

LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY



THE MAGIC FLUTE

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 1791

IN-DEPTH GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

While *The Magic Flute* is one of Mozart's most popular operas, many fans have found it one of the most troubling. On the symbolic level it is a mystical tale of the triumph of good over evil, symbolized by the victory of the cult of the wise Sarastro over the aptly named Queen of the Night; on the literal level the plot is filled with ambiguities. Before the action of the opera begins, the supposedly virtuous Sarastro has kidnapped Pamina and left her in the charge of a potential seducer. When Tamino seeks to rescue her, he is forced to risk his life in a series of seemingly arbitrary rituals in order to save her.

Beyond this, the opera might be seen as misogynistic, not only in the anti-feminist comments of Sarastro but in the way that women are portrayed in the opera itself. The women who appear in Mozart's three collaborations with Lorenzo Da Ponte are fully developed characters with genuine human emotions. The principal women in *The Magic Flute*, on the other hand, seem to fall into traditional stereotypes – the chaste princess Pamina, the hysterical harpy (the Queen), and the fertility symbol Papagena. Moreover, the supposed hero, who falls in love with Pamina simply from seeing her picture, never questions the anti-feminism of the cult.

Fortunately, the opera provides us with an alternative point of view in the person of the bird-catcher, Papageno, one of the first great anti-heroes in Western literature, a term which generally describes a protagonist who lacks traditional heroic traits but nevertheless is capable of heroic action and furthermore may challenge the values of his culture. Among well-known antiheroes in American cinema are Han Solo (*Star Wars*), Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp, and the characters depicted by Groucho Marx and Woody Allen. Like the Woody Allen character who, when told in the middle of battle that "The Lord is testing us," asks why God could not have provided a written test, Papageno questions the necessity of the trials. Moreover, unlike Tamino, he does not judge a woman based on her outer beauty. He establishes a genuine emotional connection with Pamina, and he accepts Papagena as his wife when he believes her to be old and ugly.

It's probable that the character of Papageno grew in importance as the opera was being written. The librettist, Schikaneder, must have loved him, because he created the character for himself to portray on stage. He often emerges as the audience's favorite character. In a work filled with esoteric symbolism, his common-sense approach keeps bringing us back to earth. In many ways, of all the characters in the opera, he is the most human.

CHARACTERS

Tamino (Tenor) – A prince
(tah-MEE-no)

Three Ladies (Mezzos/Sopranos) – Attendants of the Queen of the Night

Papageno (Baritone) – A bird-catcher
(pa-pa-GAY-no)

The Queen of the Night (Soprano)

Monostatos (Tenor) – A Moor, servant of Sarastro
(mo-NAH-stah-tohs)

Pamina (Soprano) – The Queen's daughter
(pah-MEE-nah)

Three Boys (Juvenile Sopranos)

Speaker of the Temple (Bass) – A member of Sarastro's order

Sarastro (Bass) – High priest of Isis and Osiris
(za-RAHS-tro)

Two Priests (Tenor and Bass)

Two Armored Men (Tenor and Bass)

Papagena (Soprano) – Papageno's intended
(pa-pa-GAY-na)

THE STORY

The Magic Flute is technically not an opera but a *singspiel*, a form of German musical comedy which includes sections of spoken dialogue, as in operetta or the American Broadway musical. Fans of the latter genre may also recognize another similarity – the inclusion of two romantic plots, with a contrast between the “high” and “low” comic types (as in *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, or *Most Happy Fella*, to name a few).

Much of the story was intended to be an allegory based on the Freemasonry movement, of which both of its creators were members. In some instances the allegory leads to inconsistencies – even absurdities – in the literal plot.

OVERTURE

In accord with the conventions of the time, *The Magic Flute* opens with an overture. The opening stately chords – three separate chords, two of them repeated – simultaneously suggest the numbers three and five, the Masonic codes for masculine and feminine attributes, respectively. These somber chords soon give way to a lively section in fugal form (in which various instruments start the melody at different times, creating a layered effect). Once more, we hear some somber chords--this time, three groups of three – and then another allegro section. While the use of counterpoint seems to look back to the baroque period, the skillful interplay of the various instruments may remind the listener of a Beethoven symphony, giving us a hint of the orchestral music that Mozart might have composed if his life had not been cut so tragically short.

