

The Representation of Oriental Others in Haydn's *L'incontro improvviso*

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Abstract

This paper examines the musical Orientalism and representation of Oriental Others in Haydn's seraglio opera, *L'incontro improvviso*. In seraglio opera, one of the Turkish-themed musical genres of "Turcomania" that swept Europe in the eighteenth century, Oriental Others were defined by their supposed negative human traits such as slyness, crudeness or irrationality. *Alla turca* topos in *L'incontro*, as in other seraglio operas, are extensively used to accentuate the inferiority of Others, their customs or religions. The representation of Others demonstrates little ethical complexity, exhibiting a stark dichotomy between morally upright Westerners and unsophisticated Others with dubious morals. I argue that despite presenting no European characters dueling with Others and thus foregoing such a narrative format as "East meets West on stage," Haydn's *L'incontro* is, nonetheless, more diminishing in its portrayal of Others than in most seraglio operas: even the male protagonist is among the degraded Others who are usually subplot characters from a low social echelon. No "rescuer," the protagonist in *L'incontro* is rendered as an incompetent figure. Ali's unmanly stature is further highlighted by the active, counter-stereotypical Oriental heroine, Rezia, who is presented as a foil to emphasize the inadequacy of Ali. The ultimate male Other, the Sultan, suffers equally from a weak stage presence despite fulfilling his role as a conveyor of Enlightenment ideals in a typical *lieto fine* of Turkish opera.

Keywords

Orientalism – Others – seraglio opera – Turcomania-Enlightenment – sentimental character

บทคัดย่อ

การแสดงภาพแทน

บทความนี้ศึกษาแนวคิดบูรพาคตินิยม (Orientalism) ทางดนตรีและการแสดงภาพแทน Oriental Others ในละคร โอเปร่า *seraglio* ของ Haydn เรื่อง *L'incontro improvviso* ในโอเปร่า *seraglio* นั้น ดนตรีแนวดุริก็ของ Turcomania แนวหนึ่งที่แพร่หลายไปทั่วยุโรปในศตวรรษที่สิบแปดคือ Oriental Others ซึ่งถูกนิยามผ่านลักษณะเชิงลบของมนุษย์เช่น เล่ห์เหลี่ยม ความหยาบกระด้าง หรือความไร้เหตุผล องค์ประกอบทางดนตรีในรูปแบบ *Alla turca topos* ใน *L'incontro improvviso* ก็เช่นเดียวกับในโอเปร่า *seraglio* อื่นๆ ที่ถูกนำมาใช้อยู่บ่อยครั้ง เพื่อเน้นความต่ำต้อยด้อยค่าของ Others และธรรมเนียมประเพณีหรือศาสนาของ Others การแสดงภาพแทน Others แสดงให้เห็นความซับซ้อนทางจริยธรรมเล็กๆ น้อยๆ และความแตกต่างกันอย่างสิ้นเชิง ระหว่างชาวตะวันตกที่ซื่อตรงและมั่นคงทางศีลธรรม กับ Others ที่ไม่ประสา ที่มีความน่าคลั่งใจในเรื่องของศีลธรรมและคุณธรรม ผู้เขียนอภิปรายว่าแม้จะไม่มี การนำเสนอตัวละครในยุโรปที่ต่อสู้กับ Others และไม่มีรูปแบบการบรรยายแบบ “ตะวันออกเจอตะวันตกบนเวที” (*East meets West on stage*) ตามรูปแบบของโอเปร่าดุริก็ทั่วไป แต่การพรรณนาภาพของ Others ใน *L'incontro* ของ Haydn ก็ถูกลดทอนลง เมื่อเทียบกับโอเปร่า *seraglio* ส่วนใหญ่ แม้แต่ตัวเอกชายก็อยู่ในกลุ่ม Others ที่ถูกลดชั้น กลุ่มนี้ปกติแล้วมักจะเป็นตัวละครย่อยจากสังคมระดับล่าง การที่ตัวเอกใน *L'incontro improvviso* ไม่มี “ผู้ช่วย” เท่ากับ แสดงว่าตัวเอกเป็นบุคคลไร้ความสามารถ นอกจากนี้ภาพพจน์ของตัวเอกชาย “Ali” ที่ไม่เอาไหนและไม่มีความเป็นผู้ชาย ก็ถูกเน้นให้เห็นเด่นชัดยิ่งขึ้น เมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับ Rezia นางเอกชาวตะวันตกซึ่งมีคุณสมบัติตรงข้ามกับชาวตะวันออกทั่วไป คือ กล้าหาญ มีความคิดริเริ่มและมุ่งมั่น Reiza ถูกนำเสนออย่างขัดแย้ง เพื่อเน้นให้เห็นถึงความพร่องของ Ali ส่วนสุดด้าน ซึ่งเป็นเลิคนิยายชายของ Other ก็ประสพชะตากรรมไม่ต่างกันจากการที่แทบไม่มีบทบาทบนเวที ถึงแม้ว่าจะทำหน้าที่ได้เต็มที่ตามบทของผู้ถ่ายทอดทฤษฎีอุดมคติแบบเรืองปัญญา (Enlightenment) ในละคร *lieto fine* ทั่วไปของโอเปร่าดุริก็ก็ตาม

1 Introduction¹

After centuries of military confrontations for geopolitical and religious hegemony, Europeans and Ottomans made peace in 1699 with the Treaty of Karlowitz, which was the result of the Ottomans' failed siege of Vienna and their disastrous retreat. Although the threat and animosity did not suddenly end, gradual changes occurred in Europeans' perception of the Ottomans, as the former began to actively engage in Eastern trade. A new Turkish trend and fashion soon inundated Europe. In a strange and unlikely turn of events, the fear of the Ottomans increasingly turned into a fascination with them and with their culture, leading to an eventual “Turcomania.” The craze was rampant, especially in social and musical scenes. Meyer (1974: 473–485) writes, “[F]or an evening's entertainment, one might attend the theater to see the latest play or

1 Oriental Others ใน Haydn's *L'incontro improvviso*

opera based on a Turkish theme or go to a masked ball wearing an elaborate Turkish costume. Dittersdorf (1801:167), the contemporary violinist, composer and a close friend of Haydn, describes a Turkish procession in Vienna “of more than fifty masqueraders ... to the accompaniment of a noisy brass band.” At home, “one might relax in a Turkish robe while smoking Turkish tobacco, eating Turkish candy, and reading an ever-popular Turkish tale. Authors frequently turned to Oriental subjects” (Meyer 1974: 473).

