



Research Article

Transformation of Turkish images in Mozart's Zaide Opera in contemporary interpretations¹

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Abstract

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart began composing the opera *Zaide* based on a libretto written by Johann Andreas Schachtner between 1779-1780, but did not complete the work. For the first time, Mozart showed Turkish culture and Ottoman palace life on stage by including Turkish images in his opera *Zaide*. The plot of the work takes place in the palace of Suleiman the Magnificent in the 16th century. The characters chosen are slaves who were captured for various reasons and brought to the palace. The work is an escape story with love in it, starring *Zaide*, the Sultan's favorite, Gomatz and Allazim, who are enslaved laborers. This work was left unfinished by Mozart at the part where the escaped slaves are captured, brought to the palace and plead for forgiveness from the Sultan. Researchers suggest that Mozart may have designed a scene of forgiveness for the unfinished finale. The missing parts of the opera were gradually completed by musicians and publishing companies and then published over time. The final version of *Zaide* that has survived to our time was first staged on January 27, 1866, in Frankfurt. In this study, the portrayal of Ottomans, Turks, and Muslims in *Zaide* by the composer will be analyzed to understand how these images are approached in the 21st century through the *Zaide* productions of Peter Sellars and Pierre-Alexandre Jauffret. In his contemporary interpretation, Sellars has made a reading of *Zaide* through a much broader social issue, the migrant and refugee crisis. Jauffret's staging was more faithful to the original *Zaide* in terms of time, place and costume design. The manner, the images of Turks in Mozart's original libretto were addressed and transformed in Sellars and Jauffret's contemporary interpretations, was examined to reveal with which dramaturgical preferences the missing parts of the original libretto were completed and interpreted in terms of content, lyrics, themes and music. Thereby, an attempt is made to gain an understanding of how Ottoman, Turkish and Muslim images are approached and perceived in the current age. In order to acquire this information, the aforementioned directors' interpretations of *Zaide* have been comprehensively analyzed in terms of location, setting, time, acting, characters, set design, light design, costume design, music, chorus and the final scene.

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Introduction

Mozart, who composed more than six hundred works during his lifetime, used Turkish imagery for the first time in his opera *Zaide*, bringing the lifestyle and cultural characteristics of the East to the opera stage. The plot takes place in the

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palace of Suleiman the Magnificent, the longest reigning Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, who lived two hundred years before Mozart. The name of this sultan, known in the West as Suleiman the Magnificent, is Sultan Soliman. The characters are slaves who were captured for various reasons and brought to the palace. The work is an escape story with a love story, starring Zaide, the Sultan's favorite, and Gomatz and Allazim, who are enslaved slaves. This work was left unfinished by Mozart at the part where the escaped slaves are captured, brought to the palace and asked for forgiveness from the Sultan. It is thought that a forgiveness scene may have been designed for the final scene of this opera, which is similar to *The Abduction from the Seraglio* in terms of subject and characters, as in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*.

In order to appeal to the musical taste of the audience of his time, Mozart followed the Turkish fashion that was popular in this period. By blending the Turks and the palace life of the period with eastern culture, he wrote a work in accordance with this trend. However, to think that the composer chose the subject of the work solely to conform to the Turkish fashion would only lead to a superficial perception of *Zaide*. In order to understand Mozart in depth, it is necessary to investigate the reasons behind each of his choices and his view of the East, taking into account the period in which he lived.

Emphasizing slavery in *Zaide's* story, Mozart built his work on the concepts of Turkishness, Islam, humanism and orientalism. When the historical background of the concept of Orientalism is questioned, it is known that it emerged in Europe and dates back to the Crusades; "*Orientalism is a historical-hegemonic ideology that was first systematically shaped by the image of the 'East' produced by people living in Europe with the Crusades* (Arlı, 2009, p.76)". However, Mozart, with his opera *Zaide*, created a perception of the East that does not coincide with the image of the East in the minds of his contemporaries according to this ideology. Because, according to this ideology, the East is an other that the West has constructed by embroidering it like a needle weaving, and which harbors all kinds of negativity and evil:

Both the East and the West are works of fiction. The East is an imaginary other, a place that fills the gaps of the Western mind.... The Western identity is constructed as the opposite of the Eastern identity.... Orientalism, which does all this constructing, attributes all evil and ugliness to the East within this universe, and reserves the good and beauty for itself. (Metin, 2013, p.51)

Mozart, who prefers to exhibit a point of view opposite to these concepts of Eurocentrism and marginalization at the basis of Orientalist ideology, has taken an attitude contrary to this understanding, which has been tried before, has been successful and has received great support, especially from the audience, by following the fashion of denigrating and humiliating an Eastern sultan just because he is Eastern. Instead, he treated an Eastern sultan in a universal dimension and added all the characteristics of humanism to his character.

When we look at the period of Suleiman the Magnificent, the fear created by the Turks in Europe was not limited to military or political developments. The concept of religion and the fear of the spread of Islam all over the world were behind this policy. Despite the Turkish fashion, the fear of Turks was not extinguished in Europe and Islam continued to be perceived as a threat. As Abdullah Metin points out, Islam "*threatened Europe with its cultural and geographical expansion. Europe, on the other hand, could only counter this threat with the unifying power of Christianity and launched the Crusades (1095-1272), which would last for nearly two hundred years* (Metin, 2013, p.59)". This struggle of Europe was not limited to the military arena, but also continued its impact with cultural wars until today.

Orientalist studies formed the basis of the cultural war. As Metin states, in the first orientalist studies, the East was perceived as Islam with a very wrong generalization and only Arabs were thought of as Muslims. This approach turns into another false generalization after the conquest of Istanbul; "*At the end of the Middle Ages, when the Ottomans conquered Istanbul, Muslim=Turk and orientalist studies started to target the Ottomans* (Metin, 2013, p.59)". Later, as the Ottoman Empire grew stronger, Turkishness began to be used as a synonym for barbarism. The concept of barbarian is underlined with all kinds of negative adjectives, and it finds its place in all kinds of works, from travelogues, poems, play texts and history books of the period. Özlem Kumrular explains the situation as "*The Turk is indeed systematically identified with violence, brutality, evil, cruelty and theft* (Kumrular, 2008, p.47)". The writers of the period very consciously fostered this cultural war with their works.

