

MOZART'S
MAGIC FLUTE



An Opera In Two Acts

Virginia
Opera
PETER MARK
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Table of Contents

Premiere	2
Cast of Characters	2
Plot Synopsis and Musical Highlights	3
Historical Background	9
A Note from the Stage Director: Bill Theisen	11
A Short History of Opera	12
The Operatic Voice	14
Opera Production	16
Discussion Questions	18

Premiere

Theater auf der Wieden, Vienna, 30 September 1791.

Cast of Characters

Tamino, a foreign prince	tenor
The Queen of the Night	soprano
Three Ladies, in the Queen's service	2 sopranos and mezzo-soprano
Pamina, her daughter	soprano
Sarastro, High Priest of Isis and Osiris	bass
Monostatos, a Moor, his overseer	tenor
Two men in armor	tenor, bass
Three Priests	1 tenor and 2 basses
Three Spirits	2 sopranos and 1 mezzo-soprano
Papageno, a bird catcher	baritone
Papagena, initially disguised as an old woman	soprano

The Setting

The Magic Flute is allegorical and takes place in no real locality or set period, although ancient Egypt is evoked.

Plot Synopsis and Musical Highlights

The action of the opera is carried out in both song and spoken dialogue.

Act 1, scene 1

The setting is rocky country with trees and mountains in the foreground. A temple.

In a forest Tamino has shot his last arrow. He is fleeing from a monstrous serpent. As he falls to the ground the Three Ladies appear and kill the serpent with their spears. They sing a Trio, only the first of many deliciously intricate ensembles throughout the opera, as they look upon the handsome youth. Each tries to get the others to return to their mistress, the Queen of the Night, for each wants to be alone with Tamino. None will yield, however, and eventually all three exit, leaving Tamino still unconscious.

Tamino regains consciousness and hides as Papageno, clothed in feathers and playing pan pipes, appears. He introduces himself as the happy bird-catcher, singing the song “Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja,” (Yes, I am the Birdcatcher), interrupted by high-pitched piping.

Tamino introduces himself to Papageno as a Prince and Papageno tells him he is “a man, like you” and he is catching birds for the Queen of the Night. Tamino asks him if he killed the serpent and Papageno takes credit for the deed, boasting that he strangled it with his bare hands. The Three Ladies return and punish him for his lie by padlocking his mouth. They give Tamino a medallion that bears the likeness of Pamina, the Queen of the Night’s daughter, and once again leave, followed by Papageno.

Tamino immediately falls in love with the portrait, and sings the aria “Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön” (This portrait is enchantingly beautiful). The yearning *appoggiaturas* and pulsations bespeak his emotions for the young lady in the portrait.

Tamino learns that Pamina has been kidnapped by the tyrant Sarastro. The Three Ladies once again return, announcing the arrival of the Queen of the Night. The Ladies withdraw. Darkness descends and the Queen of the Night is seen on her throne against a sky visible against a background of sky brilliant with stars. She sings a grand aria preceded by accompanied recitative: “O zittre nicht” (Oh do not tremble), telling him that an evil man has taken away her daughter. The aria is “Zum Leiden bin ich auserkoren” (In suffering I am forsaken). The aria is in two main parts, a slow one in triple meter and a fast concluding section in duple meter with giddy *coloratura* ascending to a high F. In the fast section, the Queen tells Tamino that if he can save Pamina, she will be his.

As the Queen of the Night disappears, daylight returns, as does Papageno, who appeals to Tamino for help. The Three Ladies join them and a Quintet ensues, beginning with Papageno unable to speak because of the padlock.

The Ladies relieve Papageno of the padlock and warn him never to lie again, for if liars were gagged, brotherly love would prevail. They give Tamino a magic flute, which can protect him and change sorrow to joy, and order Papageno to accompany Tamino on his quest to free Pamina from the evil villain, Sarastro. Papageno is horrified at the thought: surely the evil Sarastro will eat them. Papageno is then given a set of magic bells

to protect him. The Ladies promise that the Three Spirits (wise and lovely boys) will serve as guides and bid them farewell.