Along with other Turkish theatrical works, Turkish operas flourished since the appearance of the first Viennese abduction opera (seraglio or Turkish opera): John Ernest Galliard’s *The Happy Captive* (1741) with Turkish *mehter* music incorporated. *Mehter* band music, featuring a great number of brass and percussion instruments, was first introduced to Europeans through the marches of the Janissaries.² Numerous composers utilized Turkish instruments in their operas as well as in instrumental works. More than a century later, they were still much heard in various works. Mahler, for one, included the instruments of *alla turca* (in the style of the Turkish military band) in all his symphonies along with an array of various other percussion instruments. Initially, a “self-satisfied and naive” craze for Turkish fashion during the eighteenth-century (Whaples 1998: 3), *alla turca* music, albeit in its Westernized form, exerted great influence on the operas and instrumental music during and beyond that century, and its impact cannot be overestimated. Following the early example of a Turkish opera by Galliard, many more operas about a rescue from a seraglio were composed, including Niccolò Jommelli’s *La schiava liberata* (1768), Antonio Salieri’s *Tarare* (1783), and André Grétry’s *La caravane du Caire* (1783) with the last enjoying over 500 performances.

The fad for Turkish operas was such that even Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) composed one, despite the “misfortune of living in the country” far away from Vienna, as he wrote in a letter in 1781. With *L'incontro improvviso* (*The Unforeseen Meeting*, 1775, *L'incontro* hereafter), he thus joined the bandwagon of Turkish opera whose most famous representative is Mozart’s *Entführung aus dem Serail* (*Entführung*, hereafter). While fascinated with all things Turkish, Europeans largely maintained negative images of the Ottomans as a crude

2 The Janissaries were the Sultan’s elite and loyal bodyguards. The term can also refer to highly-trained infantry members. The immensely loud brass sound and percussive beats of the Janissary *mehter* band terrorized European soldiers. Janissary music became so fashionable that European armies often invited musicians to play the *mehter* music in Turkish attire.

homogenous mass, the collective “Others.” “Others” refers in this paper to members of an “out-group” in self-other relation in such discourses as Orientalism or postcolonialism. Others are considered fundamentally different and thus dubious (or dangerous) by members of an “in-group,” a collective “us” or “self.” In seraglio operas, such exclusivity or the hierarchical mindset between self and Other is manifest, as characters who embody the West often convey an air of dominance and a sense of superiority, consciously or otherwise.³

In the formulaic plotlines, the “abductor” of seraglio operas is invariably a European Christian attempting to rescue his love interest. In this, Haydn’s *L’incontro* is exceptional. It lacks a “European Christian female to be rescued,” as the Princess Rezia is a Muslim Arab in all likelihood. All eight characters in *L’incontro* are Arabs: Ali, Osmin, Calender, Rezia, Balkis and Dardane (her two maids and confidantes), the Egyptian Sultan, and his officer. Foregoing the well-established framework of Western characters valiantly confronting hostile Oriental Others, the opera therefore contains no on-stage encounter of the two duelling sides. The notorious gatekeeper Osmin’s hatred of Pedrillo and Belmonte in Mozart’s *Entführung*, for example, largely comes from the mere fact that the latter are Westerners, the Others, and hence default enemies. In *L’incontro*, on the other hand, the crisis of the protagonist or his conflict with the antagonist, the Calender, is caused by the latter’s pure greed and selfishness, not by any personal or collective enmity toward the Others.

This paper thus examines the depiction of Others in Haydn’s *L’incontro* and argues how the opera, despite the absence of Western characters, achieves what most seraglio operas do: enhancing Europeans’ confidence and their sense of superiority to Oriental Others by means of a greatly unflattering portrayal of the latter; and conveying the message of the Enlightenment about the enlightened monarch. With its negative presentation of even the protagonist himself, not just low-class Others, *L’incontro* is in fact more effective than other seraglio operas in degrading Others. This paper presents musical and textual evidence of the protagonist’s weak standing, which is further highlighted by the unusually strong and independent heroine: a surprising gender reversal, one that rejects the stereotypical portrayal of Oriental women.

3 The notation of the term, “others” (or “other”) in Orientalism discussion is not unified. I capitalize it as it indicates specific members of a group with cultural, geographical and religious differences thus conveying a significant semantic connotation, rather than simply denoting “self vs. other.”

2 *L'incontro*, the Seraglio Genre and the Orientalism

L'incontro, Haydn's sixth Italian opera, was most ambitiously launched with all forty-seven numbers. It has "miraculous scoring ... astounding figurations" (Porter 1966: 202–206) highlighting the drama and "carefully designed recitatives and extensive arias" (Geiringer 1966: 1308–1311). The opera, however, has been much neglected, as other Haydn operas have been for the last two centuries. After a brief period of scholarly advocacy in the 1960s and 1970s, during which some of his operas sporadically saw the light of day, they lapsed into oblivion again.⁴ Many published scholarly writings on his operas and the only professional recording of *L'incontro* come from that period; Haydn's operas are yet to garner renewed attention. To enhance understanding in the discussion of the barely known *L'incontro*, Mozart's *Entführung*, the only seraglio opera still on the regular repertoire, will be used as a point of reference and comparison.