One of the most influential of these works is Richard Knolles' three-volume history book titled *The General History of the Turks*. Orhan Burian made the following statement about the author of this book, which is the masterpiece of

rooting the negative image of Turks in English literature: “...he does not show the impartiality we expect from a historian; he is partial, even prejudiced. He writes with hatred against those hostile to his faith (Burian, 1999, pp.99-121; cited by Özbaran, 2004, p.310)”. The negative images of Turks and Islam created with hatred by R. Knolles and historians, travelers and literary figures like him have found a deep place in Europe that will continue to this day. As Özlem Kumrular emphasizes, Knolles introduced “the Turks as ‘the great fear of the world’” and stated that he wrote this work because he believed that this enemy should be recognized by everyone (Kumrular, 2008, p.54). Knolles is only one of the writers who openly expressed his cultural war against the Ottomans and the Turks.

Europe, which first learned about the Ottoman Empire from authors who wrote with this ideology, encountered a very different reality from the image of the Turks presented in the works they read, listened to or watched as their commercial relations with the Ottoman Empire increased. Kumrular wrote about the contradictions experienced in these encounters as follows;

It is clear that the comments and descriptions of the Turks had a complex, inextricable and contradictory effect on the European people of the period. The Westerner, who had difficulty in drawing a portrait of his enemy, did not know where to look at him and was astonished by these contradictory, incompatible and incompatible characteristics of the Turk. This exotic, mysterious, warlike, cruel, savage and “strange” being baffled the European to say the least. The confused Christian did not know how to define the “other”...when he saw the sultan in his own environment, in his own capital and visited him in his palace, his bewilderment grew. Those who got to know him closely did not hesitate to praise the importance he attached to justice in his own lands and underlined this in their reports. These diplomats, travelers, ambassadors and others took home with them that classic portrait of the sultan. In contrast to the aggressive, frightening image of the “Gran Turco”, this time a more mild, neutral image was emerging. (Kumrular, 2008, p.82-83)

Despite the positive developments mentioned by Kumrular, many historians, travelers, writers and artists continued to use negative Ottoman, Turkish and Muslim imagery in their works in order to feed the prejudices of their Christian audiences or readers about Turks and Muslims and to respond to their conventional expectations about Turks. William Shakespeare and Miguel de Cervantes are the best examples:

... it is no coincidence that both literary giants immortalized the negative characteristics of the Turks... Likewise, in Shakespeare’s England, where the Turk was synonymous with all kinds of barbarism, it is no surprise that the great poet and playwright, like many of his contemporaries, used the Turks to depict “evil”. (Kumrular, 2008, p.47)

One of the most important characteristics that distinguishes Mozart from the great artists before him and some of his contemporaries is the way he handled and interpreted Ottoman, Turkish and Muslim images in his works. It would be correct to look for this characteristic in his oppositional character. Because Mozart always stood against the aristocracy, criticized court life and opposed class distinction. One of the best examples of this is his denunciation of the aristocracy by giving leading roles to characters from the lower classes in his opera *The Marriage of Figaro*. On the other hand, in his opera *The Magic Flute*, he frequently included the elements of humanism; equality, freedom and brotherhood, showing that he prioritized human love and tolerance above all else. In *Zaide*, he emphasizes the sense of compassion by drawing attention to the problem of slavery in his time.

When the root libretto is analyzed, it is seen that Mozart, while including the slavery system in *Zaide*, does not use it to show the Sultan or the Ottoman Empire in a negative light. On the contrary, the Sultan is portrayed as tolerant and merciful towards his slaves. However, when slaves break the rules, the Sultan’s authority, power and ruthlessness are shown through his strict attitude and severe punishments. This is because such opposition and resistance was considered as interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, when they were captured, the Sultan sentenced Gomatz and Zaide to death. However, when the true situation is revealed, the Sultan pardons the slaves. Thus, the Sultan is once again portrayed as a forgiving, merciful and tolerant statesman. The Sultan not only allows Gomatz, Zaide and Allazim to return to their country, but also provides them with a team of guards and rich gifts to make their journey safe and comfortable. In this way, the Sultan’s compassion is emphasized and the concept of the ‘great-hearted Turk’ is brought back to the agenda. Although the end of the work was not completed by Mozart, an ending in which slaves are killed or severely punished has never been written. Researchers analyzing the opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio*,

which was written after *Zaide* and deals with a similar theme, suggest that Mozart may have designed a forgiveness scene for the unfinished ending of *Zaide*. This gives the impression that if Mozart had had the chance to finish *Zaide*, he would have ended the work with a similar finale by painting a positive image of the Turks.

Problem of Study

Although Mozart was well aware of the prejudices and expectations of his audience, who had been fed with the images of despotic and barbaric Turks that had been in vogue for years, he had the courage to paint a positive picture of the Ottomans, Turks and Muslims, in short, the East, instead of feeding these prejudices. Even when talking about slavery in *Zaide*, he subtly inserted the virtues of compassion, tolerance and forgiveness in Islamic philosophy into the plot. He criticized palace life with the same subtlety. Considering Mozart's approach, it would be correct to conclude that if he had been able to complete *Zaide*, he would have attributed the image of the merciful and magnanimous Turk to the Sultan and introduced the Turks as tolerant, as in the opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio*.

In this article, the way in which the Ottoman, Turkish and Muslim images in *Zaide* are handled in the 21st century is tried to be explained through Peter Sellars and Pierre-Alexandre Jauffret's productions of *Zaide*. In this way, it has been tried to reach information on how Ottoman, Turkish and Muslim images are handled and perceived today.

Method

In the contemporary interpretations of Sellars and Jauffret, it is investigated how Mozart's Turkish images in the original libretto are handled and transformed, and it is revealed with which preferences the missing parts of the original libretto are completed and interpreted in terms of content, lyrics, theme and music. In order to reach this information, the aforementioned directors' interpretations of *Zaide* have been comprehensively analyzed in location, setting, time, acting, characters, set design, light design, costume design, music, chorus and the final scene.

Findings

Plot of *Zaide* Opera

The story takes place in Istanbul in the 16th century. The protagonist *Zaide*, who gives the opera its name, is sold to the palace as a prisoner and becomes the favorite of Suleiman the Magnificent. However, *Zaide* falls in love with Gomatz, who is a Christian and works as a slave in the palace. Allazim, who was captured by pirates fifteen years earlier and sold to the palace, suffers the same fate. Allazim helps *Zaide* and Gomatz plan their escape. When the Sultan learns that *Zaide* has escaped with other slaves, he is furious and orders their capture. The efforts of Osman, who brings him other beautiful girls to appease the Sultan's anger, do not help. *Zaide* and Gomatz are captured and sentenced to death. In the root libretto of *Zaide*, there is nothing after this scene. Therefore, the continuation and finale of the work is left to the interpretation of the directors.

