart liberated himself from Archbishop Colloredo in whose residence he was treated like a valet, *Entführung* depicts the enslaved women's desire and attempt to escape from bondage. *L'incontro* conveys the contemporary women's new-found confidence and aspiration as manifested in the actions of harem-confined women's determined pursuit of freedom in the absence of conventional male leadership. The opera thus reveals Haydn as an Enlightenment-influenced composer rather than an uninterested and unaffected onlooker, as projected in conventional view that has hardly associated him with social movements of his time. Rezia and Konstanze in the two operas are also portrayed as a catalyst for the character transformation of their formerly tyrannical captor. Like a *salonnière*, the "civilizing force", who mediates her guests' conflicting male egos

[27] Clark, Caryl, "Reading and Listening: Viennese *Frauenzimmer*, Journals and the Sociocultural Context of Mozartean Opera Buffa", *Musical Quarterly*, 2004, 87, no. 1, p. 140.

to induce better behavior, Rezia and Konstanze are the instruments of discipline to male characters. It is the harem women who are to be celebrated in these operas. The reformed rulers are praised with the most exalted paeans for pardoning all in one stroke in the finale, but the heroines have persevered while being dragged around "moving sea and land" and try to earn freedom. Distinguishing themselves from the dominant heroine type of the "age of sensibility", Rezia and Konstanze represent a new model of female protagonists embodying the eighteenth-century women's elevated social status and their confidence in a rapidly changing social climate.

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