In nearly all seraglio operas, a main male character's failed attempt to rescue his love interest leads to the couple's arrest, but a Pasha or Sultan pardons them, usually against an antagonist's pleas otherwise. Praise for the ruler and a celebration follow. Such a uniform or repeated plotline is not at all unique in the *opera buffa* genre in which "[o]riginality is ... not *prima facie* a criterion of value" and the familiarity of the storyline "heightens the pleasure of watching a *buffa*" (Hunter 1999: 36). As such, *L'incontro* also follows the common seraglio opera plot. Prince Ali flees from his evil brother to Persia, where he meets Princess Rezia. When Rezia is forced to marry another, they elope only to be captured and separated. Upon learning that she has been sold to an Egyptian Sultan, Ali goes to Cairo to rescue her, with his servant, Osmin (not to be confused with Osmin, the menacing antagonist in Mozart's *Entführung*). On the street in Cairo, Ali and Osmin become acquainted with the Calender, a fake dervish who pretends to be a holy mendicant.⁵ In the meantime, the Sultan tries to win Rezia in his harem not by force but by persuasion, yet Rezia is

4 *L'incontro* has been included or mentioned in Turkish opera surveys or essays, and one of its arias ("Or vicina a te") is discussed in detail in Mary Hunter's 1989 essay, "Text, music, and drama in Haydn's Italian opera arias: four case studies" in *The Journal of Musicology* 7, 29–57. However, very few studies exclusively on *L'incontro* exist other than Matthew Head's "Interpreting 'Abduction' Opera: Haydn's *L'incontro improvviso*, Sovereignty and the Eszterházy Festival of 1775" in *TheMA* 1, 1–8 (2012); and Erin Jerome's 2015 study, "Haydn's *L'incontro improvviso*: Deceitful Dervishes, Greedy Servants, and the Meta-Performance of *Alla Turca* Style," Kathryn L. Libin (Ed.), *Haydn and His Contemporaries II* (114–130), Ann Arbor: Steglein Publishing, Inc.

5 A calender is a mendicant dervish ascetic in Sufism. Taking a vow of poverty and austerity, mystic dervishes live on alms.

steadfast and faithful to Ali. The two lovers finally reunite and try to escape in vain as the Calender betrays them and their servants by handing them to the Sultan's men for a promised bounty. Moved by their love and devotion, however, the munificent Sultan pardons Ali and Rezia, punishing the Calender instead. A joyful festivity follows and Turkish music with Janissary percussion instruments jubilantly plays.

To emphasize Others' coarseness or supposed inferiority, seraglio operas use a uniform set of specific musical *topoi*⁶ that were tailored to portray Others so. Audiences watched the operas with lingering discomfort for Others, which closely paralleled the ambivalent attitude of Europeans toward Ottomans: awed and contemptuous simultaneously. As the plot unfolds, highlighting the confrontation of the two adversarial sides, audiences saw the clear contrast between the Western European male characters and the Oriental ones. In comparison to the proper and morally upright European characters, the Oriental counterparts are depicted as belligerent machos or mere laughable simpletons with dubious morals, or both. This is a stereotypical dichotomy drawn in Orientalism, the portrayal or imitation of the Orient, Oriental customs or characteristics by Westerners. A frame of mindset molded into the consciousness of the Westerners, the "in-group," Orientalism is often based on false assumptions about Others, the "out-group." To Said (1978: 9, 51), Orientalism is "almost a European invention" which highlights the notion of "the familiar" "and the strange."

In this type of ethnocentric view, an in-group displays a propensity to be confident of its culture, religion and overall value system, dismissing those of an out-group as inferior. This often leads to a hegemonic battle for dominion and to eventual wars such as the centuries-old conflicts between Europeans and Ottomans as discussed above. Portraying the mutual exclusivity and acrimony of the two culturally and geopolitically separated worlds, seraglio operas unmistakably present the Europeans as an in-group. The stereotypical character traits assigned to Others are specific and invariably negative: sly, obsequious, despotic, menacing, irrational and innately strange. All these characteristics can be sampled in Others of most Turkish operas of which *L'incontro* is no exception. The notion of severely flawed Others subsequently fed the Europeans' justification for their imperial conquests and colonization. It is also what inspired them to their "mission": "improvement" and "civilization" of Others. The mission was carried on until the dismantlement of the European overseas empires in the first half of the twentieth century. The colonial era has subsequently been subjected to scrutiny for Western stereotypes and violence

6 *Topoi* or *topos* (topics) are conventional motifs or themes in literary or artistic works.

by postcolonialism, which problematizes such Orientalist assumptions and attempts to include the voices of those “Others” previously under the dominant colonial forces.

At the same time, in their highly ambivalent mindset towards the East, Europeans exoticized and idealized the Orient “with hysteria, seduction and desire,” as noted by the postcolonial scholar, Young (2004: 214). *L'incontro* alone displays splendid costumes and setting, harem-confined women, and the glittering sultan's palace dazzling Western audiences with the imagined fabulous riches of the East. Such an obsession epitomizes an ongoing attraction by Westerners for the East, for an Oriental utopia; it also reflects their yearning for imaginary foreign lands of pleasure where they would have “a life of ease in a protected space” (Locke 2015: 16). Oriental women are fantasized in this context (more on this later) while Oriental men are perceived as violent and barbarous.

From the very first number of *L'incontro*, for instance, audiences are introduced to obviously unpleasant male Others on the stage: a rowdy, unruly group of Muslims led by the Calender. Like many Others who are presented as unnamed individuals from a faceless mass, the Calender is not granted any name and called simply by the word for the collective group, dervish calender. In public, the Muslim beggars pretend to be holy and now they let themselves go wild in a safely private domain: “What drink, what liquor! The sweetness and the flavor/ Come drink ... Hurrah for wine and tobacco ... We feign poverty/ to arouse the kindness/ and pity of the people.”⁷ They are fully engaging in drunken revelry. The gang of beggars and their indecent behavior must have been accentuated by the extremely vivid costumes worn by the degenerate characters. Dervishes, known for their ecstatic rituals involving whirling and roaring, often wore markedly colorful outfits. *L'incontro* was written specifically for the four-day festival at Eszterháza to entertain the distinguished guests, Archduke Ferdinand and his entourage. Having exotic entertainment value, the scene is, therefore, most likely to have been presented to them with all the fake dervishes in unique, Oriental dervish outfits. Immediately following the three-part overture with Turkish instruments, the curtain would have gone up to reveal a stage full of drunken dervishes with their liquor bottles all over; and a spectacle of outlandish Others in their bright flashy costumes and

7 “Che bevanda, che liquore! La dolcezza ed il sapore/ Su beviamo ... Viva il vino ed il tabacco ... Noi fingiamo povertade/ per destare l'amistade/ de' viventi e la pieta.” All translations of *L'incontro improvviso* are from the libretto booklet of *Joseph Haydn*. (1980). *L'incontro improvviso*. [Recorded by Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne conducted by A. Dorati]. [CD]. Lausanne, Switzerland: Philips.

their unwholesome behavior to be enjoyed by Western audiences from a safe distance over the fourth wall.