In the productions of *Zaide* in Turkey, in other words, in the performances by the State Opera and Ballet, there is a common choice for the finale of *Zaide*: Allazim is captured before the death sentence for *Zaide* and Gomatz is executed. Saying that he was the Italian commander who saved the Sultan from pirates years ago, Allazim demands their release. Upon this, the Sultan forgave them all and allows them to return to their countries. (DOB, 2015-2016, p.5)

Despite this dramaturgical approach preferred for the finale of *Zaide* in Turkey, an examination of *Zaide* productions abroad reveals that the work has been staged with very different forms and contents. For example, Peter Sellars has shown that the problems of our age can be brought to the stage through opera, while Pierre-Alexandre Jauffret has shown that the art of opera can offer a fairytale world to adults with a simple and minimal set design using technology. They designed the final scene according to this approach. While Sellars does not prefer an ending in his finale by sticking to the libretto, in other words, he leaves the end of the work to the audience's imagination, Jauffret completes the work with a scene of forgiveness. Both productions are analyzed in detail in the following sections.

Peter Sellars' *Zaide* Production

Peter Sellars is an American opera and theater director born in 1957. He is one of the most written about directors in American theater. Directing classical and contemporary works with the influence of 20th century avant-garde theater,

Sellars later went beyond the avant-garde and became famous all over the world for his innovative and unique contemporary staging.

Influenced by the European tradition of avant-garde drama, Sellars draws upon movements as diverse as symbolism, futurism, constructivism, cubism, expressionism, dadaism, and surrealism. As a director, he has moved away from plot and linear action, toward abstraction and spectacle in combination with older, more visual forms.⁴

Sellars has an astonishingly creative visual virtuosity. In his opera works, he always brings a real conflict and social problem to the agenda. Staging opera and theater works with a very bold and contemporary interpretation and receiving many awards, the director has succeeded in bringing his extraordinary projects to the audience thanks to the five-year “genius grant” he received from the MacArthur Foundation in 1991. Sellars, who adapts Mozart’s works to the present day with striking methods, bold and original interpretations, is among the directors that critics and experts in the field of opera art do not keep off the agenda with positive and negative articles written by critics and experts with his interesting staging.

Sellars first worked on Mozart’s trilogy of operas *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*), *Così fan tutte* (*Women Are Like That*) and *Don Giovanni*, written in collaboration with librettist Lorenzo da Ponte. In 1980, his career took off, and in the same year he gave a stunning production of the opera *Don Giovanni* at the Monadnock Music Festival in Manchester, New Hampshire. In the work, the character of *Don Giovanni* appears almost naked on stage as a partying heroin user, in what Opera News described as “an act of artistic vandalism”. With a similar innovative approach, he also directed Mozart’s opera productions of *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*), *Idomeneo*, *La Clemenza di Tito* (*The Mercy of Titus*) and *Zaide*.

Sellars first staged *Zaide* in 2006 for the Ruhrtriennale festival in Germany. This was followed by *Zaide* at the Barbican in London in 2007, the d’Aix-en-Provence festival in France in 2008, the Lincoln Center in New York in 2009, the Paris State Opera in 2010, the Wiener festival in Vienna in 2011, the Netherlands State Opera in 2012, the Adelaide festival in Australia in 2014, the Festival de Otono in Spain in 2015 and the contemporary interpretations of *Zaide* at Art Basel in Basel Switzerland in 2018. Since only the performance of *Zaide* at the d’Aix-Provence Festival in the South of France was available among the productions listed above, the article is limited to the analysis of this performance. The direction of the *Zaide* production at the d’Aix-Provence Festival is the same as Sellars’ 2006 direction. Some changes were made to the opera’s cast, while the staging was kept the same. The recording of the performance is available on Medici TV (www.medici.tv) and the present study was prepared by analyzing this recording.

Louis Langrée conducted the Camerata Salzburg orchestra, while Moneim Adwan conducted the Ibn Zaidoun choir. The stage design was created by Georges Tsy-pin, costume design by Gabriel Berry and lighting design by James F. Ingalls. Ekaterina Lekhina as Zaide, Sean Panikkar as Gomatz, Alfred Walker as Allazim, Russel Thomas as Sultan Soliman and Morris Robinson as Osmin.

⁴ MachArthur Fellows Program (February 1, 1983). Peter Sellars. MacArthur Foundation.

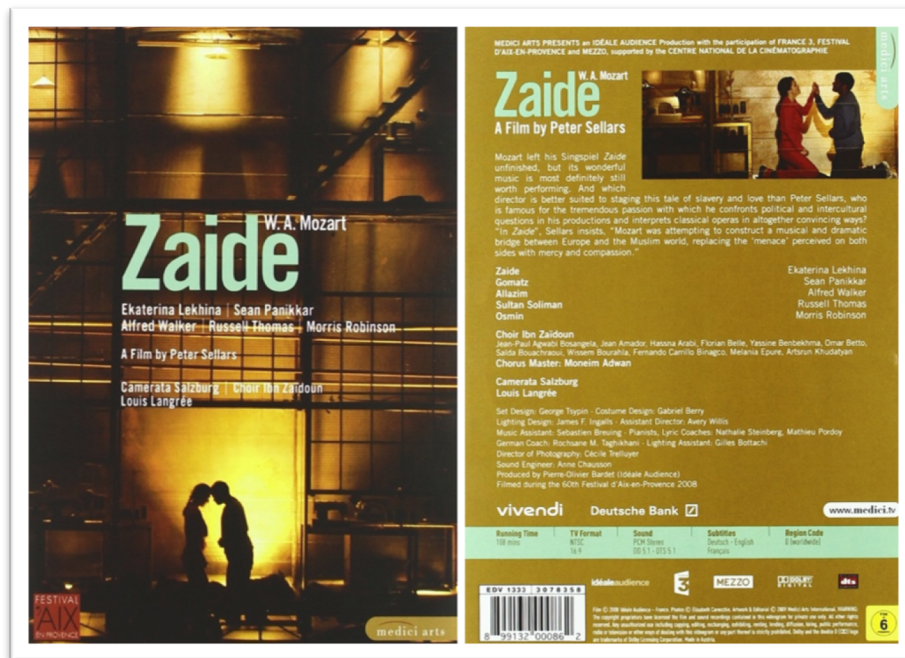


Image 1. Festival d'Aix-en-Provence 2008 - *Zaide* DVD front and back cover (Web 1)

When we interpret Peter Sellars' direction in general; we can define it as a reinterpretation or re-imagining of Mozart's unfinished root libretto with a very different reading. Sellars has transferred his own artistic vision to the production with the theme of the migrant and refugee crisis, the most urgent social, economic and political problem of our time, and has brought together modern staging elements such as projection and the use of shadow to create a thought-provoking and provocative effect on the audience. In Mozart's *Zaide*, the themes of captivity, freedom, and love were featured. Instead of presenting the same theme to today's audience with a contemporary interpretation, Sellars has made a reading of *Zaide* through the immigrant and refugee crisis, which is a much broader social issue. In this way, the modern audience followed the themes of bondage, freedom and love in the original libretto through much more contemporary, social and political issues such as the refugee crisis, intercultural relations, belonging, modern slavery. The success of Peter Sellars is that he is able to convey today's conflicts and concerns to the modern opera audience by using opera art as a tool and to connect with the opera audience through contemporary concerns. One of the best examples of this is the production of *Zaide*.