Act 1, scene 2

An elegant Egyptian-style room in Sarastro's apartment.

In Sarastro's palace three slaves are rejoicing over the news that Pamina has escaped but then they see Sarastro's overseer, the dreaded Monostatos, approach with the captured Pamina. He drags her in, has her bound and orders the servants away. Pamina faints and Papageno enters. He and Monostatos are both frightened at the sight of each other. Both flee but Papageno returns as Pamina regains consciousness. He frees her and tells her about Tamino and they sing a duet about the blessings of love, "Bei Männern welche Liebe fühlen." He, alas, has no mate. "This duet epitomizes the opera's moral, as well as its musical directness," states Julian Rushton in *The Grove Dictionary of Opera*. "The pastoral 6/8. . .brings E-flat, the 'Masonic' tonic, also the key of love (compare Tamino's first aria). Only Pamina's serene ornamentation differentiates the voices.

Act 1, scene 3

A grove, with three beautiful temples: at the back, "Wisdom"; on the right, "Reason"; on the left, "Nature".

The trombones, silent since the Overture, evoke the holiness of this locale. Tamino is led to the temple by the Three Spirits, who, after urging him to be steadfast, patient, and silent (Masonic virtues), then depart. Tamino attempts to enter but is stopped at two doors by voices within. As he approaches the third door a priest (the "Speaker") appears and confirms that this is indeed Sarastro's dwelling and informs him that Sarastro cannot be evil or he would not be dwelling here. He finds Tamino's sentiments worthy but his mind clouded by prejudice; he should beware of trusting a woman's tears. The priest returns to the temple. The melancholy Tamino begins playing his flute, attracting wild animals who listen docilely to the sweet music, but no Pamina.

Tamino hears Papageno's panpipes in the distance and answers them. He goes off to find him, hoping that Pamina will be with him.

The scene shifts to Papageno and Pamina, who have followed the sound of Tamino's flute to the temple square but have just missed him. Monostatos catches them and orders them to be put in chains. Papageno begins playing his bells, the sound of them forcing Monostatos and his slaves to dance against their will. Dancing and singing, they exit.

Relief is short-lived, however, as trumpets and drums announce Sarastro, in a chariot drawn by lions. Sarastro declares he will not force Pamina to love him but neither will he return her to her mother, for a woman, in order to be happy, must be guided by a man. Monostatos brings in Tamino and Pamina runs to his arms. Monostatos asks his master to punish the intruders but instead Sarastro orders him to be whipped, to general acclaim. Sarastro then orders that the two strangers be veiled and undergo initiation rites. While Tamino and Papageno are led away, Sarastro conducts Pamina to the temple. The

act ends with a Masonic chorus that certainly influenced the ending of *Fidelio*: virtue and justice will make of earth a paradise.

Act 2, scene 1

A palm grove, with 18 seats, on each a pyramid and a horn.

In a solemn procession scored for flutes, basset horns, and trombones, the priests arrive at a palm grove. Sarastro receives their approval (to the three opening chords of the overture) for his plan to allow Tamino into the order and to unite him with Pamina, whom Sarastro has taken from her mother for this very purpose. The High Priest sings the aria “O Isis und Osiris,” praying to the Egyptian gods to guide the newcomers through their trials and to accept them in their midst if they should perish.

Act 2, scene 2

A small forecourt, in darkness: thunder.

Tamino and a frightened Papageno are led in the dark of night into a small temple court, where their veils are removed. Although they are informed of the dangers involved, Tamino is nevertheless eager to undergo the trials. Only when promised he will meet his predestined mate, Papagena, does Papageno agree to the trials. Tamino takes it all very seriously while Papageno’s role (as established by Schikaneder in the original production) is full of popular theatrical buffoonery. Silence is imposed upon the pair and they are told to beware women’s trickery. They are left alone and the Three Ladies suddenly appear. A Quintet ensues, the Ladies warning the pair not to trust the deceitful and crafty priests. Tamino ignores their gossip and with effort keeps Papageno from speaking to them. As the Ladies turn to leave, an unseen chorus consigns them to hell; they disappear amidst thunder and lightning. The Speaker appears to guide Tamino to further trials. Papageno has been prostrate on the ground to minor-mode cadences since the thunder began. After the three opening chords are heard, the priest eventually coaxes him to proceed with the trials.