ACT I

Scene 1: Queen of the Night's realm

Crying for help, Tamino rushes onstage, pursued by a serpent. Collapsing from exhaustion and fright, he is about to be devoured when, in an ironic reversal of the usual pattern, three women – who we later learn are the ladies in waiting to the Queen of the Night – use their magical powers to slay the serpent without a struggle. The women decide that the two of them should report the presence of the young prince to the Queen, while one remains behind to protect the unconscious young man. However, in a humorous trio, the women realize that each is so attracted to

him that she does not trust either of the others to remain alone with him, so the three go off together to deliver their report.

Alone on stage, Tamino wakes, puzzled by what has just transpired. He is even more confused when, accompanied by a sprightly melody in the orchestra, the bird-catcher Papageno enters, singing about the joys of his profession. However, there is also a touch of melancholy in his aria, because, just as Annie Oakley learned that “you can’t catch a man with a gun,” Papageno has been unable to catch a wife in his net. His aria has the directness of a folk song, and he supplements the orchestral accompaniment by playing a phrase on the pan flute – an instrument which is generally sold as a children’s toy, capable of playing only five fixed tones.

This song is followed by one of the longest sections of spoken dialogue in the opera. Tamino asks him to identify himself, and the democratic-minded Papageno replies, “A man like you.” Tamino counters by introducing himself as a prince. Papageno is surprised to learn there are other lands besides the one he inhabits. “How do you live?” Tamino asks, and Papageno again takes the opportunity to assert his common humanity with the prince: “By eating and drinking, like everyone else.” As Tamino approaches him, the fearful Papageno boasts of his great strength, and when Tamino asks if it was he who killed the serpent, he replies in the affirmative. As soon as he does so, the three ladies return and punish Papageno for his lie by padlocking his mouth shut. They then turn to Tamino, presenting him with a picture of the Queen’s daughter.

It is literally love at first sight. In the aria “Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön,” Tamino tells us how he has fallen in love with the princess simply from seeing her picture. Seeing his response, the three ladies approach Tamino and tell him that the Queen has selected him to save her daughter.

To a peal of thunder, the Queen of the Night appears. In the aria “O zitt’re nicht, mein lieber Sohn!,” she describes the kidnapping of her daughter and charges Tamino with the task of rescuing her. This is a spectacular aria, soaring to a high F, designed to test the high notes of any soprano, including Mozart’s sister-in-law, Josefa Hofer, who first sang the

role. Since we will later see the Queen in an unsympathetic light, some critics have argued that her tone should be so shrill and insincere that only a naïve prince would accept it at face value. It is possible, however, that the aria was written not to develop the character of the Queen but rather to parody the opera seria, a type of opera based on a set of formal rules portraying noble characters and deeds. While Mozart himself had written a number of such operas, including one he composed more or less simultaneously with *The Magic Flute*, these works were intended mostly for the court, and the popular theater in which this opera was premiered would have been the perfect venue for such parody. With a stately slow section followed by a more rapid one, the aria follows the pattern established by opera seria, even following the convention of the “exit aria,” in which the singer leaves the stage following his or her big number. Mozart must have had great fun reducing the queen’s exhortations to nonsense syllables.

Papageno reenters and tries to tell Tamino something, but with his mouth padlocked all he can say is “hm-hm-hm.” The duet between the two men – with Papageno’s grunts forming a perfect countermelody to Tamino’s expression of frustration at being unable to help – never fails to get a laugh. The three ladies return and remove the padlock. They then announce that the Queen has chosen the two men to rescue her daughter. To help the men in their quest, they give Tamino a magic flute and Papageno a magical set of bells, and also introduce three boys (note the constant use of this number) who will serve as guides.

Scene 2: Sarastro’s realm

A number of slaves are seen on stage. In a scene of spoken dialogue, they rejoice in the fact that Pamina has escaped from her unpopular jailor, Monostatos, and that their nemesis will soon be punished for his negligence. Their joy is short-lived, however, as Monostatos soon enters with the recaptured princess. He asks to be alone with her, and the others leave. Papageno, who has been exploring the palace, enters. The two men are frightened of each other’s appearance, but while Monostatos runs off in fear, the more broad-minded Papageno recognizes that if there can be black birds, there can be black men. Recognizing Pamina from her portrait, which is now in his possession, he tells the princess of Tamino’s love for her. She is thrilled with the news, and when Papageno expresses his own

loneliness, she assures him that a kind-hearted man such as he will surely find a wife.