While the “Che bevanda” in the introduction lacks the typical *alla turca* elements, the first aria, “Castagno, castagna” by the Calendar, fully utilizes the style of Turkish music (Figures 1–3) as well as other subsequent numbers of the opera. Hence, I cannot share the notion that the Calendar’s “Castagno, castagna” is “the only Turkish number in this opera” as stated in Erin Jerome’s study, one of the few scholarly articles exclusively on *L’incontro* (2015: 115). Another study by Head (2012: 3) similarly maintains that *L’incontro* “avoids” the topos of Janissary music in “deploying the harem setting ... to celebrate the values of the Enlightened Despotism.” Jerome’s assertions that “Castagno, castagna” is the only Turkish number and that the overture employs only “a brief passage of Turkish-style music” misrepresent the degree of *alla turca* delivered in *L’incontro*.⁸ Janissary music is consistently heard throughout the overture. Except for the slow section (forty measures), the Janissary instruments *tamburo* and *cinelli* play in most of the 205-measure overture. Jerome also fails to list as a Turkish number the final chorus (no. 47), which is predominantly Turkish except for the parts where each character sings in alternation. The chorus fully



FIGURE 1 Haydn (1962). Bars 110–115. no. 6, Aria, “Castagno, castagna” in Helmut Wirth (Ed.), *L’incontro improvviso* Hob. XXVIII: 6. Munich, Germany: G. Henle. Note. All the following Haydn score excerpts are from the same Henle edition, reproduced here with permission of copyright holder, G. Henle.

8 Jerome’s citation of Eva Badura-Skoda is also misleading due to the way she is cited, giving the impression of her, not Jerome, making the above claim (that “Castagno, castagna” is the only Turkish number in *L’incontro* and that there is only a short passage of Turkish music in the overture to the opera). In her two-paragraph entry on “*Turca, alla*,” Badura-Skoda’s only comment on Haydn’s operas is that “Haydn used the [Turkish] style, for instance, in his operas *Lo speziale* (1768) and *L’incontro improvviso* (1775).” See Badura-Skoda’s entry on “*Turca, alla*,” *Oxford Music Online*. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/28593> (accessed 22 July, 2016)



FIGURE 2 Haydn (1962). Bars 33–39. no. 6, Aria, “Castagno, castagna.”



FIGURE 3 Haydn (1962). Bars 40–46. no. 6, Aria, “Castagno, castagna.”

employs Turkish instruments in celebrating the magnanimity of the Sultan. Written in the typical key of C for Turkish music, “Castagno, castagna” consistently displays *alla turca* style such as octave intervals, trills, and repetitions throughout.

As Clark (2005: 84) also comments in her brief discussion of *L'incontro*, in “Castagno, castagna,” an “idiotic alms begging song, Haydn has ample opportunity to depict the exotic East using ... Turkish flavoured music.” Turkish music typically includes big leaps, frequent grace notes, chromatic inflections (raised fourths), strange phrases, numerous octave jumps, trills, hopping thirds and constant repetitions. In addition to these features that create undignified music, Haydn also follows the common practice of rendering the tonality and harmonies as static, simple or a bare minimum: the majority of the chords in this aria are in root positions and often repeated multiple times in unison. “[R]endered comical by the accompaniment of the Turkish music” and “written to please the Viennese,” as Mozart writes in his letter (26 September 1781),⁹ *alla turca* is farcical in intent and basically to offer entertainment; it is used often to evoke scorn and to confirm the “morally and culturally superior ‘us’” among the Western listeners. Sprinkled with various Turkish *topoi* to accentuate Others’ crudeness and deficiency, “Castagno, castagna” thus portrays a Turkish character’s stereotypical primitiveness.

9 Mozart explains to his father his composition of *Entführung* (Anderson 1990: 161).

3 Exoticism, Musical Othering and the Enlightenment Message

What is called “Turkish” music is basically a European imitation of Turkish music: there is nothing Turkish in it, and it exhibits no musical authenticity. For her pioneering work on musical exoticism, *Exoticism in Dramatic Music*, Miriam Whaples examined about a hundred scores of exotic musical pieces written from 1600 to 1800 and found no references or quotations from published transcriptions of Turkish or other non-European music. Demonstrating the rhythmic and metrical patterns of traditional Turkish music, Whaples (1958: 159) states that the lack of *usul*, the “foundation of the *mehter*,” from the European imitation of Turkish music is “inexplicable.” A dominant feature in Turkish musical pieces, *usul* is an underlying rhythmic basis that holds together the overall structure of a piece in most Ottoman classical music. Moreover, Whaples remarks, in a “problematic legacy of indifference,” composers made no distinctions among different Eastern cultures or Eastern dwellers and “Turkish” refers to any Oriental person or Oriental topic (1958: 4).