Act 2, scene 3

A garden.

Monostatos discovers Pamina asleep on a garden bench and cannot refrain from giving her just one little kiss. The piccolo in the orchestra suggests Turkish music. He is singing that “everyone feels the joys of love” when the Queen of the Night suddenly appears and he quickly escapes. The Queen wants the power conferred by the sevenfold circle of the Sun, which her dying husband confided to the initiates. She sings a revenge aria in D minor against Sarastro, “Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen” (The wrath of hell is boiling in my heart), culminating in outbursts of high coloratura singing that reaches high F four times. She gives Pamina a dagger destined for Sarastro and tells her that she must exact revenge or she will no longer be considered her daughter.

The Queen of the Night exits and Monostatos immediately returns. He has overheard the Queen's plans to use her daughter as an instrument of revenge but promises to forget them if Pamina agrees to love him. She refuses, he draws a dagger, but then Sarastro enters. Pamina begs him not to take revenge on her mother and Sarastro answers with the folk-like aria in E major, "In diesen heil'gen Hallen" declaring that the word revenge is unknown within the walls of the temple of wisdom.

Act 2, scene 4

A large hall.

Papageno and Tamino are led into a bare room and once again warned that they must keep silent or be punished by thunder and lightning. Papageno begins complaining, saying they are not even given water. Immediately, an old woman appears bearing water. She claims she is only eighteen years old and has a lover named Papageno, but before she can reveal her own name, loud thunder is heard and she limps away.

The Three Spirits enter, sent by Sarastro to return the flute and the bells, which had been confiscated at the beginning of the trials. They also invite them to eat and drink from a laden table that has magically risen out of the ground. Their exquisite Trio is also a warning of imminent danger. After they leave, Papageno eats and Pamino plays his flute. Led by the sound of the magic flute, Pamina arrives. When Tamino refuses to speak to her, her joy is changed to grief. She sings a melancholy aria in G minor, "Ach, ich fühl's" (Ah, I feel it).

Three trombone blasts signal to the men that they must proceed with the trials and eventually Tamino is able to drag Papageno away from the food and force him to go with him. Tamino's flute calms them.

Act 2, scene 5

The vault of a pyramid.

Sarastro, leading his priests, enters a hall inside a pyramid. Tamino is brought before him and agrees to undergo the last and most dangerous trials. Pamina is led in to bid him farewell and begins a Trio, "Soll ich dich, Teurer, nicht mehr seh'n?" (Must I see you never again, dear one?), joined by Tamino and Sarastro, who tell him to have faith in the gods. Pamina is led away, everyone else leaves, Sarastro guiding Tamino. Darkness falls.

Papageno stumbles in but thunder and fire keep him from moving forward. The Speaker enters and announces that, although Papageno will not be punished further, neither will he be granted acceptance into the brotherhood. All Papageno wants at the moment, however, is a glass of wine. The Speaker leaves and a great goblet filled with wine rises from the ground. After Papageno drinks from it he experiences a strong desire for a wife. Ringing the bells (each verse has a more elaborate part for the bells), he sings his second folk-song, "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" (A Maiden or a Little Wife).

The Old Woman appears and asks him to marry her, or else he will remain a prisoner in this same room, living only on bread and water. He reluctantly swears fidelity

and she is transformed into a young Papagena, dressed all in feathers like Papageno. The Speaker appears at that moment and leads her away.

Act 2, scene 6

A small garden.

The Three Spirits evoke sunrise, which banishes darkness and death; they enter a palm grove to prevent Pamina, who thinks that Tamino does not love her anymore, from killing herself with her mother's dagger. The Spirits tell her she is mistaken and lead her away to find Tamino.