The duet that follows, which was a show-stopper at the opera's first performance, is one of the most beautiful set numbers that Mozart ever wrote. Its message is that through the joys of marriage human beings participate in the Divine. While some critics have commented that this love duet seems out of place in view of the fact that the singers do not love each other, Mozart scholar Nicholas Till has argued that the writers wished "to make it clear that this is a statement of a spiritual, and not a romantic (far less an erotic), ideal of love."

Scene 3: At the entrance of three temples

The three boys guide Tamino in. There follows an extended dialogue which is neither recitative nor melody but uses a declamatory style of music which looks forward to the musical style of the nineteenth century. As Tamino approaches the various doors, offstage voices tell him to go back. At the third door – the temple of wisdom – however, he is greeted by a priest designated as the "Speaker of the Temple," who informs him that he has misjudged Sarastro. Tamino is not convinced, but he rejoices in the news that Pamina is still alive. Accompanying himself on the flute, he sings of his joy. The pan flute is heard offstage, and he goes off looking for Papageno, who now enters with Pamina. Monostatos and his men follow, but Papageno hypnotizes them with his magic bells, and they dance off. Sarastro now enters with several of his followers. Pamina assures him that she meant no offense in attempting to run away; she was simply trying to escape the sexual advances of Monostatos. Sarastro tells her that he is keeping her in his charge for her own good, because she needs a masculine influence in her life. Monostatos now drags Tamino in, and while the two lovers rejoice in meeting at last, the Moor demands a reward for his diligence. Sarastro instead orders that he be whipped as punishment for his treatment of Pamina. He then announces that Tamino and Papageno are to be initiated into his order. The two men are led off to begin their trials of initiation; the chorus praises Sarastro's wisdom.

ACT II

Scene 1: Sarastro's realm

The priests enter. Underscoring the allegorical nature of the story, Sarastro announces that this is one of the most important assemblies of the order, as the prince is about to undergo initiation at the risk of his life. Sarastro further indicates that the gods have designated Pamina to be his wife. Following three sets of three chords, he leads the group in a prayer to the Egyptian gods Isis and Osiris. The playwright George Bernard Shaw was so overcome by the solemnity of Sarastro's arias that he referred to them as "music that could be put into the mouth of God without sacrilege."

Scene 2: A dark cavern

Papageno and Tamino are awaiting the initiation trials. Two priests enter. First, apparently following a scripted formula, one asks Tamino what he is seeking, and he answers, "Friendship and love." Papageno wants to back out, but when he is told that a woman named Papagena has been designated as his reward, he agrees to join Tamino's quest. The two men are sworn to silence, a vow which Papageno finds too hard to keep. The three ladies break in and try to dissuade the men from continuing, but Tamino, now thoroughly convinced of Sarastro's wisdom, rebuffs them. The priests return to lead the men to the next step.

Scene 3: Sarastro's garden

Pamina is sleeping. Monostatos still has not given up, and in a comic aria he sings of his loneliness and his plan to steal one kiss. He is thwarted, however, by the entrance of the Queen. While Pamina is excited about her reunion with her mother, the Queen is dismayed to learn of Tamino's initiation. She explains that her late husband once owned a powerful medallion--the orb of the sun--which he turned over to Sarastro. Without this talisman, the Queen's power has been lost. She demands that Pamina kill Sarastro and reclaim the object. If not, she will disown her daughter. This aria, "Der Hölle Rache," like the Queen's previous aria, provides a soprano with the opportunity to show off her coloratura skills. Also, like the earlier aria, it may be intended as a parody of the revenge aria from opera seria.

Monostatos, having overheard the exchange, offers to help Pamina if she will give in to him. When she refuses, he threatens to kill her, but Sarastro arrives in the nick of time and banishes Monostatos, who vows to serve the Queen from then on. Pamina begs Sarastro not to avenge her mother, and the latter replies with the aria “In diesen heil’gen Hallen,” explaining that vengeance is not practiced within his domain.

Scene 4: A dark cavern

As Tamino and Papageno await their initiation trials, a woman in a cape enters. Though she gives her age as “eighteen years and two minutes,” her cracking voice leads Papageno to believe that she is closer to eighty. She tells Papageno that he is her boyfriend, a rather frightening prospect for the young man, and then makes a hasty exit.

