



CANADIAN  
OPERA  
COMPANY

STUDY GUIDE

2016 | 2017 SEASON SPONSOR: BMO 

# THE MAGIC FLUTE

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART  
(1756 - 1791)

PRODUCTION SPONSOR

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*Cover: Michael Schade as Tamino.*

*All photos in this study guide are from the COC's 2011 production of The Magic Flute, and were taken by Michael Cooper*

# THE MAGIC FLUTE: BACKGROUND AND CHARACTERS

*The Magic Flute* was the result of collaboration between two long-time friends: Mozart first met Emanuel Schikaneder, the librettist of *The Magic Flute* when Schikaneder brought his theatre company to Salzburg in 1780. Ten years later, the men were still friends, and both members of the same Masonic lodge. Schikaneder had begun working on a libretto based on a fairytale called *Lulu, or the Magic Flute* by A. J. Liebeskind, when a version of the same story was produced at another Viennese theatre to great success. Having already persuaded Mozart to compose the music to his libretto, Schikaneder decided to take a different approach to the fairytale and incorporated the rites and symbolism of Freemasonry (which at the time was a controversial subject in Vienna) into the opera. Mozart began work

on the music in March 1791, and completed the score in July. Mozart's final opera premiered in Vienna on Sept. 30, 1791, with Schikaneder performing the role of Papageno, and Mozart's sister-in-law, Josepha Hofer, as the Queen of the Night. It was well received, and continued to grow in popularity. Less than two months later, Mozart died. He never knew that in November 1792, just over a year after its premiere, *The Magic Flute* celebrated its 100th performance. It continues today as one of the most popular operas in the repertoire.

This is a COC production.

Performed in German with English SURTITLES™.

NAME	DESCRIPTION	VOICE TYPE	PRONUNCIATION
Tamino	A prince	Tenor	tah-MEE-noh
Papageno	A birdcatcher	Baritone	pah-pah-GEH-noh
The Queen of the Night		Soprano	
Monostatos	Sarastro's servant	Tenor	moh-noh-STAH-tohss
Pamina	The Queen of the Night's daughter	Soprano	pah-MEE-nah
The Speaker of the Temple		Bass	
Sarastro	High Priest of Isis and Osiris	Bass	sah-RAS-troh
Papagena	Papageno's love interest	Soprano	pah-pah-GEY-nah

Chorus of Servants, Priests and People

# THE MAGIC FLUTE: SYNOPSIS

## ACT I

Prince Tamino is pursued by a serpent. He collapses and is saved by the Three Ladies who slay the serpent and leave the prince there to tell their queen of his arrival in their land. Tamino awakens as Papageno, a birdcatcher, enters. When Papageno claims responsibility for slaying the serpent, the Three Ladies reappear and padlock his mouth as punishment for lying. They give Tamino a portrait of a young woman, with whom Tamino falls immediately in love. The portrait is of Pamina, the Queen of the Night's daughter, and captive of Sarastro. The Queen herself appears and tells Tamino that if he rescues her daughter, Pamina will be his forever. The Three Ladies remove Papageno's padlock, giving him a set of magic chimes, with instructions to accompany Tamino. To Tamino they give a magic flute which will protect him from danger during their rescue mission. Three Boys will guide them on their journey.

In Sarastro's palace Pamina is pursued by the lustful slave Monostatos. Papageno, having been separated from Tamino, saves Pamina and tells her that her mother has sent a handsome prince to rescue her, one who

is already in love with her. Pamina is overjoyed and together they reflect on the importance of love.

The Three Boys bring Tamino to the Temples of Wisdom, Reason and Nature, promising that if he remains obedient, he will succeed in rescuing Pamina. He enters the temple of Wisdom and meets the Speaker, who informs him that the Queen of the Night is the villain, not Sarastro, as he will understand when he enters the brotherhood of the Temple. Tamino plays the magic flute in hopes of summoning Papageno. Wild animals come tamely to him, bewitched by the music. He hears the birdcatcher's chimes off in the distance and he goes to find him.

In the meantime, Papageno, with the help of his magic chimes, saves Pamina once more from Monostatos. Sarastro enters and tells Pamina he cannot let her return to her mother. Having been caught by Monostatos while looking for Papageno, Tamino is brought in and he and Pamina joyfully meet at last. Tamino and Papageno prepare to be tested for admittance to the brotherhood.



## ACT II

Near the temple Sarastro leads a prayer to Isis\* and Osiris\*\*, to assist Pamina and Tamino.

Tamino and Papageno begin the first test, during which they must remain silent and without their flute and chimes. The Three Ladies tempt them to talk, only succeeding with Papageno.

Monostatos tries to kiss Pamina as she rests while waiting for the outcome of Tamino's trials. She is saved from Monostatos by the appearance of the Queen of the Night who demands that her daughter kill Sarastro. Alone, she is once again accosted by Monostatos, but Sarastro enters and chases the slave away. Sarastro comforts Pamina, telling her that love, not vengeance, lives in the walls of the temple.

In the temple a hooded old woman appears to Papageno, claiming that she is his sweetheart. She disappears and the Three Boys appear, returning the magic flute and chimes to Tamino and Papageno. Pamina enters but Tamino will not speak to her, leaving her heartbroken.