The story of the opera is placed in a metal container made of a large iron construction and integrated with the colors in the lighting and costumes to create the material world of the play. The gray iron material used in the decor represents hardness, rigidity, sharpness and power. At the same time, the violent sound and noise when the rebelling characters hit the iron gates conveys the feeling of anger to the audience in its most striking form. The setting is a multi-story textile warehouse in Los Angeles where a tailor exploits immigrants who have entered the country illegally. The setting, which is advantageous in terms of functionality and visuality as it shows different events at the same time, is also quite challenging for the artists who sing their arias up and down the stairs.

In addition to the iron construction, Sellars, who brought the visuals of today's refugee crisis to the stage with projection, has realized a bold and original staging by drawing parallels between the problems of the characters in the original libretto and the problems of today's refugees and immigrants through the concepts of being a prisoner in another country and modern slavery.



Image 2. Peter Sellars's Zaide Décor

As seen in Image 2, this textile workshop where migrants work resembles a prison rather than a workshop. With this arrangement, Sellars has revealed the atmosphere of oppression, exploitation and modern-day slavery that separates, excludes and categorizes in its most striking form through immigrants.

Light design is another important element to be emphasized. The division of the iron construction into sections, giving the appearance of cells, and the fact that these cells symbolize different spaces in the workshop allowed the light to be used in the same fragmentation. In this way, only the place where the action takes place is illuminated when needed, while the other spaces are darkened and the audience's eyes and the place they look at are tried to be managed as in the cinema. Thanks to this use of light, the viewer's attention was controlled by directing it to the scene and character the director wanted, thus allowing the viewer to focus only on the moments the director wanted.



Image 3. Using light in the décor

In Sellars' direction, the storyline takes place mostly in darkness in the first act. On the other hand, in some scenes of the second act, a brighter image is provided and a very successful lighting design is made, especially in creating a day-night contrast.



Image 4. Day-night contrast in set design

Another tool Sellars utilizes to create atmosphere is the use of cages. This iron construction, which forms the center of the set design and looks like a prison cell, creates a cold atmosphere of imprisonment with the appearance of strangely disconnected, independent cages. On the other hand, the stairs that reach each floor of the iron construction create an image of interconnectedness and accessibility, and manage to implicitly place the connection and hope between the characters in the audience's subconscious, even though they are imprisoned behind bars and isolated in cages. This connection established through the stairs breaks the gloomy atmosphere created by the cold iron construction with the support of the yellow lights used inside the cages in the scenes required by the libretto, and supports the fragility of the human being that the system tries to dehumanize, his struggle against slavery, that is, his effort to become human again. The dramaturgy of the production is built on this construction. The image of iron bars, cell, cage is the most important metaphor that constitutes the main character of Sellars' staging. The entire opera is performed behind these iron bars. Even if a human being is imprisoned in a cage, he or she will manage to escape this imprisonment because he or she is human. This is precisely why, in Sellars' direction, *Zaide* is able to initiate love between them by sending her picture to Gomatz with a rope through the bars. While the cage they are in emphasizes the difficulty of reuniting the two lovers, it also hints at their common destiny.



Image 5. Using lattices in the Décor

Another characteristic of Peter Sellars' production of *Zaide* is his cinematographic interpretation of the stage. He not only used light design to support the lighting, space, characters and atmosphere, but also included the shadows of the characters in the staging. Thus, he brought the concept of shadow in psychology to the stage quite successfully. In Sellars' dramaturgy, shadows are used to bring the dark aspects of human beings or the aspects that they do not want to show to others to the stage. In addition to this, the emotions and thoughts that the characters cannot express because they are afraid of expressing them are magnified on the stage thanks to the shadows, turning them into a means of conveying the dilemma, pressure, fear and passion of the characters to the audience in a much more concrete way. The subconscious and different characteristics of the character, which the audience is unlikely to see, hidden in the subtext, are embodied on the stage through the use of shadow.

In order to understand the place of the use of shadow in philosophy, which Peter Sellars often includes in his staging, it is necessary to look again at Carl Gustav Jung's approach to the concept of shadow:

The shadow contains the basic instincts of man. It is the animal-like side of our personality. It is our inheritance from the lower forms of life. We need to tame the animalistic tendencies in our shadow in order to become civilized. The positive side of the shadow is that it is the source of the spontaneity, creativity, insight and intense enthusiasm necessary for human development. When the ego and the shadow cooperate, one feels full of life and vitality. The rejection of the shadow leads to a deflated personality (Ukray, 2015).



Image 6. Using shadows

As can be seen in Image 6, Sellars has always brought his characters into existence through their shadows. While the subconscious and instincts of the characters, which are reflected through the shadows, are sometimes made gigantic with the light technique, sometimes they are deliberately reduced in size and left stunted. This is why Sellars' use of light is very harsh and shadowy. This harshness has been successful in making the audience feel the sharp, angular, contrasting and aggressive tone of the story. As in Image 7, the use of light in the decor as if it were the natural light that belongs to that place also increased the realism.