Scene 5: A dark cavern

The three boys enter, returning to the men their respective musical instruments. They leave, and Pamina enters, approaching Tamino, but when he remains true to his vow of silence, she sings the plaintive aria “Ach, ich fühl’s,” expressing her desire for death now that it appears Tamino no longer loves her. A melancholy phrase from the orchestra completes the thought. After some comic byplay from Papageno, the men are led off to further trials.

Scene 6: At the three doorways

Sarastro congratulates Tamino on his progress and tells him two trials remain. Pamina is brought in to wish him farewell as he embarks on the trials. He is led off, and the frightened Papageno is left alone on stage.

Scene 7: A dark cavern

The Speaker enters to tell Papageno that he has failed the trials and will never know the pleasures of the ordained. He responds that he does not care – all he wants now is a glass of wine. But once that need is satisfied, he recalls his real desire, and in the aria “Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen” he sings of his desire for a wife, accompanying himself on the bells. (There is an amusing anecdote concerning this aria. Unlike the pan flute, the bells are actually played offstage. One night during the opera’s first run, Mozart took control of the bells and kept playing them at the wrong time, much to the

consternation of Schickaneder, who was playing Papageno.) In response to his aria, the old woman reenters and tells him that he must marry her or remain captive forever. Reluctantly, he agrees, and the woman sheds her cloak to reveal that she is indeed eighteen and, moreover, is dressed similarly to Papageno. Their union is thwarted by the Speaker, however, who declares Papageno is not yet worthy of a wife.

Scene 8: A barren place

The three boys are observing Pamina, who has been driven mad by the events of the day and is contemplating suicide. (Since Pamina had just been told that her separation from Tamino is temporary, this scene seems somewhat out of place.) The boys intervene and inform her that Tamino's silence was not meant as a rejection.

Scene 9: The place of trials

They lead her to Tamino, and she offers to accompany him in his trials. Quickly they pass the trials of fire and water, with the aid of the magic flute, and the chorus announces their admission into the cult.

Scene 10: A barren place

Convinced that he has lost Papagena for good, Papageno plans to hang himself on the count of three. In a plaintive aria he expresses his hope that someone will come to dissuade him; he even counts to three as a child might: one, two, two and a half, two and three quarters. Once again, the three boys form a suicide intervention team. They remind him that his bells have magical powers. He plays them, and Papagena reappears. The two look at each other in amazement. (Schikaneder rejected Mozart's first version of their duet because it did not sufficiently express this emotion.) At first they can only stammer the first syllables of each others' names; then they simply repeat the names. Finally, they express their love and their plans to create many Papagenos and Papagenas. Unlike Papageno's duet with Pamina, which described spiritual love (agape), this sexually charged duet is pure eros.

Scene 11: A dark cavern

The Queen and her ladies, accompanied by Monostatos, plan an assault on the temple. The Queen has promised Monostatos Pamina's hand

in marriage in return for his cooperation. A peal of thunder, however, signifies that their assault is doomed. It is not totally clear how their defeat is accomplished, since there is no indication of any overt action on Sarastro's part. Perhaps we are meant to understand that the marriage of the ideal couple and their entry into Sarastro's order has caused a cosmic change in the universe and has altered the balance of power between good and evil. With Sarastro now in firm possession of the orb of the sun, the evil represented by the Queen can no longer challenge his dominion.

Scene 12: The holy city

Sarastro announces that the sun's glory has vanquished the night. To the tune of three accented ascending chords, repeated three times, the chorus proclaims the triumph of virtue and wisdom. This is truly one of the most uplifting endings of any opera.

SOURCES AND INTERPRETATIONS

As was mentioned before, the story of *The Magic Flute* must be seen as allegory, because without such a perspective, it would be too objectionable to be performed. On the literal level, its hero is a cult leader who kidnaps a young woman and places her in the charge of a sexual predator; who owns slaves and holds life-and-death power over his subjects; and who demands potential initiates to risk their lives by undergoing dangerous rituals. This can hardly be the story that Mozart meant to tell us with his music.

