

THE SACRIFICE OF WAR

By Omer Ben Seadia, *director*

A devastatingly drawn-out war has finally come to an end, and after surviving years of combat, Mozart's Idomeneo finds himself at a desperate juncture. With a glimpse of home just over the horizon, he vows to make a deadly sacrifice to ensure his safe return. Idomeneo is a triumphant hero thought to have been killed in battle, but he washes up on shore confused, battered, and morally bewildered. His homecoming is overshadowed by his terrible oath, and the warrior finds no peace. Combat has taken a heavy toll on him physically, emotionally, and psychologically, and the safe haven he returns to now seems foreign and frightening. In Idomeneo's heart and mind, the war still fiercely rages on.

We perceive war as a singular traumatic event waged on a distant battlefield, but it has a long-lasting effect on those who fight it and, more importantly, those who are left behind. As an aging warrior, Idomeneo is confronted with his own mortality. He fears the conflict he fought to keep at bay will soon claim not only his life, but the life of the future generation—his son, Idamante. Idomeneo is in search of a long-lasting solution, without which another battle is inevitable. He struggles with the idea of sacrificing something dear to him for the greater good, but he is not alone in his dilemma. Each of the principal characters in Mozart's opera is asked to sacrifice something so great that it threatens to alter their very being and test their character. Idomeneo is forced to learn that the only way to achieve true peace is by striving for a crucial change—one that is beyond his reach.

This opera asks fundamental questions about what we are willing to sacrifice in times of peril. These questions were as relevant in Mozart's time as they are for us today.