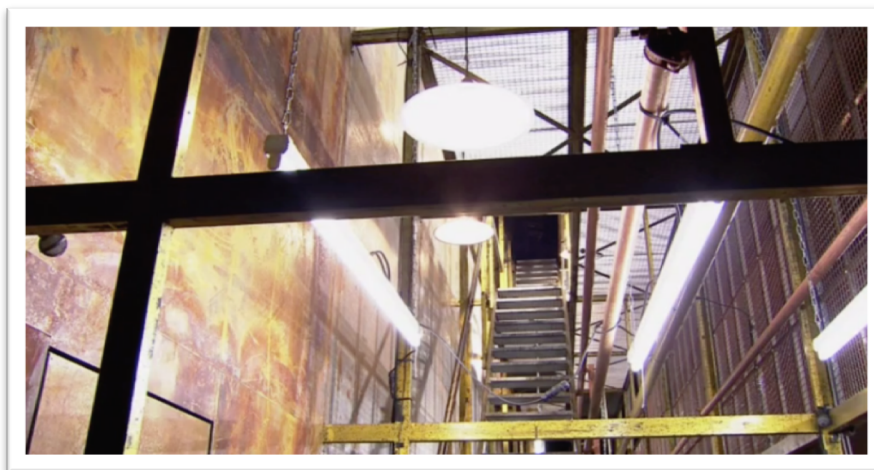


Image 7. Using natural light in set design

The lighting design of *Zaide*, which contains very sharp emotional states such as violence, fear, love, passion and anger, has skillfully reinforced these emotions on stage and made them multi-layered and sub-textual through shadows. Sellars also supported the use of shadows with the use of projection. He created one of *Zaide*'s most original staging by

projecting the visuals of the refugee crisis, one of the biggest social, political and economic problems of our time, onto the stage.

When the costume design was analyzed, two important elements emerged. The first of these elements is related to Sellars' interpretation of Mozart's purpose in writing *Zaide*. Emphasizing that *Zaide* is not a historical story, Sellars states that Mozart wrote about "Europeans in the Muslim world throughout his life" and that even at that time Europeans were concerned with "the 'threat' of the Muslim World". He argues that Mozart wrote the opera *Zaide* to show how Europeans could have a positive relationship with Muslims and to emphasize that in order for this relationship to succeed, there must be a sense of "compassion" (Arendt, 2006) on both sides. Due to this approach, Sellars chose costumes for Soliman, the most important character of the opera, which emphasizes Turkishness, and caused the audience to perceive Soliman more like a Moroccan or an Indian. With this conscious choice, he brought Soliman closer to the Muslim image, which he saved from the Turkish image.

The second important element is the call for mercy in Mozart's opera *Zaide*. Sellars believes that in the 21st century "the relationship between the Muslim world and the West will be determined by the response to this cry for mercy (Arendt, 2006)". Therefore, by emphasizing the Muslim image instead of the Turkish image in his work, he emphasizes that the ongoing problems between the Muslim world and the Western world in the 21st century should be approached through the concept of mercy.



Image 8. Soliman's Costume

Zaide's modern style red espadrille pants and the hooded cardigan she wears on top are in stark contrast to Soliman's style. The red color in Zaide's outfit represents love, passion, violence and blood.



Image 9. Zaide's Costume

When Zaide, Gomatz and Allazim are captured, the headscarf on Zaide's head is another detail emphasizing her Muslim identity. In the picture Zaide sends to Gomatz in the first act, she is wearing the same headscarf. This picture, which is shown for a very short moment, is actually the identity of Zaide, an illegal immigrant. Here the director emphasizes that Zaide is a Muslim. In addition, while all the characters have dark skin color, a white Russian soprano was chosen for the character of Zaide.

A blue costume was preferred for the character Gomatz. Since blue is considered a color that symbolizes freedom, Sellars emphasized Gomatz's longing for freedom through costume and color.



Image 10. Gomatz's Costume

The second Turkish character in Mozart's *Zaide* is Osmin. But Peter Sellars used a black actor for this character. He chose a sporty jeans and a t-shirt for his costume. The character also wears earrings with shiny stones and a wristwatch. In this way, all Turkish characters in the root opera were eliminated and an African character was created, emphasizing the diversity and richness of the Muslim world.



Image 11. Osmin and Allazim's Costumes

All costumes in the opera are adapted to the present day in accordance with the staging. Like Soliman, much more traditional clothes were chosen for the character of Allazim, similar to Soliman's. In Sellars' staging, neither Soliman, the tailor who employs illegal workers, nor the character Osmin has anything to do with being Turkish. The underlining theme has always been the Muslim world. Peter Sellars, who is known especially for his mastery of directing actors in opera, displayed the same success in this staging. The actors successfully performed strong emotions and actions that required a lot of movement. Peter Sellars removed the most important feature of the singspiel style, the speaking parts,

from the work and allowed the singers to emphasize their acting skills only with gestures, mimics and actions without words. In this way, Peter Sellars has succeeded in explaining *Zaide* to today's audience with a striking interpretation of the immigrant, refugee, asylum seeker problem, which is the political, economic, social, cultural agenda of this audience, through the Muslim world, the West and the concept of compassion.

The director took great risks in making changes to the score. Sellars added to both the overture and the interludes of the orchestral score. These additions are some parts from the opera *Thamos, King of Egypt*. In addition, at the beginning of the opera, another melody with Turkish instrumentation, which does not belong to *Zaide*, is used. The musical differences that stand out when compared to the original are listed below.

