

Mozart

Zaide

Gré Brouwenstijn



mp LIVE

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 1756–1791

Zaide K344

Zaide

Gomatz

Allazim

Sultan Soliman

Osmin

Zaram

Speaker

Gré Brouwenstijn

Peter Pears

Bruce Boyce

Alexander Young

Owen Brannigan

Lloyd Strauss-Smith

Jill Balcon (not recorded)

London Mozart Players

Harry Blech

Recording: 14 July 1952, Royal Festival Hall, London



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1	Overture	8'22
Act 1		
2	Bruder, lasst uns lustig sein	2'19
3	Unerforschliche Fugung	8'45
4	Ruhe sanft, mein holdes Leben	7'15
5	Rase, Schicksal, wute immer	6'35
6	Herr und Freund!	3'51
7	Nur mutig, mein Herze	4'28
8	O selige Wonne!	7'00
Act 2		
1	Saide entflohen!	4'43
2	Der stolze Low	4'38
3	We hungrig bei der tafel sitzt	3'14
4	Ich bin so bos' als gut	5'24
5	Trostlos schluchzet Philomele	9'08
6.	Tiger! wetze nur die klauen	4'34
7	Ihr Machtigen seht ungeruhrt	4'44
8	Freundin! stille deine Tranen	5'29

Note from the remastering engineer: The dialogue was removed from the original tape. There is occasional radio interference and tape-speed instability problems with the original source that could not entirely be corrected in the remastering process.

Zaide

Synopsis by Alison Latham

ACT 1

In the Sultan's garden

A group of slaves accept their fate and resolve to make the best of things (No 1).

Alone, Gomatz laments the 'inscrutable Providence' that has led him, an innocent man, to be exiled and enslaved alongside criminals; tormented and exhausted, he longs for oblivion and finally falls asleep (No 2).

*Zaide, the Sultan's favourite in his harem, approaches Gomatz and concludes from his face that he must be European. She wants to wake him to inquire about the fate of her parents, but thinks better of it and places a small bag in his lap as a gift.**

Zaide sings a lullaby to the sleeping Gomatz (No 3).

Gomatz wakes and discovers the bag, which contains some jewels and a portrait, with which he falls in love. A note enjoins him to secrecy but says that if the picture pleases him, he should go in disguise to the square.

Clutching the portrait, Gomatz ecstatically resolves to defy his fate (No 4).

Heavily veiled, Zaide pretends to accuse Gomatz of theft of the portrait; his protestations reveal his integrity so she decides to disclose her true identity. They resolve to live and die together, but Gomatz is determined that they should escape.

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Zaide and Gomatz sing of their happiness at meeting (No 5).

Allazim arrives and challenges Gomatz about his plan to flee. Gomatz reminds Allazim that, in spite of his high position in the Sultan's court, he too is a slave. He asks for Allazim's help. Allazim is drawn to the young couple and resolves to help them.

Gomatz pours out his thanks to Allazim but his thoughts keep returning to Zaide (No 6).

Allazim advises them to escape at once by sea.

Allazim resolves to have courage and take his destiny into his own hands (No 7).

Allazim bids Zaide and Gomatz farewell, promising to comfort the Sultan over the loss of Zaide; if he fails he will follow them both.

At sunrise Zaide, Gomatz and Allazim express their joy, though Zaide briefly has dark forebodings, and they pray for a peaceful future as a reward for their constancy (No 8).

ACT 2

A room in the Sultan's palace

Sultan Soliman is enraged to learn of Zaide's escape, especially at her treachery in abandoning him for a Christian slave, and swears bloody revenge: a proud lion may be tamed but if treated shamefully will become a tyrant (No 9).

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Osmin tries to calm him by presenting him with a new female slave, but Soliman drives them away, threatening to have them whipped.

Osmin makes fun of Soliman's foolish behaviour (No 10).

Zaide and Gomatz have been captured and are led in as prisoners by Zaram. Zaide is convinced that she is about to die; Gomatz will face death unafraid as long as he dies alongside Zaide. Soliman threatens them with dreadful punishment.

Soliman tells the captives that he rewards merit but punishes wrong (No 11).

Zaide cannot understand why she should die simply for wanting freedom rather than slavery.

Zaide compares her fate with that of a caged nightingale (No 12).

Zaram announces Soliman's verdict: Zaide and Gomatz are sentenced to death but Gomatz will be tortured first. Enraged, Zaide accuses Soliman of tyranny; he will not assuage his hatred with blood.

Zaide accuses him of being a tiger gloating over his prey; only death will end her misery (No 13).

Zaram enters with Allazim, whom he has also captured. Soliman sentences him to death. Allazim reveals his identity: it was he who, as admiral of a European ship, once freed Soliman from pirates, only to be captured himself.

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Allazim reflects that it is only those who have known suffering before they rise to power who can understand their slaves (No 14).

Soliman pardons Allazim and invites him to be his friend but rejects Allazim's plea for clemency for Zaide and Gomatz.