Act 2, scene 7

Rocky landscape with two mountains, one gushing forth water, the other fire.

After a solemn introduction, two Men in Armor enter a dark cave with embers glowing on one side and a waterfall on the other. They sing in chorale style that the elements, and worthy to join the mysteries of Isis will cleanse those who traverse the paths of hardships. Tamino is brought in, ready to start on his road of trials, and Pamina's voice is heard calling him; she wants to join him in his trials and is allowed to do so. (Women of course were not participants in Masonic rituals). They embrace jubilantly and prepare to pass through fire and water, strengthened by love and protected by the playing of the flute. The couple and the Two Men in Armor sing a quartet.

Pamina and Tamino pass unharmed through fire and water and unseen voices invite them to enter the temple that suddenly appears before them in great splendor.

Act 2, scene 8

The small garden.

Papageno is wandering through a garden, looking, calling, and whistling for Papagena.

When no one responds, he decides to end his misery by hanging himself. Just as he is tightening the noose, the Three Spirits hurry in and advise him to try his bells. He follows their advice and is soon joined by Papagena.

In a humorous duet, they start planning a future rich in little Papagenas and Papagenos.

Act 2, scene 9

Monostatos has been promised Pamina as a reward and so leads the Queen of the Night (bereft of high notes) and the Three Ladies through the darkness toward the temple, in order to destroy "the unctuous pietists," as they call them. They sing a Quintet, "Nur stille" (Now quiet), about keeping quiet as they approach the door of the temple.

They suddenly hear a distant roar that grows into thunder. A bolt of lightning hits the earth and the evil band is plunged into eternal night. With no interruption in the music, the scene changes to the Temple of Wisdom.

Act 2, scene 10

Before the assembled brotherhood, Sarastro, with Tamino and Pamina near him, rejoices in the victory of light and truth over night and mendacity. Everyone thanks the gods and hails the newly ordained pair.

Historical Background

Opera was for Mozart the perfect medium of expression; likewise, he was the ideal opera composer. As the noted music historian Paul Henry Lang explains, “Mozart was the greatest musico-dramatic genius of all times. This unique position he owes to a temperament, which approached everything, every situation, and every human being with absolute objectivity. Every situation and every individual appeared to him as music, his whole conception was purely aesthetic, and music was his language.”

Opportunities to compose opera were never numerous enough for Mozart; for years he had wanted to write serious opera that was more vibrant than the rigid Italian opera seria and he also wanted to write an opera that was distinctly German. With *The Magic Flute* he came close to achieving both goals. As with *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, this work is a mixture of the serious and the comic, this combination being Mozart’s particular specialty. Like Shakespeare, Mozart demanded vivid contrasts; both artists portrayed the complete spectrum of humanity and human emotion.

It is no coincidence that the librettist of *The Magic Flute*, Emanuel Schikaneder, was a theatrical jack-of-all-trades renowned for his portrayals of Macbeth, Hamlet, and King Lear. (Carl Ludwig Gieseke, who originally played the First Slave, claimed much later that he had contributed as much to the libretto as Schikaneder but his claims are now generally discredited.) Mozart had known Schikaneder for about a decade before they collaborated on this opera. In Vienna, Schikaneder had formed a troupe of entertainers that performed a far-ranging repertoire, ranging from the operas of Gluck and the works of Shakespeare, to ballets, orchestral concerts, farces, foreign comic operas translated into German, and Singspiele (German comic operas with spoken and simple melodies; *The Magic Flute* is the epitome of this genre). Their headquarters was the Theater auf der Wieden, a temporary playhouse in the Vienna suburbs. To appeal to the relatively unsophisticated Viennese tastes, Schikaneder was forced to emphasize comic and romantic Singspiele and to throw in a great deal of spectacle. Very popular at the time was the “Zauberoper” (magic opera), a comic rescue play featuring special effects, animals, and various magical objects used by heroic characters to triumph over villainry. For the creation of *The Magic Flute*, Schikaneder played Papageno, adding many improvisatory and crowd-pleasing touches. There are delightful stories of Mozart playing Papageno’s bells in the orchestra pit, keeping Schikaneder on his toes with extra, unrehearsed flourishes. The original Queen of the Night was Mozart’s sister-in-law, Josepha Hofer.