Jonathan Bellman maintains that exoticism is not an “earnest study of foreign cultures” and the *alla turca* is “the product of the European imagination ... [as] few had heard the Turks play” (1993: 14). Apparently, Haydn and his librettist for *L'incontro* simply followed the practice of most contemporary composers in creating exotic “Turkish” operas. The two colleagues imitated and freely exercised their imagination in drawing characters from a little-known land, as Pierre Beaumarchais wrote in his preface to Salieri’s *Tarare*: “Oriental manners, more varied and less familiar, leave more opportunity to the imagination.” (Locke 2009: 55). Exoticism, Bellman adds, “merely evokes and the listener is intrigued, hears something new and savory” without being “aurally destabilized enough to feel uncomfortable” (1998: xii-xiii). However, some other critics of exoticism are not so lenient. Kerman (1988: 203) bluntly states that virtually any type of exoticism or its evocation is dubious, depreciating it as “bogus orientalism.” If the exotic, “new and savory” music is not aurally disorienting, despite the bizarre sound in Turkish characters’ numbers, it is because the “Turkish” music is still unmistakably Western in tonality. For instance, Osmin’s “Solche hergelauf’ne laffen” in *Entführung* starts at the rage aria part with a new tempo and meter—following typical Western compositional rules in the key of F, albeit modulating to the more remote A minor, not the relative D minor. The Calendar’s aria, “Castagno, castagna,” likewise follows a rudimentary tonic-dominant progression in E minor. Nothing in these arias suggests any unusual, non-Western tonality. Strange and unfamiliar, but causing no “aural imbalance,” the primary usage of “Turkish” musical elements is to highlight

the alienness of Others, an uncivilized mass demarcated from the Westerners and their norms.

To such unsavory music, the Calender lists all kinds of nonsensical gibberish uttered in a series of same pitch notes: “Conker, bonker,/ Treacly trail;/ Hanky panky,/ Squeakly snail./ Fibs, dibs, Lulu, Fanny/ Make a case of toffee glue;/ Bash, cash, hootenanny,/ Salem alelkum, rumtifo.”¹⁰ A few scenes later, the Calender is joined by Ali’s servant, Osmin, in a duet to repeat the silly alms song in its entirety. The Calender does not throw himself into a fit in “Castagno, castagna,” unlike Osmin in his notorious aria above, “Solche hergelauf’ne laffen,” in *Entführung*. The sly Calender is too calculating to do so. However, his aria, sung with “grotesque gestures” (Act 1, scene 4), is similarly effective in conveying the bizarreness of a Turkish character, as he tries to imitate words that he imagines mendicant dervishes would utter when chanting. As such, Haydn attempts to make the Calender look and sound grotesque and foolish to his Western listeners. Nonetheless, the calculating Calender, who would do anything to his advantage, is fully aware of what he wants to achieve by his pretension as a dervish. After all, he instantly impresses Osmin, Ali’s servant, who considers the song a profound chant of some sort, but to any audience member, the Calender’s absurd words are nothing but pure nonsense. Likewise, Osmin’s recitatives contain many equally foolish words (“The devil take you and your Leary Larry, bleary blue, blue, blue” for one). Some of his recitatives and arias are also preceded or followed by stage directions, “bizarre gestures” as seen at the end of his aria, “Noi pariamo Santarelli” (no. 8).

Such musical and verbal incoherence of Others continues in the Calender’s next aria, “Noi pariamo Santarelli.” The villainous antagonist proudly details in “Noi pariamo Santarelli” how he makes a good living through his feigned poverty and holiness: “We look like holy men/ and cheat all and sundry/ by showing poverty./ But meanwhile our purse swells,/ we eat in plenty/ and drink likewise/ The larder is well stocked,/ the cellar well filled ...”¹¹ As in “Castagno, castagna,” “Noi pariamo Santarelli” exhibits severe deficiencies both in music and language: a simple harmonic structure again repeats itself, and the opening text is also reiterated multiple times. There are also constant octave jumps, a lack of any legato singing, repetitive neighbor notes and rhythms, and frequent dynamic changes.

10 “Castagno, castagna,/ Pista fa nache/ Rimagno, rimagna,/ Mustil ll mache,/ Chich, blich, lu lu gagne,/Mecsa che sa tonfilu;/ Fir li, mirli magne,/ Se li manca ronzi tu”

11 “Noi Pariamo Santarelli / e truffiamo quest’e quelli / dimostrando povertà./ Ma la borsa in-tanto avanza, e mangiamo in abbondanza,/ e beviamo, come va./ Ben fornita è la cucina,/ tanto basta in verità.”



FIGURE 4 Haydn (1962). Bars 19–22. no. 8, Aria, “Noi Pariamo Santarelli” in Helmut Wirth (Ed.), *L'incontro improvviso* Hob. XXVIII: 6. Munich, Germany: G. Henle.

These demeaning musical elements examined so far serve one purpose: to provoke laughter in Western audiences at the expense of Others, the collective denizens of the East. The disregard of Others goes beyond mere foolery when it is aimed at their religion, which is a particularly offensive form of Orientalism (Versluis 1993: 5). The canzonetta (no. 34) and recitative in Act 2 have the Calender and Osmin, two Muslim characters, belittle their own prophet and the Koran:

Il Profeta Maometto	The prophet Mahomet
non avea cervello netto,	was not in his right mind,
quando c'interdisse il vin	when he forbade us wine....
Non sono sempre tutte le	Not all truths are
verita nell'Alcorano.	always in the Koran.

The same type of mockery is easily spotted in other seraglio operas as well. The dialogue before “Vivat bacchus” of *Entführung*, Act 2 duet, shows a close parallel to the above: Pedrillo and Osmin, for instance, condemn the “cursed law” forbidding alcohol in the duet “Vivat bacchus” in *Entführung*: “Mohammed made a terrible blunder when he forbade you to drink wine ... Mohammed has been asleep for ages.”¹²

In light of such ridicule and denigration of Others, their rulers and religion, it is curious that the Turkish operas have a ubiquitous *lieto fine* (‘happy ending’) with enthusiastic paeans by all present to the virtue of a Muslim ruler. The ending of *L'incontro* is no exception. Rulers in seraglio operas generally

12 “Wahrhaftig, da hat euer Vater Mahomet einen verzweifelten Bock geschossen, daß er euch den Wein verboten hat ... Mahomet liegt längst auf'm Ohr.” Translations of *Entführung* are from *The Metropolitan Opera Book of Mozart Operas*. Paul Gruber, ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991).