Virtually all Mozart scholars agree that Sarastro's cult is meant to be a mythological depiction of a Masonic lodge. Mozart himself was actively involved in Freemasonry, and Schikaneder had also been a member at one time, though apparently not at the time he wrote the libretto for this opera. While there is a popular legend that Mozart drew the wrath of his fellow Masons by betraying their secrets in *The Magic Flute*, this idea is largely discredited by most of his biographers. H. C. Robbins, in *1791: Mozart's Last Year*, has suggested that the truth is the exact opposite of this popularly held notion, and that in fact this work was intended to be a defense of the movement, which was under attack at the time and was declining in membership.

The Freemason movement itself was controversial in Mozart's time and remains so to this day. Look up "Freemasonry" on the internet, and you will find, along with promotional material, several websites devoted to attacking the movement as a satanic cult. The movement itself traces its origins to Biblical times and the building of the First Temple, but historically its origins appear to trace back to the middle ages when lodges of actual stonemasons sought to build their membership by allowing honorary masons to join. Eventually, the honorary members outnumbered those in the craft, and they became builders of men rather than buildings. The modern Freemason movement began in London in 1717. Devoted to brotherly love, good works, and truth, the movement was, at the time of Mozart, broad enough to include several Catholic clergymen among its members (as well as Jews), though it remained somewhat suspect in official circles and was tightly monitored by the government. Due to its secret rituals, however, some Christians have accused Masons of being

secret idolaters. Some of the objections, however, could be based on the Masons' insistence that while members must recognize the existence of God the Creator, Christianity has no monopoly on truth. One unfortunate aspect of the movement's philosophy is its prevalent misogyny, which is unfortunately reflected in *The Magic Flute*. Nevertheless, women were permitted to form affiliated organizations called "adoption lodges."

The extent to which the opera follows Masonic teaching has been a subject of debate. Jacques Chailley, in *The Magic Flute: Mozart's Masonic Opera*, has argued that virtually every incident in the opera has a one-to-one correspondence to some aspect of Masonic belief and ritual. Most critics have sought more general correspondence between Masonic mysticism and the plot of the opera. Nicholas Till, in *Mozart and the Enlightenment*, sees in this opera the influence of the Rosicrucian movement, a specifically Catholic offshoot of Masonic mysticism, formed to combat the pagan influences which its adherents saw in Freemasonry. He argues that Osiris, the god of the sun, is emblematic of Christ. The Rosicrucian movement was heavily influenced by Christian Gnosticism, the belief that self-knowledge was the ultimate path to salvation.

It would certainly be possible to interpret the ending of the opera as a Christian allegory, for just as for Christians the Resurrection represents a permanent victory over death, so does Sarastro's ascent to power render the forces of evil impotent. This would clearly be contradictory to the pagan world view, which sees history as cyclical rather than progressive.

As for literary influences, the one cited most frequently is the Masonic novel *The Life of Sethos* by Abbe Jean Terrasson, written in 1731. This story of a young prince who must undergo a series of trials in the Pyramids of Egypt in order to become fit to rule has several parallels to the story of *The Magic Flute*. In some ways this story became the prototype of the German *Bildungsroman* (a novel about a hero's acquisition of wisdom).

In 1996 American musicologist David Buch came across a manuscript of a then obscure German *singspiel* *The Philosopher's Stone*, an opera-by-committee with a libretto by Schikaneder. What made this manuscript unique is that, unlike other copies, this one featured the name

of the composer on each musical number, and the name of Mozart appeared three times. Moreover, several other sections were written by people who were to be involved in the premiere of *The Magic Flute* a year later, including the conductor and two of the singers. Not only was the magical story somewhat similar; several musical parallels were noted between the two works. In the earlier opera there is a scene where one of the characters is placed under a spell and can only “meow” instead of speaking. The duet between the woman and her husband, composed by Mozart, bears a strong resemblance to the Tamino-Papageno duet in the first scene of *The Magic Flute*. Even some sections of *The Philosopher’s Stone* that do not involve Mozart’s music have parallels to the later opera that are too close to be coincidental.

One aspect of *The Magic Flute* that has puzzled audiences is the fact that the story seems to change direction about one-third of the way through. For much of the first act, it seems to be a conventional rescue story where the prince must rescue the princess from her evil captors. Then suddenly we are told that the captor is actually the “good guy,” who desires that the prince will marry the princess. This has led some critics to posit that Mozart and Schikaneder changed the story as they were writing it. One theory is that another company had produced a “magic flute” story while this one was being written, and they feared charges of plagiarism. However, we do know that Mozart had seen the other opera and commented that there was nothing worthwhile in it. Moreover, in Mozart’s day copying and even outright plagiarism were commonplace, and fear of obvious imitation would not have deterred them from completing the project. More likely, the apparent contradictions were caused by the fact that the writers chose the rather common literary device of grafting a philosophical allegory onto a familiar tale.