One of the main sources for Schikaneder’s libretto was, in fact, such a magic story: *Lulu, or The Magic Flute* by August Jakob Liebeskind. Important also was the traditional Italian commedia dell’arte, improvised street comedy featuring such stock characters as Pantalone, Pierrot, and Truffaldino. This is reflected in *The Magic Flute* in the characters with Italianate names, such as Papageno, who is usually dressed as a bird in the manner of eighteenth-century commedia dell’arte drawings. Furthermore, “Papagei” is the German word for parrot. Although, according to the Mozart scholar Julian Rushton, writing in *The Grove Dictionary of Opera*, the libretto is for the most part “original and contemporary in its significance,” other sources Schikaneder consulted

included the French novel *Sethos* by Jean Terrasson, a book that drew connections between Freemasonry and ancient Egypt, whence Masonry claimed its origins. Schikaneder was himself a Mason (although he had been expelled from the lodge in Regensburg) and one is well aware of the importance of Masonry to Mozart and his music, especially his later compositions. In the case of *The Magic Flute*, one might say that Lulu provided the comic underpinning, and Mozart's exalted sense of the Masonic the serious overlay. Much has been made of the connection between the number 3 in Masonic symbolism and its use in this opera: the three flats of the opening E-flat major key signature, the three ladies, the three spirits, the three knocks at the door, three trumpets, three priests, and three musical instruments. Yet it is easy to get carried away. The trinity is after all important to a number of other groups beside the Masons, and *The Magic Flute* uses other significant numbers in addition to the number three. Furthermore, it has been suggested that certain characters represent contemporary figures: Queen is Maria Theresa, Sarastro is Ignaz von Born (Master of a Masonic lodge), Tamino is Joseph II. The work is strong enough to support almost any and all interpretations, both singly and simultaneously.

Many consider *The Magic Flute*, with its blend of the trivial and the sublime, a strange work for the mature Mozart to have written. It is, however, precisely this universality that made it an ideal subject for a man who embraced humanity in all its manifestations. The story unfolds in many short scenes that effectively contrast the grave with the comical, the earthy with the sublime, and so forth; likewise, the opera's musical numbers function by contrast, with an unprecedented stylistic range. The diversity and discontinuity are deliberate and do not deprive the score of the right to be considered as an entity, the masterpiece of Mozart's late style. Mozart was already suffering from his final illness during the first run of performances of *The Magic Flute*. He was often in dire financial straits in his last years, not so much because he did not earn enough to live on, but principally because he and his wife Constanze were spendthrifts. Yet no matter what his personal circumstances, Mozart was always able to see life clearly and to see it whole as few mortals have ever done, an aspect of his personality that helped make him the greatest of opera geniuses. This work is a masterpiece that was written, not as a recondite exercise in philosophy, but as a living entertainment meant to appeal to a large public. And appeal it did. In its first year alone it was given over one hundred times. Antonio Salieri attended a performance and complimented Mozart warmly. That the work gave the dying Mozart intense pleasure and comfort should alone be enough to recommend it for eternity.

A Note From the Stage Director: Bill Theisen

My main goal in approaching THE MAGIC FLUTE is to get to the heart of the story. Over the years so many layers have been added to the opera, the basic story seems to get lost. It also should be noted that the opera in its original form is rather complicated, but there is a wonderful story to be told and that is what I plan to do. By rearranging some the musical numbers, I feel the plot can develop in a much more linear way, which makes the storytelling clearer for the audience. The Andrew Porter translation is definitely the most concise of the many versions that exist, and with the rewritten dialogue and cuts I have made the piece as a whole plays in a wonderfully cohesive way, and the action never drags. I also use the 3 Spirits as our storytellers, and weave them throughout the opera, which adds a great deal of charm, and creates a link with the audience.