Gomatz calms Zaide, saying death will crown their love; Allazim, anguished, again asks for compassion for the lovers; Zaide begs to die instead of Gomatz; Soliman dismisses their entreaties (No 15).

Before she is brought to execution, Zaide reveals that she is the daughter of Prince Ruggiero, who was taken captive. In an effort to find him, her mother set out with Zaide and her brother (who was three years her senior), only to die in slavery. Gomatz suddenly recognizes Zaide as his sister, and Allazim announces that he is the lost Prince Ruggiero. Soliman grants freedom to them all and allows them to return to their native land.

* passages in italic are taken from an anonymous libretto called *The Seraglio, or: The Unexpected Encounter in Slavery of Father, Daughter and Son* (Bolzano, 1799) which is believed to have been the source of Schachtner's libretto and thus provides the plot surrounding Mozart's musical numbers

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A festival of Mozart after the Festival of Britain

Mike Ashman

Mozart himself probably called the Singspiel K344/336b *Das Serail* (The Seraglio) after the contemporary operetta from which his librettist took its plot and characters. The music paper used suggests that he worked on the piece in Salzburg in 1779/80 after returning from an extended tour to Mannheim and Paris. He completed only 15 vocal numbers with short vocal cues (no libretto has survived), which could correspond to the first two acts of the work. There was no specific commission, and this first attempt at a German opera in 11 years (after *Bastien and Bastienne*) was partly inspired by the entertaining visits to Salzburg of theatrical troupes led by his friends Johann Heinrich Böhm and Emanuel Schikaneder. Mozart composed for both companies, including a revision of the incidental music for *Thamos, König in Ägypten* - which shared both the use of melodrama and themes of rescue and forgiveness with the *Serail* project.

Das Serail (only named *Zaide*, after the drama's heroine, by its eventual 19th-century publisher Johann Andre) may also have been intended by Mozart as a trial run, or even an audition piece, for the national *Singspiel* troupe (Nationaloperette) that Emperor Joseph II had recently established to run alongside his theatre of spoken drama at Vienna's Burgtheater. One condition required of a composer to work for this new company was that he should write a comic opera, which the Emperor, or his advisers, regarded as central to the re-establishment of German language theatre in Austria-Hungary. Another vital ingredient in the mix of the *Serail/Zaide* experiment was Mozart's fascination, amounting almost to obsession, with the form of melodrama which he had witnessed in Mannheim in the *Medea* of

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Georg Benda. ‘There is no singing in it –only recitation, to which the music is like a sort of obbligato accompaniment to recitative’, wrote Mozart. He was soon rumoured to be about to compose a *Semiramide* in this style, but used melodrama instead in *Thamos* and in *Zaide* for Gomat’s *Unerforschliche Fuegung* and Sultan Soliman’s rage (at, presumably, the beginning of Act II) when *Zaide* has escaped.

The librettist of *Serail/Zaide*, Johann Andreas Schachtner, was a close friend of the Mozart family and something of an all-rounder. Court trumpeter to the Archbishop of Salzburg, he was a poet and composer and, for Mozart, translated *La finta giardiniera* and *Idomeneo* into German, wrote recitatives for *Bastien und Bastienne* and the text of a chorus for *Thamos*. For their first collaboration on a complete work, Schachtner and Mozart took the popular plot theme of rescue of a European from the seraglio, or harem. This was made topical at the time by both the actual incidents, and tabloid press fabrications, of Muslim pirates preying on Mediterranean shipping, particularly to obtain female and male slaves for what one report called ‘various purposes’. This mixture of Beauty and the Beast and *nostalgie de la boue* had been given literary and musical credibility earlier in the century by Voltaire’s *Zaire* (the play had been given in Salzburg as recently as 1777 and the name is already suggestive of that of Mozart’s heroine), Gluck’s *La rencontre imprévue* and Haydn’s *L’incontro improvviso*.

With Mozart, especially for Act I of their project, Schachtner raided *Das Serail, oder Die unvermuthete Zusammenkunft in der Slavery zwischen Vater, Tochter und Sohn* (The Seraglio, or the unexpected Reunion in Slavery of Father, Daughter and Son), a 1777 libretto by Franz Joseph Sebastiani. He took from it all the main characters, naming one of them, Sebastiani’s ‘Renegade’ (a once Christian Mohammedan), Allazim. After the Trio *O selige Wonne* (presumably) brings Act I to a close,



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Schachtner's scenario strikes out in some different directions from Sebastiani's – in, for example, the dungeon scene aria of Zaide, *Trostlos schluchzet Philomele* which has no dramatic equivalent in the 1777 score. Many of these changes strike a darker note than the Sebastian 'original', and it has been suggested that one of the reasons why Mozart was unable or unwilling to complete the opera was because he felt that it was becoming too serious for contemporary Viennese taste, and for the specific brief of Joseph II's new company.

