

W.A. Mozart, Overture to *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction for the Seraglio*), K. 384



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (27 January 1756 – 5 December 1791), was a prolific and influential composer of the Classical era. He composed over six hundred works, many acknowledged as pinnacles of symphonic, *concertante*, chamber, piano, operatic, and choral music. He is among the most enduringly popular of classical composers.

Mozart wrote his opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio* when he was 26 years old. The Overture is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 trumpets, 2 French horns, timpani, triangle, bass drum, and crash cymbals, and strings and is approximately 5 minutes long.

Die Entführung aus dem Serail was Mozart's first important success. The *singspiel* (featuring spoken dialogue rather than sung recitatives) was both a wonderful achievement in itself and a gesture to Vienna's infatuation with Turkish music. Premiered during the composer's first full year in Vienna (July 1782), it holds a treasure trove of superb arias and ensembles. Requiring virtuoso singing from two of its principals and sustained lyric vocalism from the rest, it is both a charming entertainment and an example of Mozart's finest and most inventive writing.

Aside from the Turkish aspects, Mozart's orchestra here offers a more subtle and sophisticated complement of instruments than found in his earlier operas. Especially noteworthy are the woodwind combinations. Mozart wrote for clarinets in C (seldom used today) and basset horns at the lower end of the tonal spectrum. The exotic setting, a Turkish seraglio, was no impediment to the work's popularity. Vivid costumes and foreign stage sets made an immediate impression, and have continued to do so long as producers and directors do not attempt to make *Die Entführung* relevant.