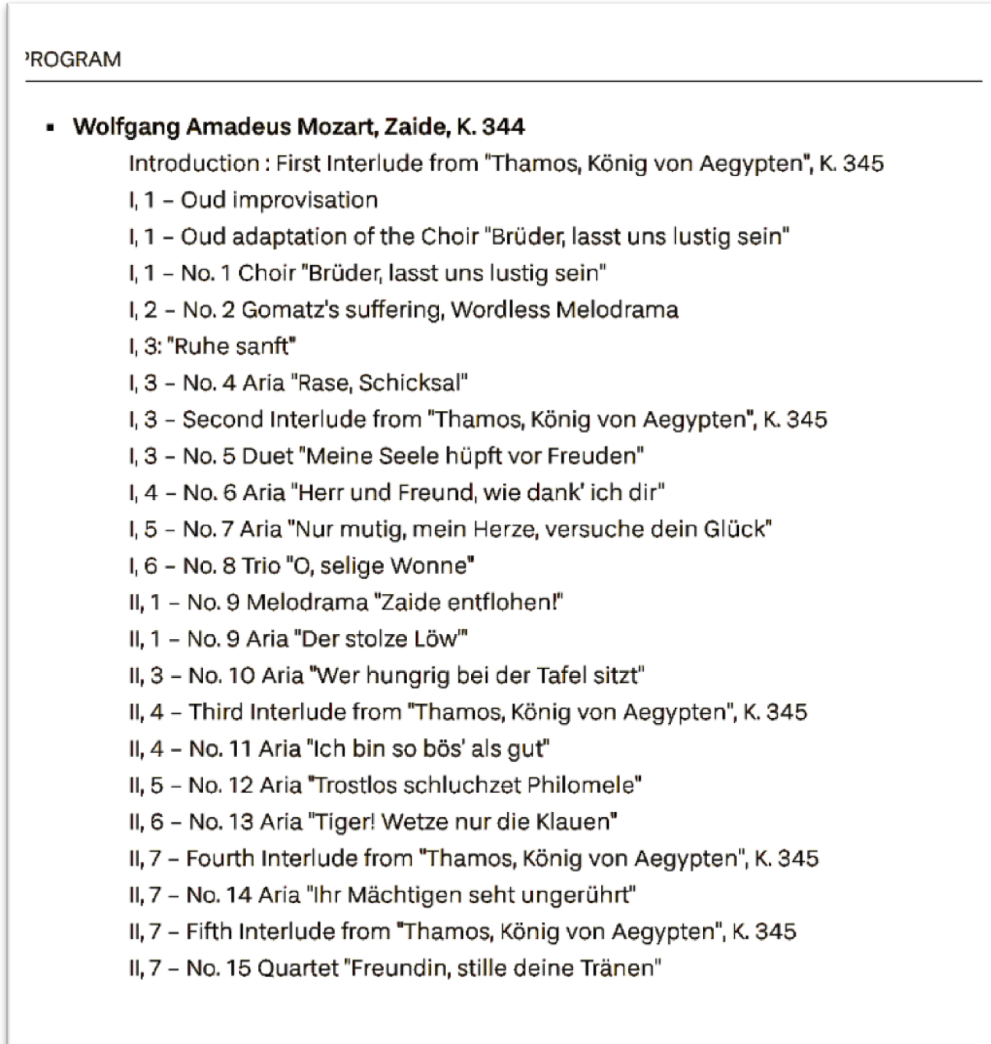


Image 12. Peter Sellars' *Zaide* Musical Program (Web 2)

Sellars added a passage from the Egyptian King Thamos for the opening music of *Zaide*, whose overture was missing. As this music plays, the opera begins with the character's faces bearing the same hopeless expressions. Although not in the original text, these faces shown at the beginning of the opera belong to the other illegal immigrants who witnessed the story in Sellars' direction and had to share the same fate and work there.



Image 13. Illegal immigrants

In the original work, a new piece was added before the choral part “Brüder, lasst uns lustig sein”, which Sellars created and arranged. This piece is a variation of the melody using the oud. The oud is an important instrument of the Middle Eastern and Central Asian musical tradition. With this choice of music, Sellars has managed to reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity that best suits the atmosphere of *Zaide*'s story. This instrument, which may be unusual for a conventional opera work, emphasizes the interaction of different cultures and cultural diversity in Sellars' *Zaide*. The cultural diversity made visible by the choice of costume is made audible by Sellars' choice of instrument. The lute, which has its own emotional tone and unique character, adds a new musical richness and depth to the production with its impressive sound, while bringing a different perspective to the opera. Sellars claims that Mozart wrote the opera *Zaide* to bridge the gap between the West and the Muslim world, and reconstructs this idea with the sound of the oud, which acts as a bridge between eastern and western music. In addition, the original text of the chorus, written for male voices only, is accompanied by a new part for women in Images 14 and 15. The characters singing this melody with Turkish motifs as they wake up from their sleep are actually on strike. The original score for this section was then played and repeated. Only this section was changed by adding female voices to the chorus, which was originally written for male voices. The subtext of this choice lies in the fact that while in Mozart's time only male slaves were employed in hard labor, today women are also employed in hard labor. Thanks to this point of view of Peter Sellars, the situation of the migrants is brought to the stage in a much more holistic and realistic way.



Image 14. Other female characters in choir



Image 15. Male and female characters sing in the choir

The plot of Sellars begins with Soliman taking out illegal immigrant workers one by one from the locked warehouse. In this scene, the character understood to be Osmin is the person responsible for the security of the workshop. When the character changes in the script are analyzed, the character of Osmin is initially shown on Soliman's side, but after Gomatz's shooting scene, he evolves for the better and takes the side of the lovers.

Sellars' direction, which portrays the bad characters as bad and the good characters as good, leaves unanswered the question of whether Soliman frees the captured Gomatz and Zaide after his violent treatment of them. Sellars remains faithful to the original libretto in its finale, ending *Zaide* with Quartet No. 15, which Mozart interrupted to write his opera *Zaide* (Image 16). The unfinished ending of the root libretto parallels the narrative style of 20th-century novels and films that leave the work to the audience's judgment through a question or deliberate ambiguity, rather than bringing it to a definite end. Similarly, Sellars leaves *Zaide's* ending to the conscience of the audience with a plea for mercy. The audience will decide what the next step will be. In Sellars' *Zaide*, mercy is the only way to bridge the gap between the Muslim world and the West. Bringing the 21st century's cries for mercy to the stage through the migrant crisis, Peter Sellars leaves the concepts of the Muslim world, the migrant crisis and mercy to the mind, conscience and decision of his audience through the art of opera.



Image 16. Final scene

Pierre-Alexandre Jauffret's *Zaïde* Production

Genevan scriptwriter and director Pierre-Alexandre Jauffret staged *Zaïde* at the Geneva Opera in 2005. The video recording of the work is available on the website www.operaonvideo.com. The work was accompanied by the Geneva Chamber Orchestra conducted by Franco Trinca and the artistic director was Sarah Ventura. The stage sets were prepared by Mathieu Reverdin and costumes by Patricia Vatre. Liliane Schneider: Zaïde, Valery Tsarev: Gomatz, Gerardo Garciacano: Allazim, Jean-Louis Meunier: Sultan Soliman, Alexandre Diakoff: Osmin and Claude Vuillemin: Cin (speaking role).



Image 17. 2005 Geneva Chamber Opera *Zaïde* representative (Web 3)

In Jauffret's staging, the events are handled in a spatial form created with the light technique projected on the curtain by utilizing technology. The background curtain, which turns into a shadow play curtain, is the main element of Jauffret's staging. Because the director used both the front and the back of this backdrop curtain as the play space. Thus, all the actions on the stage were realized around this curtain without the need for a décor, with only set pieces and props. In this way, Jauffret managed to create different spatial perspectives and layers of meaning at the same time by involving both the actors and their shadows reflected on the background curtain.