suffer from weak stage presence except in the finale. The Pasha in *Entführung*, for instance, merely plays an acting role without a singing voice. In an opera, a medium in which one's feelings, thoughts, and interactions with others are all sung not spoken, a character is significantly reduced when unable to express him/herself with sung text. The Pasha is thus a highly ambiguous figure: despite being a clemency-giving mighty ruler in the finale, he is curiously effete and a symbolically impotent Other because of his inability to sing at all. The Pasha is particularly helpless when confronted by Konstanze's vehement challenges to his authority. He is absolutely confounded by the Western heroine's demand for freedom in her notoriously difficult, nearly ten-minute-long aria, "Martern aller Arten," which involves an introductory ritornello and various alternating solo instruments. As for the Sultan, the ruler in *L'incontro*, he is not even seen throughout the opera until the final scene in which he sings in one single recitative. When the audience does hear of the Sultan intermittently throughout the opera, he is mentioned as "more Rezia's slave than [her] master," being "at [her] feet" who is very much defied by the heroine: "Let the Sultan rave on his return and search high and low for me. He will find Rezia no more," asserts the harem woman in her aria, "Or vicina a te" (no. 29). At the same time, however, he is described as being a typical Oriental ruler, in other words, as a fearsome tyrant. Upon learning of Rezia's escape attempt, the enraged Sultan rails about "punishment, torture, and death as [her] lot."

Then in the finale a few scenes later, the despot suddenly transforms into a merciful father-figure to both Rezia and Ali, granting pardons to all involved in the "treachery." The now benevolent ruler forgives everyone for the escape attempt and commands the Calender, the "vile traitor," to be "flayed and impaled," thus restoring order as expected in a *buffa* finale: the good are rewarded and the evil, punished. All is well as the Sultan-turned-father-figure now blesses Ali and Rezia, his "dear children," and pardons even the Calender, who "will cultivate integrity." The heightened stature of the Muslim leader is clearly conveyed in his recitative and the final chorus (Figures 5, 6) by the many dotted rhythms, which is conventionally assigned to royal or noble figures.

Presto



FIGURE 5 Haydn (1962). Bars 1–5. no. 46, Recitative, "Ah, Signor!"

Presto

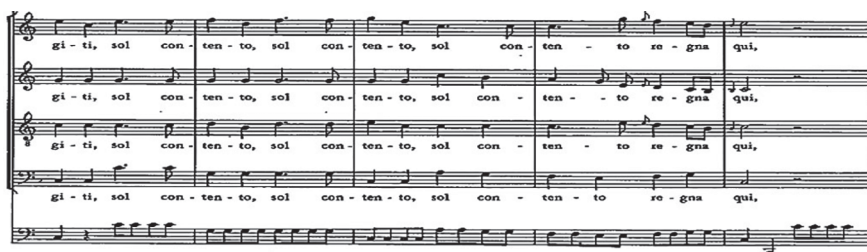


FIGURE 6 Haydn (1962). Bars 12–16. no. 47, Final Chorus

The “despotic” ruler’s sudden, implausible act of mercy is a remarkable turn of events and a “disruption of the text” by a *deus ex machina*: resulting in a sacrificed drama as Joseph Kerman would argue. In *Entführung*, the ruler grants clemency even as he has to overcome his bitter resentment towards his former enemy. Such a plot twist is an inevitable consequence of the intended didacticism of Enlightenment seraglio opera. The most prominent socio-political current of the time, the Enlightenment and its tenets are strongly featured in Turkish opera; this is unsurprising since the themes of the *buffa* genre tend to “mirror contemporary society and its social realities in general” (Clark 2004: 145). As a model for the moral aspirations of the Enlightenment, the magnanimity of the Sultan is meant to highlight the ideal of an enlightened monarch who governs with reason. The Sultan’s decision and action in the finale adhere to “the precise specification of Voltaire’s ideal: the noble, pagan, philosophic, exotic, benevolent despot who is amenable to education” (Brophy 1988: 223). The patronizing rationale for elevating Muslim rulers to the status of the “civilized barbarian” is that if Others could be so civil and charitable, Europeans had a greater duty to be noble.

4 A Strong Woman and a Feeble Man

Even the protagonist, a *seria* character, cannot escape the negative portrayal reserved for Others. The Muslim prince, Ali, is depicted as an outright unmanly character. Outmaneuvering a gatekeeper or any Other guarding the harem, a Western protagonist in other seraglio operas successfully infiltrates the harem to “abduct” his lover. Belmont in *Entführung* even obtains permission to work for the Muslim ruler by using a disguise, one of the stock features of eighteenth-century comedies. Ali in *L'incontro*, on the other hand, manages

to set foot into the harem only because Rezia, testing his love, has her maids seduce and lure him there. Ali repeatedly rejects a “lady” who has “the liveliest passions” for him. At Osmin’s urging, however, he reluctantly goes to see the “lady” who is none other than Rezia herself. Testing Ali, Rezia simply wants to know if Ali is as faithful as she has been, “moving sea and land.” Her action is an unusual gender reversal on display, one that is rarely seen in other eighteenth-century operas, especially not in the popular contemporary sentimental opera that originated from Samuel Richardson’s epistolary novel, *Pamela; Or, Virtue Rewarded*. Sentimental literature or opera highlights female constancy and femininity, portraying the heroines’ perseverance in their misery. “Practicing a curious kind of heroism” (Goehring 1999: 120), sentimental heroines stoically bear their lovers’ or husbands’ constant philandering or other abuses; some are tormented nearly to the point of absurdity in the hands of a lustful man. Mozart’s *La finta giardiniera* even has the heroine stabbed by her lover to whom she still shows an unflinching fidelity to the very end. Rezia is certainly not one of the sentimental heroines whose emotional grieving extorted sympathy and tender feelings from audiences. Rezia states, in no uncertain terms, the mutual commitment she demands of her partner: “believe me that I do not know if I wanted to see you again had another been able to delight you” (no. 27, Recitative). Her faithfulness to Ali through her many afflictions squarely places her among the sentimental heroines. However, an independent woman who thinks and acts for herself and wishes to be treated on an equal footing with men, she proves herself to be far removed from sentimental heroines whose “susceptibility, emotionalism and passivity” epitomize the eighteenth-century “cult of sensibility” (Todd 1986: 110). From her first appearance in Act 1, scene 5 to the finale, she remains hopeful, never despairing, sighing or uttering discouraging words to anyone. Rezia’s calm reasoning and actions, instead of self-pity, bring freedom to all concerned, eventually.