Nicholas Till has argued that there really is no change of purpose. He points out that the first act includes all of the universal archetypes that anthropologist Joseph Campbell has identified as central to initiation myths throughout the world: the hero is lost, initially refuses the call (here, Papageno takes on this role), receives supernatural aid, is confronted by a custodian (the Speaker, here) who determines if he is up to the challenges, and the entry into the underworld. This sequence is followed by a series of trials, which may be rewarded by sexual union with the goddess.

In *A Season of Opera*, renowned commentator M. Owen Lee further develops the idea that opera is a coherent narrative based on Jungian archetypes, “an allegory of mankind’s progression from nature to culture, from unreason to reason, from matriarchy to patriarchy – and of its creative fusion of those opposites.” Tamino’s adventures are “a quest for his father, which is ultimately the male’s quest for his own self.” The hero then encounters a companion unlike himself (Papageno in the opera) who helps him on his way. He then encounters the feminine, often portrayed as a dragon, which he must conquer. If he slays “the destructive aspect of the feminine...he will release the feminine’s creative potential.” Finally, the hero will integrate all of these experiences into the self. In this view, the Queen is not evil but “a personification of the dark unconscious, where intuition reigns and reason is unknown,” and Sarastro is “the bright consciousness which is the beginning of reason.”

Whether one agrees with this analysis or not, most audiences have found that there is power in Mozart’s music that transcends the absurdities and contradictions of the plot. Great music always tells a story that mere words cannot express. Otherwise, there would be no reason to compose it.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Of all the great composers, perhaps none has been the subject of more romantic speculation than Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. A 1984 film, *Amadeus*, created a Mozart for our own age – an irreverent, uncouth young man with an innate and inexplicable gift for composing immortal music. In the Peter Schaffer play upon which the film was based, it was clear that what we were seeing was a caricature of the composer as filtered through the deranged mind of his rival, Antonio Salieri (also a caricature). But film audiences, accustomed to television biopics, often have missed that distinction.

When we look at the historical record, much of which can be derived from the large amount of Mozart's correspondence which has been preserved, we find a quite different picture. For one thing, he was a keen student of music theory, aware of the effects of various harmonies and key changes. He also was a devout Catholic throughout much of his life, and he drew inspiration from the rituals of the church. As for the vulgarity, much of which can be confirmed from the letters, we need to remember that in the eighteenth century scatological humor and sexual frankness were much more acceptable than they were to become later. Rumors of Mozart's sexual affairs are unsubstantiated, and the erotic letters we do have are addressed to his wife.

But even if we strip away the myths, one indisputable fact remains: Mozart was clearly one of the greatest creative geniuses (if not the greatest) the world has ever known. In a lifetime just short of thirty-six years he revolutionized Western music. Whereas most other great opera composers, with the exception of Richard Strauss, were known almost exclusively for their operatic compositions, opera was just one area in which Mozart excelled. His symphonies clearly surpassed those of his predecessors and contemporaries, and many of his concertos are still part of the standard orchestral repertoire.

Mozart was born in Salzburg (which was not yet part of Austria) on January 27, 1756, the son of a professional musician, Leopold Mozart. His musical gifts were apparent as early as age three, and by the time he was six he had already composed a keyboard piece and been taken on tour, along

with his one sibling who did not die in infancy, his sister Nannerl, herself a gifted musician. By age 14 he had composed his first opera, *Mitridate*.

For the next several years Mozart traveled throughout Europe, barely managing to make a living through performing and composing. In 1781, he made the most important decision of his life, relocating to Vienna, which at that time was the cultural capital of the German-speaking world. Here he was able to find a wider audience for his works, eventually landing a post in the court of Emperor Joseph II.

It was during his travels that he came into contact with a music copyist named Fridolin Weber, a friendship which led to a brief romance with the latter's sixteen-year-old daughter, a talented singer named Aloisia. Though she soon broke off the relationship, Mozart remained in touch with the family and eventually turned his attention to her sister Constanze, the woman who was to become his wife. Leopold was furious about the match, having hoped that Wolfgang, like his sister, would find someone who could provide him with some financial stability. But the young Mozart knew best, and by all accounts it was an excellent marriage, despite the couple's financial difficulties, and the two seemed to have shared a spiritual connection similar to that described in the aforementioned duet between Papageno and Pamina.