Thanks to the lighting design, the stage plastic created behind the background curtain has become as important as the front stage plastic. In this way, with a simple use of technology, different spaces and atmospheres are brought together with the audience in a fairytale-like narrative. Likewise, the backstage actions of the characters are made as important as the frontstage actions with light and shadow plays. In his production, Jauffret did not use light design with the delicacy of a painter. Instead, he preferred to use shadow and emphasis, which Adolphe Appia emphasized, in a very

simple and functional way. Adolphe Appia, who laid the foundations of the use of light in contemporary stage practices, described light as “*the highest painter on the stage* (Simonson, 1999, cited by Saadati, 2022, p.77)”.

He defined three types of stage light. These are diffused light that covers the entire stage space, creative light that composes shadows and accents on the stage, and painted light that creates painted shadows and accents on the two-dimensional decor. (Benedetto, 2012, p.43, cited by Çevikayak, 2015, p.8)

Here, the functionality of light, shadow and darkness mentioned in Appia’s theory is fully implemented. Thanks to the use of only shadows in some parts of the work and the narration of some parts with both the shadows of the characters and the characters themselves, the production has been made multi-layered with 2D and 3D narration. Thanks to this use, the theme of the root libretto has been made more fairytale-like without changing it. The functionalization of light with this technique resolves the creation of the perception of space to a great extent (Image 19). In addition, the use of time is facilitated by a few simple props used in front of the curtain. Thus, behind the backdrop curtain, one space is quickly transformed into another without any shift in meaning. For example, in the escape from the palace scene, the back of the background curtain used as a wall shows the outside of the palace, while the front shows the inside (Image 18). Thus, the audience can see both the interior and exterior at the same time.

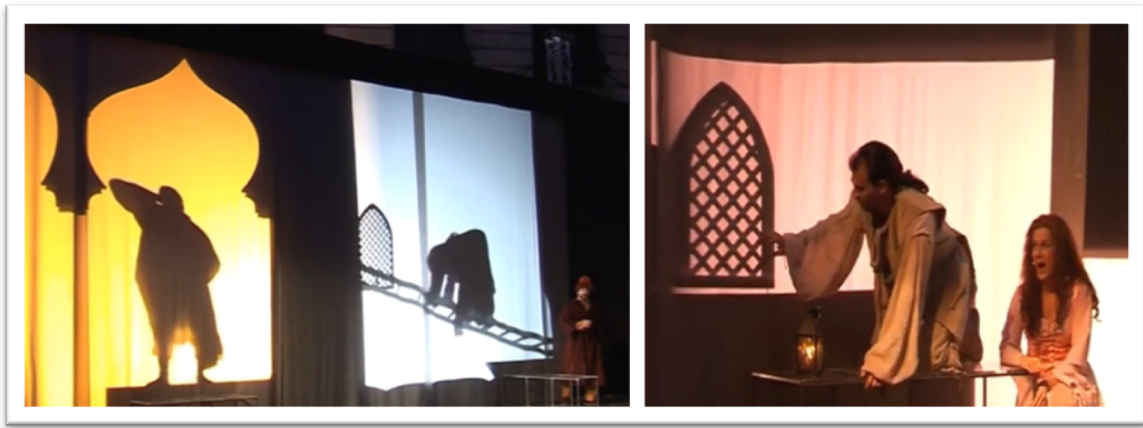


Image 18. Slaves’ Escape scene

In order to reflect the emotional states of the characters and the related atmosphere, dim light was preferred in some scenes and bright light in others in the selection of the color tone and saturation of the lighting. Sometimes these preferences were used simultaneously (Image 19). In order to create a dramatic mood and environment, gloomy lighting reinforces the feeling of imprisonment by creating a stuffy and depressing environment, while bright lighting, such as in the final scene, expresses the feeling of happiness and hope. The direction and angle of the light can enlarge or reduce the size of the projected space and the characters acting behind the curtain. Thus, Jauffret has realized a staging that is far from the conventional approach we are used to seeing on the traditional opera stage.

Image 19 shows a photograph of the stone-breaking slaves and Gomatz’s scene. The slaves breaking stones behind the curtain are deliberately made faint and blurred. In this way, slaves are dehumanized. Gomatz, on the other hand, is kept in front of the curtain and separated from the other slaves. With this technique, the actions of the slaves, who turn into mere shadows on the screen, are made to appear larger than normal. Thus, the emphasis is not on the slaves themselves, but on the hard work they do and the situation they are in. The different spaces created by the shadows on the screen facilitate the actors in terms of using time and create a functional space for dramatic action.



Image 19. Creating place in décor

As can be seen in Image 19 of Jauffret's staging, with a simple shadow play, very different places are brought to the stage in a simple way. Places such as the sea, the boat, the palace rooms, the roof, the window, the quarry, which are difficult to be shown on the stage, were projected on the background curtain in a very practical way and embellished the audience's imagination.

With the perception of space created on the background curtain with the light-shadow technique in Image 20, the state of captivity is emphasized, not the dungeons of the palace.



Image 20. Gomatz locked in dungeon



Image 21. Using place in décor

The costume choices in Jauffret's direction are quite simple and far from detail in parallel with the use of shadows. The costumes do not reflect the splendor of the costumes of the period in which the work is set. The director, who prefers simplicity and functionality in his production, has used only costumes that refer to the period and signify the characters of that period in costume design. As in the décor, splendor and detail were avoided in the costumes. For example, in the costume design for Sultan Soliman (Image 22), while the character is implied to be a sultan, no effort was made to reflect his splendor. Similarly, Gomatz's costume design (Image 22), while implying that he is a slave, is far from reflecting the clothing of the slaves of that period.



Image 22. Costumes of Sultan Soliman, Zaide, Allazim, Gomatz and Osmin

As can be seen in Image 22, Pierre-Alexandre Jauffret designed the characters of Allazim and Osmin, especially *Zaide*, to the extent that we can relate them to their own identities and periods, but without elaboration.

In his interpretation of the work, Jauffret has remained faithful to the original text. Only in two places simple changes have been made. For example, when Gomatz is sleeping, Zaide covers him with the sash around his waist instead of leaving a bag of gold on his lap. Another change is the scene in Image 23 where Zaide looks at Gomatz through binoculars and takes his picture. This scene is not in the original libretto, but it does not contradict the addition. Because considering the training given to the concubines in the harem, Zaide's painting is in accordance with the Ottoman harem tradition. It is thought that Jauffret made this addition to reinforce Zaide's love.