Her bold actions are also incongruous with the stereotypes of Oriental women whose docility and submissive status were of great interest to Westerners during the Enlightenment. As Harvey (2012: 27) has noted, for instance, “Of the various contrasts between the Christian West and the Islamic Orient, few captured the interest of French observers more than the status of women.” Operas, as well as various other artistic and literary genres, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries typically portray Oriental heroines as irresistible beauties or submissive beings who have infinite patience (Puccini’s *Turandot* and *Madama Butterfly*, Verdi’s *Aida*, Bizet’s *Leila* or *Delibes’ Lakmé*). Some others are seducers (Massenet’s *Thaïs* or Saint-Saëns’s *Delilah*). As Said (1978: 7) contends, such fantasized images of highly exotic Oriental women are a sweeping

generalization that blindly turns the Orient into “a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories.” To suggest the atmosphere of the Orient, music for Oriental women uses numerous suspensions, chromatic lines, and pleasing melodic lines suggestive of a relaxed Oriental ambience. None of Rezia’s numbers displays such stereotypical features indicative of the Orient. Indeed, even at the exciting news of Ali’s being spotted nearby, she immediately regains her self-control and directs people to their tasks 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”¹³ (no. 11, Recitative).

Rezia’s leadership in this opera greatly contrasts with the male protagonist’s incapability and dependence. Highlighting a female’s strong presence as a foil to an effete male is a way to further undermine Oriental male Others in an opera with no Westerners for them to be negatively compared with; juxtaposed with Rezia’s initiative, Ali’s stature is indeed considerably reduced. It is always Rezia who assures Ali in crises. For the despairing Ali over parting from her again after their long-awaited reunion, due to the Sultan’s unexpected return, Rezia has calm and reassuring words: “Do not torment yourself for nothing ... [R]emain faithful to this heart of mine: It will soon return, all love for you.” Nowhere in the opera does Ali demonstrate initiative in the escape attempt. He does pose as a painter to save the day for all when the arrest is imminent, but only after being prodded and directed by Osmin. Rezia is the one who plans and arranges everything for all to flee and arrive in Persia before the Sultan’s return from hunting. Rezia prepares herself with “a half of the Sultan’s purse” and the jewels to finance the journey.

Despite it all, however, the couple and their servants are captured as the duplicitous Calender lures them to his warehouse and hands them over to the Sultan’s men for a hefty reward. When all seems to be lost as the Sultan’s guards surround the hiding place, it is again Rezia, who calms and emboldens all: “Begone, all agitation, now it’s a matter of life and liberty.” Ali as a feeble and ineffectual Other is most prominently displayed in his lamentations for his miserable lot. The recitative, “Indarno m’affanno,” presents Ali bemoaning how he is “abandoned, distressed, penniless and friendless, to what am I reduced?” His self-pity continues, “Are you beating, my poor heart? Am I still breathing?

13 “All’opra, mie compagne!/ È d’uopo, che fra noi concertiamo/ l’esito delle mie, ancor confuse, felicità./ Tu intanto alle mie stanze/ precedimi, Dardane:/ seguimi, Balkis, del giardino alle fontane.”

... Inhuman fate! At such savage tyranny, my spirit fails me, my soul despairs.”¹⁴ In his aria, “Deh! Se in ciel pietade avete” which is also in Adagio, he beseeches the gods, “if in heaven you have pity, ye just gods, take back my life and my soul, give me back ... my heart from such pain, weary of the blows of fate.”¹⁵ Thus relinquishing traditional male leadership, Ali does not assert himself. His stage presence only dwindles each time he appears by his timid utterances (“I am paralysed with terror”). With such a portrayal of Ali, the contrast between this effeminate Muslim protagonist in *L'incontro* and the bold European Christian heroes in typical seraglio operas is unmistakable.

In the absence of Western characters to make Oriental Others look inferior by comparison, *L'incontro* may not be a “concretised ‘abduction’ opera ... in which ‘East meets West on stage’” as Wilson (2009: 23) defines the seraglio opera genre. However, East does meet West in *L'incontro*: through the fourth wall. With the metaphorical partition between the presenters (the actors) of the stage action and themselves, Haydn’s audiences see through every move Others make. A portal to an illusory world, the fourth wall ignites the imagination of audiences, allowing them to be part of the action as the very missing Westerners. “Unaware,” as the theatrical convention has it, of the Westerners watching from the other side of the “wall,” the Eastern dwellers display all their flaws and highly undesirable behaviors.

5 Conclusion

As in many other literary or artistic works during the eighteenth century, contemporary socio-political currents are mirrored in seraglio opera as it unfolds against a backdrop of the changing relations between Europeans and the Ottomans. The post-détente mood turns into a mania when anything related to the Turks explodes into a phenomenon spreading throughout all of Europe; Europeans oscillate between their fascination for the Ottomans and hostility toward them. As a *buffa* genre that is often a conveyor of social realities, seraglio opera is a vehicle for this new fad for all things Turkish. Turcomania is a product of a potent combination: the reimagination of a former archenemy and the centuries-old Western obsession for a heavily exoticized East, where

14 “Abbandonato, afflitto, senza cotanti, e senza amico, cosa son diventato? Povero mio core tu palpiti? E ancor respiro? ... Sorte inumana! A tanto liera tirannia la spirito mio si perde, languisce l'alma mia.”