Though he had written a number of operas in his teen years, it was in 1781 that the young composer first began to write the works which would bring him immortality in the annals of opera. First came *Idomeneo* (1781), based on classical mythology, which is occasionally performed today. The following year Mozart turned his attention from Italian to the creation of an indigenous German-language *singspiel*, collaborating with Gottlieb Stephanie on *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. It was this work that led to a legendary exchange between composer and emperor: "Too beautiful for our ears, and monstrous many notes, my dear Mozart." "Exactly as many as necessary, Your Majesty." Whether or not this dialogue actually took place, it does illustrate the fact that the young Mozart was writing with a complexity that was new to the Viennese audiences.

In 1783, realizing that the German opera company had produced only one work of lasting value – the aforementioned *Abduction* – Emperor Joseph disbanded it in favor of a new company to be devoted to the production of Italian opera. Salieri, the official court composer, invited a promising young Italian poet, Lorenzo Da Ponte, to court so the two men could collaborate on Italian operas. However, in one of those great ironic twists that make music history so fascinating, when their opera *Il Ricco d'un giorno* flopped, Salieri blamed his librettist and swore that he would never work with him again. This left the field open for Da Ponte to work instead with Mozart. The pair created three operas – *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte* – all of which remain in the repertoire to this day.

The final year of Mozart's tragically short life, 1791, was the most remarkable. In addition to a number of occasional pieces, he composed a clarinet concerto, a Requiem (albeit unfinished at his death), an *opera seria* (*La clemenza di Tito*), and a German *singspiel* (*The Magic Flute*) – each of which remains to this day the most popular example of its genre. *La clemenza*, written for the coronation of emperor Leopold II, is rarely performed today because of the static plot typical of the highly formalized *opera seria*, but it contains much gorgeous music, and a number of its arias have become popular recital pieces.

Despite *La clemenza*, however, the succession of Leopold II after the death of Joseph II led to a diminished role for Mozart at the court. Fortunately, about a year earlier he had reconnected with an old friend, Emanuel Schikaneder, a versatile man of the theater who had recently returned to Vienna, and he eagerly accepted an invitation to compose a German *singspiel* to a libretto by Schikaneder for his public theater. As early as 1777 he had written to his father from Munich, “I am very popular here. And how much more popular I should be if I could help forward the German national theater. . . . For when I heard the German *Singspiel*, I was simply itching to compose.” The resulting work, *The Magic Flute*, with its combination of romance, mysticism, low comedy and, of course, a memorable score, was an immediate success. Mozart himself conducted several performances and frequently attended those he did not conduct.

At the height of his creative powers, however, the young composer was struck by a disease which his biographers have been unable to identify, though few take seriously the rumor that he was poisoned. He died December 5, 1791, just weeks short of what would have been his thirty-sixth birthday. In accord with funeral practices of the time (part of Joseph II's reforms), he was buried in an unmarked grave. Mozart does not need a stone monument, however. His works are certainly enough of a monument for any man.

EMANUEL SCHIKANEDER

Though today Emanuel Schikaneder is remembered primarily as the librettist and producer of *The Magic Flute*, he was a highly successful man of the theater in the German speaking world, author of more than fifty plays and librettos. He was also an accomplished actor, having played Hamlet at the Munich court theater, and he was a sufficiently talented singer to play leading comic roles in his own compositions.

In the late 1770s he became director of a traveling theater group, and it was during an extended run in Salzburg in 1780 that he first made Mozart's acquaintance. During that time, he had married Eleonore Arth, who helped run his troupe when he was employed elsewhere. The marriage was somewhat rocky, however, and she left him for another man – though the couple was to reconcile later, following the death of her lover.

In 1789, Schikaneder settled in Vienna, where he took over the Freihaus theater, and he reconnected with Mozart. Both *The Magic Flute* and *The Philosopher's Stone* were composed for this theater.

Though he was never to match the success of *The Magic Flute*, he enjoyed a successful career for more than another decade, and in 1801 he opened the Theater an der Wien, the largest theater of the era. Sadly, his later years were marred by financial woes and mental illness, and he died in poverty on September 21, 1812.

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