The Sebastiani *Serail* ended happily with one of those sudden revelations of unsuspected consanguinity about which the 18th century (Mozart not excepted) was always enthusiastic. Gomatz and Zaide - despite or perhaps because of their passion – were revealed to be brother and sister; Allazim was their father who, 20 years before, had saved the Sultan's life. All were pardoned and free to go home. No music or libretto exists to prove which way the Mozart/ Schachtner team was going. But when the composer took the score to Vienna with him and showed it to Gottlob Stephanie, inspector of Joseph II's Nationaloperette, the result was the libretto for *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, crucially modified by Stephanie himself from an existing drama. It was one of the few real successes of the new company, so in some respects *Serail/ Zaide*, literally unfinished as it remained, achieved one of its original goals. *Die Entführung* is a neat resolution of the conflicts between tragedy and comedy that Mozart could not quite resolve in his *Serail* project and a perfect crowning of the 18th century's 'rescue from the seraglio' operas.

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The subsequent history of the work begins with his widow Constanze's campaigns to make good on all that Mozart had left behind. She found *Serail* in his scattered manuscripts in 1799 and eventually sold it to Johann Andre, who gave the work its present name. The fragments were first published in 1838, and a first performance of them given in Frankfurt on 27 January 1866. Mozart's autograph contains no overture, but a number of modern performances (including the present one) adopted Alfred Einstein's belief that the Symphony No. 32 was the composer's own intended beginning (although it is scored for a larger orchestra, was written earlier than *Serail/ Zaide* and uses 'Turkish' effects not present in the opera).

There have been various attempts in modern times to write new dialogue to substitute for Schachtner's lost words, or to concoct a narration (as devised for the present performance, although not preserved on tape) depicting what may have happened if Mozart had actually finished the opera. The Sebastiani 'happy' ending has not inevitably been used. Modern companion pieces to *Zaide* have been written by both Luciano Berio and Chaya Cernowin. Some contemporary stagings have been bolder still with *Zaide*. These include choreographer Lucinda Childs in 1995 at Brussels's Theatre Royal de la Monnaie and Peter Sellars's Mozart 250th anniversary production in Vienna, New York, London, and Aix. Sellars added excerpts from the contemporary *Thamos, König in Ägypten* music and set his staging (played by the original-instrument Concerto Köln under Louis Langrée) in a contemporary sweatshop, cast entirely with African-American and Asian singers.

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The present performance was one of a series of four concerts. Undoubtedly in the spirit of enterprise and initiative in the arts in Britain promoted by the previous year's Festival of Britain, the three-year-old London Mozart Players, under their founding principal conductor Harry Blech, put on (then) a four-concert series of rare Mozart, with the support of the BBC, in London's new Royal Festival Hall between May and July 1952. The other programmes included the oratorio *Die Schuldigkeit des ersten Gebotes* (with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Adele Leigh and Jennifer Vyvyan), the *Thamos* incidental musical and *Il re pastore*.

The 'specialist' press reaction was typical of an age to which the Third Programme and the long-playing gramophone record had already lent a desire to assess and strictly catalogue the works of the great masters according to perceived, and completed, merit. Of the dedicated music magazines, *Opera, Music & Musicians* and *The Musical Times* did not publish reviews of *Zaide* (which would not have an actual stage premiere in the UK until the City Opera Club's Toynbee Hall performances in London the following January). A. J. of *The Musical Times* wondered if 'the apparently indiscriminate applause for *all* Mozart's music (mature and immature, first-rate and second-rate alike) indicate that the attraction lies in the honeyed surface of the music, free from what the layman calls discord' and even suggested that promoters and conductors might have discovered that Mozart's music 'requires the employment of only a few performers' and 'can be 'got through' by conductors of little experience and rudimentary technique'. In hurrying to exempt the BBC and Harry Blech from this charge, he still felt that the 'recent series of concerts seemed at least to give assent to the fashion of worshipping Mozart's name rather than his achievement'.

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The cast of *Zaide* included Peter Pears, returning from recent work in the concert hall and in creating new roles for Benjamin Britten to the Mozart opera which had helped to establish him in the 1940s. In the hall, although not heard here, the actress Jill Balcon, wife of Cecil and mother of Daniel Day-Lewis, was making something of a speciality of narrating musical scores (she recorded Schumann's *Manfred* with Beecham). The South African tenor Lloyd Strauss-Smith had actually been a London resident since 1947, where his 20-year stay included roles in over 80 operas, many of them contemporary and on the radio. The Dutch soprano Gré Brouwenstijn was at this time on the verge of an international career in Verdi (Elisabeth de Valois at Covent Garden), Wagner (Elisabeth and Sieglinde at Bayreuth) and Beethoven's Leonore.

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The original sources are stored in the Borthwick Library at the University of York, where they are curated by Dr. Christopher Webb. Many of them are unique, irreplaceable and fragile: acetates in particular have an unpredictable shelf-life and require extremely careful handling. They are being remastered by Roger Beardsley, who has a worldwide reputation in the field, to the highest possible standard, with the emphasis kept on the feel of the live performance.

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Having said all that, it is remarkable just how few of our recordings have audible faults. It is important to remember that you are hearing them as the first listeners did over half a century ago.

Roger Beardsley

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Recorded: 14 July 1952, Royal Festival Hall, London

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