

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *ZAIDE. EINE FLUCHT.* (*ZAIDE. A displacement.*) Peace opera in collaboration with refugee artists

Running time: 120 minutes including the interval

On August 6, 2015 *ZAIDE. EINE FLUCHT.* was premièred at an event which was simply perfect for the occasion: the Augsburg Peace Festival. The production combines a European opera team with refugee artists from Syria, Iraq and Nigeria.

But what has Mozart to do with today's civil war refugees? More than it appears at first sight! Following the rave success of the opera production *Così fan tutte* in autumn 2014 where Cornelia Lanz and the association **Zuflucht Kultur** e.V. (Refuge Arts) had collaborated with asylum seekers from Syria, everybody agreed: This life-changing story must go on! *ZAIDE* has taken the acclaimed previous project to a new level: The refugees now act in leading roles and are even more involved in the action on stage.

ZAIDE. EINE FLUCHT., based on the opera by W. A. Mozart, sets up a blueprint of inclusion. The main character Zaide is not prepared to put up with oppression and leaves her native country. Her fate stands for a biography in times of flight and displacement. The result is a musical drama which ties in Mozart's unfinished work with contributions by Afghan, Syrian and Nigerian musicians, dancers and actors, giving a new twist to the story of Zaide and her lover Gomatz. Isolation and the ensuing confusion in a foreign country are reflected from many perspectives. The central idea is peace.

The previous project *Così fan tutte* already demonstrated the emotional impact of a collaboration with performers who are directly affected. The association Zuflucht Kultur e.V. wants to encourage people to get involved and support intercultural activities ranging from rallies against the Pegida movement, Amnesty International, Oxfam Germany or Women of the World to visits to the Jewish Museum Berlin and the German Bundestag. The most gratifying acknowledgement to date: The programme *ZDF Die Anstalt* was awarded the prestigious Grimme Prize for the appearance of the Syrian refugee choir *Zuflucht* and „the moment of authenticity and importance“.

MORE DETAILS

Mozart's *Zaide* is about a young woman who is not allowed to love the man of her heart. The two of them decide to flee abroad. They leave their country and set out on a search for a more liberal society. The artistic team rewrote the unfinished libretto together with refugee artists from Syria, Iraq and Nigeria. The piece centres on the difficulties and consequences of fleeing from one's own country: What does it mean to leave behind one's family, one's culture, one's home? What happens once I have arrived in a foreign country? How does our society react to a large influx of refugees? And what about one of the most beautiful arias of all times where Zaide lulls her lover to sleep who cannot find any rest?

All performers were working as artists in their home countries. Classical singers encounter an oriental band, dancers an African choreographer. Mozart's opera thus becomes a bridge of integration, raising awareness for the experience of refugees well beyond the daily news coverage.

THE PLOT

ZAIDE. EINE FLUCHT. is based on the libretto by Johann Andreas Schachtner but the plot has been altered. Zaide is not a slave but represents today's refugees, just like her lover Gomatz. The second act reverses the audience perspective: What if you yourself had to flee Germany because you cannot live in freedom any longer? Zaide and Gomatz have arrived in a foreign country but, as artists, they are not welcome. The welfare worker speaks Arabic and they have to complete forms they do not understand. They are staying in an accommodation for refugees. But what is to become of them if they are not granted asylum?

CONCEPT – THE IDEA OF INTEGRATION

Texts, music and additional scenes performed by a team of international artists deal with the

subject of displacement and explore the cultural differences between Syria, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Iraq and Germany. The cast entered into an intercultural dialogue, working with artists who had never staged an opera before but contributed their very own perspective, making *ZAIDE* a whole new experience.

Zaide and Gomatz are played by three performers respectively: Zaide by a Turkish actress, a choreographer from Nigeria and a German opera singer, Gomatz by an oud player and actor from Syria, a harmonium player from Afghanistan and a German opera singer. National borders lose their significance compared to a profoundly human question: How do I want to live my own life? How do I deal with the extreme situation of displacement?

TEAM

Zaide: Esther Jacobs-Völk (Nigeria, dancer), Berna Celebi (Turkey, actress), Cornelia Lanz (Germany, mezzo-soprano)

Gomatz: Houzayfa Al Rahmoon (Syria, narrator), Philipp Nicklaus (Germany, tenor), Ahmad Shakib Pouya (Afghanistan, musician)

Allazim: Kai Preußker (Germany, baritone)

Sultan Soliman: Ayden Antanyos (Iraq, actor), Onur Ertür (Turkey)

Osmin: Ivo Michl (Czechia, bass), Yasar Dogan (Turkey, sass)

Chorus: Ahmad Abbas, Alan Abbas, Osama Alfaraj, Anas Al Masri, Mohammad Al Mustafa, Ayham Al Mustafa, Mohammad Al Sheik, Tim Ewere Aizee, Francis Ezegbebe, Jussuf Jalila, Hamza Jalila, Mohammad Haj Ali, Collins Igbinoba, Ahmed Kadage, Hazem Kanbour, John Karo, Farouk Mohammad, Hussein Mohammad, Mohammed Mohammad, Ameen Nasir, Muhammad Nasir, Ahmad Shakib Pouya, Daa Rihani, Ahmad Sauwan, Mohammad Sueran, Murad Shubat, Salaheddin Shubat

Musical direction: Gabriel Venzago

Stage direction: Julia Huebner

Dramaturgy / texts / subtitles: Nora Schüssler

Set design: Xaver Unterholzner

Costumes: Lisa Geller

Lighting design: Thomas Wendt

Organiser and executive production management: Zuflucht Kultur e. V. – Walter Schirnik

Production management / concept: Cornelia Lanz

A production of Zuflucht Kultur e. V. in cooperation with Theater Augsburg, The Peace Office of the City of Augsburg, artists from Augsburg refugee homes, e.g. Grandhotel Cosmopolis, the German-Syrian Association, The Friends of Asylum Fürstentfeldbruck, the Initiatives Voll dabei and Tür an Tür e.V. as well as Daimler TSS GmbH.

More information: **www.zufluchtkultur.de**

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