The opera certainly has its fantastic moments, which we hope to make quite spectacular, but I think the real, human moments are even more important. The cast we have put together are all wonderful singing actors, and that is what it takes to make the characters come to life, yet be real multidimensional people who we truly care about. Their journey has to become our journey.

What I most want people to get from this production is the idea of a new beginning, equality in the world, and enlightenment from the darkness that can fill all of our lives.

With the beginning of the 20th century, composers in America diverged from European traditions in order to focus on their own roots while exploring and developing the vast body of the country's folk music and legends. Composers such as Aaron Copland, Douglas Moore, Carlisle Floyd, Howard Hanson, and Robert Ward have all crafted operas that have been presented throughout the world to great success. Today, composers John Adams, Philip Glass, and John Corigliano enjoy success both at home and abroad and are credited with the infusion of new life into an art form which continues to evolve even as it approaches its fifth century.



The Operatic Voice

A true (and brief) definition of the “operatic” voice is a difficult proposition. Many believe the voice is “born,” while just as many hold to the belief that the voice is “trained.” The truth lies somewhere between the two. Voices that can sustain the demands required by the operatic repertoire do have many things in common. First and foremost is a strong physical technique that allows the singer to sustain long phrases through the control of both the inhalation and exhalation of breath. Secondly, the voice (regardless of its size) must maintain a resonance in both the head (mouth, sinuses) and chest cavities. The Italian word “*squillo*” (squeal) is used to describe the brilliant tone required to penetrate the full symphony orchestra that accompanies the singers. Finally, all voices are defined by both the actual voice “type” and the selection of repertoire for which the voice is ideally suited.

Within the five major voice types (*Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Baritone, Bass*) there is a further delineation into categories (*Coloratura, Lyric, Spinto, Dramatic*) which help to define each particular instrument. The *Coloratura* is the highest within each voice type whose extended upper range is complimented by extreme flexibility. The *Lyric* is the most common of the “types.” This instrument is recognized more for the exceptional beauty of its tone rather than its power or range. The *Spinto* is a voice which combines the beauty of a lyric with the weight and power of a *Dramatic*, which is the most “powerful” of the voices. The *Dramatic* instrument is characterized by the combination of both incredible volume and “steely” intensity.

While the definition presented in the preceding paragraph may seem clearly outlined, many voices combine qualities from each category, thus carving an unique niche in operatic history. Just as each person is different from the next, so is each voice. Throughout her career Maria Callas defied categorization as she performed and recorded roles associated with each category in the soprano voice type. Joan Sutherland as well can be heard in recordings of soprano roles as diverse as the coloratura Gilda in *Rigoletto* to the dramatic Turandot in *Turandot*. Below is a very brief outline of voice types and categories with roles usually associated with the individual voice type.

	<i>Coloratura</i>	<i>Lyric</i>	<i>Spinto</i>	<i>Dramatic</i>
Soprano	Norina (Don Pasquale) Gilda (Rigoletto) Lucia (Lucia di Lammermoor)	Liu (Turandot) Mimi (La Bohème) Pamina (Magic Flute)	Tosca (Tosca) Amelia (A Masked Ball) Leonora (Il Trovatore)	Turandot (Turandot) Norma (Norma) Elektra (Elektra)
Mezzo-Soprano	Rosina (Barber of Seville) Angelina (La Cenerentola) Dorabella (Così fan tutte)	Carmen (Carmen) Charlotte (Werther) Giulietta (Hoffmann)	Santuzza (Cavalleria) Adalgisa (Norma) The Composer (Ariadne auf Naxos)	Azucena (Il Trovatore) Ulrica (A Masked Ball) Herodias (Salome)

