

Die Zauberflöte

(The Magic Flute)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the great Austrian composer, was born in Salzburg on 27th January 1756. Mozart is ranked along with Verdi and Wagner as one of the three greatest of all opera composers. A child prodigy, his first stage work, the sacred play written at the age of 11, was THE OBLIGATION OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT (Die Schuldigkeit des Ersten Gebotes). In his three great Italian works, written in collaboration with Lorenzo Da Ponte, Mozart breaks through the rigid structures of opera, presenting music drama of great fluidity and remarkable human insight. His mastery of extended ensemble, his blending of serious and comic elements; his dramatic insight and his loosening of the musico-dramatic structures all had an incalculable influence on the subsequent development of opera.

Wolfgang was educated by his father Leopold Mozart, who was concertmaster in the court orchestra of the archbishop of Salzburg and a celebrated violinist, composer, and author. By the age of six, Mozart had become an accomplished performer on the clavier (a stringed instrument that has a keyboard), violin, and organ and was highly skilled in sight-reading and improvisation. Five short piano pieces composed by Mozart when he was six years old are still frequently played. In 1762, Leopold took Wolfgang on the first of many successful concert tours through the courts of Europe. During this period Mozart composed sonatas for the harpsichord and violin, a symphony, an oratorio and the opera The Pretend Simpleton (Buffa La Finta Semplice) — 1768. In 1769 at the age of 13 Mozart was appointed concertmaster to the archbishop of Salzburg.

At the age of 14 Mozart was commissioned to write a serious opera, this work Mithridates, King of Pontus (Mitridate re ponto) produced under his direction at Milan completely established an already phenomenal reputation. The neglect he suffered from the aristocrats whom he courted, made the two years from Mozart's arrival in Paris, until his return to Salzburg in 1779 one of the most difficult periods in his life. The success of Mozart's Italian opera Idomeneo, King of Crete (Seria Idomeneo Re Di Creta), commissioned and composed in 1781, prompted the archbishop of Salzburg to invite Mozart to his palace at Vienna. A series of court intrigues and his exploitation at the hands of the court soon forced Mozart to leave. In a house in Vienna rented for him by friends, he hoped to sustain himself by teaching. In 1782 Mozart married Constanze Weber, unfortunately unending poverty and illness persistently troubled the family until Mozart's death.

The Wedding of Figaro (Le Nozze di Figaro) - 1786 and Don Giovanni (Don

Juan) - 1787, with opera lyrics by Lorenzo Da Ponte, while successful in Prague, were partial failures in Vienna. From 1787 until the production of *The School of the Lovers* (*Così fan tutte*) - 1790 again with a opera lyrics by Da Ponte, Mozart received no commissions for operas. For the coronation of Emperor Leopold II in 1791 he wrote the opera *The Clemency of Titus* (*Serìa, La Clemenza Di Tito*) - 1791 with the opera lyrics by Metastasio.

Mozart's large output - more than 600 works - with a number of instrumental combinations, concertos and vocal works shows, that even as a child he possessed a thorough command of the technical resources of musical composition as well as an original imagination. Mozart thus epitomizes the classical style of the 18th century. His operas achieved a new unity of vocal and instrumental writing, with their profound contrasts between different personalities reacting to changing situations. Subtle characterization and an unusual use of classic symphonic style mark them in large-scale ensembles. Mozart had an unsuccessful career and died young, but he ranks as one of the great geniuses of Western civilization. While Mozart was working on the singspiel *The Magic Flute* - 1791 an emissary of a Count Walsegg mysteriously requested a requiem mass. This work, uncompleted at Mozart's death proved to be this great composer's final work. On December 5th - 1791 - Vienna, Mozart met his death, presumably of typhoid fever. The legend that the Italian composer Antonio Salieri murdered him is unsupported, sadly few friends attended his burial. Mozart's grave is left unmarked.

THE OPERAS OF MOZART

Apollo Et Hyacinthus [*Hyacinthi* (companion of Apollo) *Metmorphosis*] - 1767.

Bastien Und Bastienne (Story about a shepherdess and shepherd)- 1768.

La Finta Semplice (The Pretended Simpleton) - 1768

Mitridate Rè Di Ponto (*Mithridates, King of Pontus*) - 1770. Italian-language comic opera (*opera buffa*) produced under his direction at Milan completely established an already phenomenal reputation.