15 “Deh! Se in ciel pietade avete, giusti Numi, riprendete questa vita e l'alma mia ... o il mio cor da tante pene, stanco delta sorte ria, mai più non respirerà.”

unimaginable riches and pleasure exist and women are shrouded in feminine mystique. Turcomania is, however, not without reservation and suspicion; it coexists with a phobia in Europeans' minds, sparked by their struggles and wars with the formidable Ottomans still in recent memory. Such wary infatuation, a reflection of a complex, highly-ambivalent European mindset riven between mania and phobia towards the fading power of the Ottoman Empire and its people, reveals itself in most seraglio operas.

As such, Haydn's *L'incontro* presents all the enticingly exotic charms to enthrall theater-goers, on the one hand. The opera conjures up Oriental images with sumptuous costumes and scenery that took advantage of the advanced stage machinery at Eszterháza opera house (one of the best in Europe during Haydn's time). The portrayal of Others in *L'incontro*, on the other hand, confirms the audience's suspicion and contempt for the Turks and Orientals in general; audiences have an ample number of scenes and dialogues with which to laugh at Others. Watching debased Oriental Others can be far more satisfying an entertainment than the exotic staging or costumes; it offers the Western audience an immense sense of superiority. In the eighteenth-century power struggle and political calculation which, Nicholas Till argues, evoke the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union: "[c]onstant, almost symbolic hostilities" were maintained (1995: 104). For Emperor Joseph II, it is thus necessary to keep the Austrians' animosity against the Turks in the public awareness. Seraglio operas were a perfect tool and to this end, they fully employed custom-tailored Turkish topos for musical Othering. Musical signifiers of Orientalism used in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century are countless. Among the musical signifiers, many of those representing Turkish characters require only the basic level of musical means such as a rudimentary chord progression.

McClary (1992: 37) lists "racialized Other" as one of the four categories for which extreme musical gestures occur (with the rest being the feminine, madness and natural phenomena). Indeed, the chief aspect of most Turkish *topoi* in seraglio operas is the exaggerated music to render the Oriental Others "racialized" and as comical as possible. The instrumentation, rhythms, dynamics, melodies and tonality in many seraglio operas are arranged in a way that they make undignified music for undignified Others. As exhibited in the scores examined above, the numbers sung by the Calender, the antagonist in *L'incontro*, are full of musical signs specifically reserved for Others, creating a music that "merely functioned as audible local colour" (Dahlhaus 1989: 303). Such Othering by Europeans, the in-group, is on the basis of Others' alleged irrationality and lack of sophistication. It is an Orientalist frame of mind in which the Eastern denizens as a group (male Others in particular) are considered "not full

human beings but a sort of subhuman,” the “classic legitimization” for Europeans’ subjugation of them (Wilson 2009: 83).

It is not only their unseemly and crude behavior that distinguish them from their Western counterparts in seraglio operas. Others are also depicted as morally compromised and ethically challenged. Before luring everyone and delivering them to the Sultan’s men for a reward, the Calender successfully earns everyone’s trust as a fake dervish and by posing as a loyal friend to all. The Calender’s dramatic treachery and the fugitives’ arrest come at the last stage of their escape. His action seems far more perturbing than Osmin’s triumphant arrest of all involved in *Entführung*. In this opera, a clear demarcation is drawn between the Westerners and the Others. With the acrimony between the two groups continuing, the arrest does not create much of a surprise. In *L’incontro*, in which no hostile feelings exist among the characters until nearly the end, the Calender’s betrayal is thus an act of backstabbing. Not only does it result in a twist ending to the whole escape scheme, but it also arouses a poignant emotion.

The same seraglio genre with a similar plot, *L’incontro* therefore conveys different sentiments and dynamics from *Entführung* and most other seraglio operas with its all-Arabic characters and the lack of a common narrative of abduction opera. In the absence of any physical encounter of the East and the West, it is the Western audience with their hostility towards the Ottomans that confronts the Eastern Others through the fourth wall as discussed above. The audience sees Others in *L’incontro* at their worst behavior. The reduced Others include even the protagonist, not just the subplot characters, which also separates *L’incontro* from other seraglio operas. Ali, the protagonist, is a far cry from the gallant Western heroes. Depicted as a weakling, he is prone to grieving and despairing over his lot, and follows the lead of Rezia whom he is supposed to rescue from a harem. Ali does not attempt to solve problems but escapes them, seeking solace in books (“Bring me a book; I wish to divert myself”).¹⁶ Ali is certainly one of the least charismatic protagonists in the operatic genre. In the extremely patriarchal eighteenth-century, there would have been hardly better way to make a man unworthy of his salt than rendering him prone to lamenting and depending upon a woman, which is what Ali does. By downgrading the protagonist who is supposed to be a heroic *seria* character, *L’incontro* draws a more unfavorable portrait of Others than in usual seraglio operas.

Another feeble Other in *L’incontro*, the Sultan, makes a single stage appearance in the finale, transforming himself into a wise monarch: a newer version of John Dryden’s “noble savage.” Pardoning everyone, the Sultan dramatically reverses the course of the opera facilitating a happy ending as befitting a

16 “Portami un libro, vuo’ dissiparmi ...” (Act II recitative, no. 23).

dramma giocoso.¹⁷ Intended to epitomize the ideal of an enlightened ruler, the unusual act of clemency by the “civilized barbarian” in *L'incontro*, or in any seraglio opera, is rendered as a moral aspiration and the embodiment of Enlightenment values. With such an unmistakable edification effort, *L'incontro* thus goes “beyond buffa’s purpose of sheer pleasure” or “ethos of multivalent delight” (Hunter 1999: 27). Using a mirror-image reflection of Europe against the Eastern setting and woven in a nearly universal plotline that ends with an Oriental monarch’s wisdom, the didactic seraglio opera conveys the tenets of the Enlightenment: tolerance, reason and generosity, among others. After the invariably damaging portrayals of Others and indeed of the whole non-European world, it is a great irony and a self-contradiction that *L'incontro* should use one of the Orientals, the ultimate Other of all the “barbarous Others,” to deliver such a message of the Enlightenment.

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17 Literally “cheerful” or “comic drama,” *dramma giocoso* is the eighteenth-century Italian opera genre developed chiefly through Carlo Goldoni’s libretti. It is comic, in general, but includes serious characters and plotline.

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