<i>Tenor</i>	Count Almaviva (Barber of Seville) Don Ottavio (Don Giovanni) Ferrando (Così fan tutte)	Alfredo (La Traviata) Rodolfo (La Bohème) Tamino (Magic Flute)	Calaf (Turandot) Pollione (Norma) Cavaradossi (Fosca)	Dick Johnson (Fanciulla) Don Jose (Carmen) Otello (Otello)
<i>Baritone</i>	Figaro (Barber of Seville) Count Almavira (Le nozze di Figaro) Dr. Malatesta (Don Pasquale)	Marcello (La Bohème) Don Giovanni (Don Giovanni) Sharpless (Madama Butterfly)	Verdi Baritone Germont (La Traviata)	Scarpia (Fosca) Jochanaan (Salome) Jack Rance (Fanciulla)
<i>Bass</i>	Bartolo (Barber of Seville) Don Magnifico (Cenerentola) Dr. Dulcamara (Elixir of Love)	Leporello (Don Giovanni) Colline (La Bohème) Figaro (Marriage of Figaro)	Buffo Bass Don Pasquale (Don Pasquale) Don Alfonso (Così fan tutte)	Basso Cantate Oroveso (Norma) Timur (Turandot) Sarastro (Magic Flute)

Opera Production

Opera is created by the combination of myriad art forms. First and foremost are the actors who portray characters by revealing their thoughts and emotions through the singing voice. The next very important component is a full symphony orchestra that accompanies the singing actors and actresses, helping them to portray the full range of emotions possible in the operatic format. The orchestra performs in an area in front of the singers called the orchestra pit while the singers perform on the open area called the stage. Wigs, costumes, sets and specialized lighting further enhance these performances, all of which are designed, created, and executed by a team of highly trained artisans.

The creation of an opera begins with a dramatic scenario crafted by a playwright or dramaturg who alone or with a librettist fashions the script or libretto that contains the words the artists will sing. Working in tandem, the composer and librettist team up to create a cohesive musical drama in which the music and words work together to express the emotions revealed in the story. Following the completion of their work, the composer and librettist entrust their new work to a conductor who with a team of assistants (repetiteurs) assumes responsibility for the musical preparation of the work. The conductor collaborates with a stage director (responsible for the visual component) in order to bring a performance of the new piece to life on the stage. The stage director and conductor form the creative spearhead for the new composition while assembling a design team which will take charge of the actual physical production.

Set designers, lighting designers, costume designers, wig and makeup designers and even choreographers must all be brought “on board” to participate in the creation of the new production. The set designer combines the skills of both an artist and an architect using “blueprint” plans to design the actual physical set which will reside on the stage, recreating the physical setting required by the storyline. These blueprints are turned over to a team of carpenters who are specially trained in the art of stage carpentry. Following the actual building of the set, painters following instructions from the set designers’ original plans paint the set. As the set is assembled on the stage, the lighting designer works with a team of electricians to throw light onto both the stage and the set in an atmospheric as well as practical way. Using specialized lighting instruments, colored gels and a state of the art computer, the designer along with the stage director create a “lighting plot” by writing “lighting cues” which are stored in the computer and used during the actual performance of the opera.

During this production period, the costume designer in consultation with the stage director has designed appropriate clothing for the singing actors and actresses to wear. These designs are fashioned into patterns and crafted by a team of highly skilled artisans called cutters, stitchers, and sewers. Each costume is specially made for each singer using his/her individual measurements. The wig and makeup designer, working with the costume designer, designs and creates wigs which will complement both the costume and the singer as well as represent historically accurate “period” fashions.

As the actual performance date approaches, rehearsals are held on the newly crafted set, combined with costumes, lights, and orchestra in order to ensure a cohesive performance that will be both dramatically and musically satisfying to the assembled audience.



Discussion Questions

1. The number three was important to the Freemasons. Discuss how many examples of the use of the number three can be found in the story and music of the opera.
2. Discuss how the contrasting statures of the two leading male characters (Tamino and Papageno) are reflected in the style of the music they sing.
3. What is symbolism? What are examples of symbolism in *The Magic Flute*?
4. Mozart evokes ancient Egypt in the opera. How does he accomplish this?
5. The end of the opera brings the victory of light over darkness. This represents the ideals of a major trend of thought in the 18th century called the Enlightenment. Research the Enlightenment and identify examples of this philosophy in *The Magic Flute*.