Ascanio In Alba [*Ascanio* (son of Venus) in Dawn]- 1771.

Lucio Silla (*Lucio Silla* was a Roman dictator) - 1772.

Il Sogno Di Scipione [*Scipio's* (Roman consul-elect) *Dream*] - 1772.

La Finta Giardiniera (*The Pretended Gardener*)- 1775.

Il Re Pastore (*The Shepherd King*) - 1775.

Idomeneo Rè Di Creta (*Idomeneo, King of Crete*) - 1781. Italian opera seria, a success.

Die Entführung Aus Dem Serail (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*) - 1782. A singspiel which was requested by Emperor Joseph II.

l'oca Del Cairo (*The Goose of Cairo*) - 1783.

lo Sposo Deluso (*The Deluded Bridegroom*) - 1783.

Der Schauspieldirektor (*The Impresario*) - 1786.

“The Freemason Opera”

Many music critics and scholars have often dubbed “The Magic Flute” “The Freemason Opera”. One is able to recognize many Masonic symbols throughout the opera. The use of the number three is very significant. The opera begins and ends on the same three chords, there are Three Ladies and Three Boys, and three doors to the Sun Temple and most obvious to Masons the references of Light and Darkness.

One of the obvious reasons for this Masonic influence was that Schikaneder (the librettist) and Mozart were Freemasons. In the eighteenth century Freemasons were plentiful. The finest minds of the age joined the Freemasons. Mozart loved the Freemasons and found many kindred spirits who understood his music and supported him in rough financial times. Mozart and Schikaneder, through “The Magic Flute”, were actually trying to save the Freemasons by demonstrating to the public that the Freemasons (a.k.a. the Sun Priests) held Reason, Truth and Virtue in the highest esteem. This was a vain effort on Mozart’s part since the Hapsburg Monarchy eventually dissolved the Freemasons after Mozart’s death.

After Mozart’s death there were wild rumors that the Freemasons killed Mozart for divulging their most prized secrets to the public view in “The Magic Flute”. This is ridiculous, however, since the Freemasons supported Mozart’s widow and children and because none of the true secrets of Masonry were in the opera.

First performed only two months before Mozart’s death, *The Magic Flute* is the story of true lovers, who must survive magical ordeals before they can be together. Prince Tamino stumbles into the land of the Queen of Night, where he is attacked by a giant serpent. Three ladies, who show him a picture of the beautiful Pamina rescue him, and Tamino instantly falls in love. Protected by a golden flute, he sets off with the bird-catcher Papageno to rescue Pamina from the clutches of the sorcerer Sarastro. But the sorcerer is actually a wise priest, who tells Pamina that though she and Tamino are destined for each other, they must first prove their love. When the gods instruct Tamino to take a vow of silence, Pamina fears that all is lost and contemplates suicide, but she is comforted by kind spirits and finds new strength to aid Tamino through the trials of fire and water. Triumphant over all adversity, the lovers unite, as the forces of light banish the darkness, and the magic flute carries the final melody.

German Singspiel

The traditional German Singspiel (musical comedy) had had a longer history, parallel to the popular comedy of Italy and France. As in those countries, the division between the purely popular and the more formal and literary comedy diminished. This led to a form of German language comic opera, with some

spoken dialogue, on a variety of subjects. In some, like Mozart's Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute), elements of earlier popular comedy continue.

The comic bird-catcher Papageno is one of a long line of such characters, an ordinary man set in the most extraordinary surroundings. Comedy lies, as always, in the inappropriate situation and the down-to-earth reaction to it. Singspiel continued also in a serious vein, reflecting the parallel developments in Italy and France, as well as in German theatre, with its middle-class drama, if one may so translate the word burgerlich (bourgeois), without giving it a derogatory meaning.

The Magic Flute

A word from wise Sarastro....

SARASTRO

Within these halls so hallowed
We leave no room for wrath.
The lost that blindly wander
Are shown the lighted path.

Here guided by a loving hand
We journey toward a higher land.

Within these halls of wisdom
Where side by side we strive,
No slave of hate can enter,
Nor seed of vengeance thrive.

Until a person longs to learn,
The name of man he's yet to earn.

The Mozart Project, <http://www.mozartproject.org/index.html>
The Magic Flute, by Jacques Chailley