Image 23. Zaide painting

In Jauffret's direction, Mozart's Symphony No. 26 in E flat major (KV 184) is played as the overture. The choral part in the first scene is completely omitted. One of the slaves sings "Brüder lasst uns, lustig sein". In addition, a character has been added that is different from the original work. This character is a genie that is not in the original libretto. This genie, dressed in black clothes as in Image 24, appears in the melodramatic parts of the opera. He voices the characters' speech texts as if they were their inner voices. In addition, while the parts in *Zaide* are sung in German as in the original text, the genie character is made to speak in French.



Image 24. Genie and Gomatz

The expected character change for Soliman appears in Jauffret's staging. As seen in Image 25, Jauffret concludes the opera with a scene of forgiveness that could have been designed by Mozart. This ending is also in line with the image of the forgiving, tolerant Sultan that Mozart had drawn. In the opera's finale, the slaves regain their freedom thanks to the Sultan's mercy.



Image 25. Zaide's final scene

Conclusion

When the staging of Sellars and Jauffret for the opera *Zaide* are analyzed, it is seen that both directors brought completely different interpretations to the work. As a result of the above-mentioned analyses, the information obtained about these two stagings of *Zaide* staged in Europe in terms of location, setting, time, characters, set design, light design, costume design, music, overture, melodrama, chorus and final scene is summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. Differences between Zaide Directors

	Peter Sellars	Pierre-Alexandre Jauffret
Location	Los Angeles	İstanbul
Setting	Textile Workshop	Ottoman Palace
Time	21st century	16th century
Characters	Zaide, Gomatz, Allazim, Soliman, Osmin and Illegal Immigrants	Zaide, Gomatz, Allazim, Sultan Soliman, Osmin and Genie
Set Design	Grey iron construction	Background curtain and cubes
Light Design	Cinematographic illusion	Creating space with the use of shadow on the curtain
Costume Design	Traditional and contemporary	Period clothes
Music	Before the choir party, a melody with a variety was added using the oud, which is an instrument of Turkish music. Both in the introduction and in the work, excerpts from King Thamos of Egypt are played.	Faithful to the original
Overture	Thamos, König in Ägypten (King Thamos of Egypt) (KV 345)	Symphony No. 26 in B flat major (KV 184)
Melodrama	Melodrama episodes have been completely removed	All melodrama episodes were sung in French by the Genie
Chorus	Originally written only for the male voice, the choir party is sung by men and women together	The choir part of the first scene has been completely removed. One of the slaves sings the part "Brüder lasst uns, lustig sein"
Final Scene	What slaves say after their capture ends with No.15 Quartet	It ends with the scene of the Sultan forgiving the slaves

Based on Table 1, the cinematographic illusion created by Sellars, as opposed to Jauffret's almost scenery-less direction, reveals how the same work is presented in a completely different form with a different dramatic setup. The most important feature of Jauffret's direction is that it is more faithful to the original work in terms of time, place and costume. In addition to this, he avoids conventional staging approaches that include magnificent sets and sumptuous costumes, and completes the entire opera from beginning to end without using any sets on the stage, using only the background curtain, light plays, decor, props and costumes that signify the period and place, in other words, with a minimalist approach.

In terms of substance and form, Sellars's version offers an original and contradictory interpretation. On the other hand, Jauffret's direction was more faithful to the original work. Because while Sellars moved the storyline, which in the original work takes place in the Ottoman palace, to the other side of the world, to a cage-like textile workshop made of iron construction in Los Angeles, Jauffret did not compromise on the original work and did not give up the palace atmosphere in the space fiction.

Although Jauffret's visual technique of projecting shadows on the screen differs from Sellars' direction, it has a similar function in terms of dramatic action and the use of time. Peter Sellars created the space with a single iron construction and compressed the action into this space. The choice of a single location reinforced the immigrant phenomenon, the concepts of slavery and captivity, and made the location much more effective. The dungeons of the palace in Jauffret's staging were conveyed to the audience with the light and shadow technique created on the background curtain. Considering the use of light and shadow, Sellars' design is not as multidimensional as Jauffret's in terms of time and space. While Sellars used light and shadow to display more social, psychological and class situations, Jauffret used them to show the audience different times and places far away from each other. In this way, the audience can see all the actions of the characters, sometimes in the palace, sometimes at sea, sometimes in the dungeon.

When the musical evaluation of these two stagings is made, it is seen that Peter Sellars took more risks than Jauffret and made bold choices in the music of the opera. For example, he chose a section from Mozart's *Thamos, König in Ägypten* (*Thamos, King of Egypt*) (KV 345) for the overture. Jauffret used the Symphony No. 26 in E-flat Major (KV 184). Sellars added a melody to the opening of the opera, which was not in the original, performed on the lute and varied before the choral part. In addition, the choral part, which Mozart had originally written only for male slaves, was performed with a choir of male and female immigrants. He removed the spoken parts from *Zaide*, which was written in German singspiel style. Jauffret, on the other hand, made the work more fairy-tale-like by narrating the events with a French-speaking genie character. The choral part "Brüder lasst uns, lustig sein" in the first scene was sung by one of the slaves instead of the chorus.

In Jauffret's staging, acting is demonstrative. The audience is not expected to empathize with the characters. The audience follows what is told on the stage as an observer. For this reason, the characters are often transformed into shadows with light plays and staged as two-dimensional characters instead of three-dimensional characters. Thus, not only the characters but also their actions are emphasized. The choice of costumes and decor also supports the demonstrative acting style. In Sellars' production, a simulative acting style was preferred. The characters, created in three dimensions, are treated in depth, and it is aimed for the audience to empathize both emotionally and intellectually with the pressure and difficulties experienced by immigrants. While the development of the events proceeded in a straight line, the audience's heavy emotional and questioning action was handled through the concepts of East-West, Muslim-Christian immigrants, asylum seekers and compassion. This is precisely why Peter Sellars, like Mozart, did not add an ending to his performance. This choice of the director is a conscious attempt to put the responsibility of how the work should end on the audience. What is projected on the stage is not an illusion, but a crisis that Western societies must decide and take urgent action to resolve for the sake of world peace.

Today, there is no Ottoman, Turkish threat for Europe. In parallel with this situation, in both *Zaide* productions analyzed within the scope of the research, it is seen that the Ottoman and Turkish images have lost their power and splendor, or even disappeared completely. In Sellars' interpretation, *Zaide* was almost rewritten. The Ottoman and Turkish traces have been removed from the work and replaced with the problem of the immigrant, even Muslim

immigrant crisis, which Europe now perceives as a threat to itself. In this way, this interpretation, which is quite far from the original *Zaide*, has not changed Mozart's libertarian approach, his anti-slavery attitude and his belief in compassion.

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