In a temple vault, Sarastro calls for Tamino and Pamina to be brought forth. Tamino has two more trials to go, the most dangerous ones.

The old woman reappears to Papageno. He tells her he'd rather have her than nothing. She removes her disguise revealing a beautiful young woman, Papagena. She's immediately whisked away, as Papageno is still unworthy of her.

Pamina is prevented from taking her life by the Three Boys and is reunited joyfully with Tamino, in time to take his last two trials with him, those of fire and water. They emerge triumphant, earning entrance to the temple as initiates.

Saddened by being alone and not having anyone to love, Papageno tries to hang himself. The Three Boys save him from taking his own life, reminding him to play his chimes. Papagena appears and the two lovers are together at last.

The Queen of the Night attempts to seize power from Sarastro but is defeated. All celebrate the triumph of Tamino and Pamina. "Virtue has conquered and crowns, as a reward, beauty and wisdom with an eternal crown."



Opposite: The Three Ladies save Prince Tamino from the serpent. Above: Rodion Pogosov as Papageno.

\*Isis:  
The Ancient Egyptian goddess of motherhood, fertility and magic.

\*\*Osiris: The Ancient Egyptian god of the afterlife and the dead.

# THE MAGIC FLUTE: WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born on January 27, 1756, in Salzburg, Austria, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was the only son born to Leopold and Anna Maria Mozart. His father, an eminent musician in his own right, began teaching him the harpsichord when he was only four years old. He wrote minuets when he was five, a sonata at seven, a symphony at eight; and, at the suggestion of the Holy Roman Emperor, an opera, *La finta semplice* at 11.

At the age of six, he and his sister Maria Anna were taken by their father to the electoral court in Munich, where they were a huge success and, for the next several years, Leopold exhibited his children throughout Europe.

Mozart and his father embarked on an extended tour of Italy in 1770. During the tour, 14-year-old Mozart astounded his audience by listening to Gregorio Allegri's *Miserere* only once, and then writing the complete score from memory!

From 1772 to 1777 Mozart resided in Salzburg, under unhappy conditions. The city's new archbishop, Hieronymus von Colloredo failed to appreciate Mozart's genius. The young man was treated as a servant, with imperious authority and personal abuse.

Mozart escaped Salzburg in 1777, setting off for Paris with his mother and hoping to find a more advantageous post. Unfortunately his stay in Paris came to an abrupt end with the death of his mother and Mozart had to return to his drab existence in Salzburg.

In January 1781, Mozart was acclaimed for his new opera, *Idomeneo*. This was the first work that hinted at his developing powers as a composer for the stage.

The permanent break with the archbishop of Salzburg came in 1782 when Mozart visited Vienna with the archbishop's entourage. Denied permission to appear at some benefit concerts, Mozart denounced his employer, and was summarily dismissed. From then on Mozart resided in Vienna. There, the Holy Roman Emperor, Joseph II, commissioned him to write a new opera, *The Abduction from the Seraglio* which premiered on July 16, 1782, and was a triumph.

Confident of his future, Mozart married Constanze Weber on August 4, 1782. He expected a profitable position at court, but, although the Emperor was lavish with praise and commissions, no position was offered. To earn a living Mozart gave lessons, which brought in meagre earnings.

A 1785 meeting with librettist Lorenzo da Ponte, who had recently been appointed poet of the Viennese court theatres, resulted in a working collaboration



which would produce three of Mozart's greatest operas. The first was *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1786, followed quickly by *Don Giovanni* in 1787: both were triumphs. The last of their three collaborations was *Così fan tutte* in 1790. It was considered a failure and only received 10 performances before being dropped from the repertoire.

The final year of Mozart's life brought no end to his continuing personal misfortunes. While he had finally received a permanent post as court composer and chamber musician, he received such a small salary that it neither relieved him of his debts nor provided for necessities. Yet 1791 was a period of brilliant creation, yielding two operas, *La clemenza di Tito* and *The Magic Flute*, and his great *Requiem*.

Mozart died at the age of 35 on December 5, 1791 after a short illness. His funeral was held at Vienna's St. Stephen's Cathedral, and his body was interred in an unmarked, mass grave.

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF W. A. MOZART

- 1756 ♦ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is born on Jan. 27 in Salzburg, Austria.
- ♦ In Europe, England declares war on France, beginning the Seven Years' War.
- 1759 ♦ After taking control of Fort Niagara earlier in the year, on Sept. 13 British forces climb the banks of the Plains of Abraham and overtake the French stationed there. Both leaders, General James Wolfe and the Marquis de Montcalm, are mortally wounded, and Quebec falls to the English.
- 1761 ♦ Marie Tussaud (née Grosholtz) is born on Dec. 1 in England. Her mother's work as a housekeeper to a physician who created wax forms for anatomical purposes led to her life's work of collecting and sculpting wax figures.
- 1762 ♦ Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau publishes *The Social Contract*, one of the best-known books to come out of the Enlightenment, a movement that sought to attach reason to art, politics and society. This movement would eventually lead to both the American and French revolutions. It also greatly informed Mozart's work.
- ♦ Christoph Gluck premieres *Orpheus and Euridice* in Vienna on Oct. 5.
- 1763 ♦ The Treaty of Paris cedes Quebec to the British, ending the Seven Years' War.
- ♦ John Molson, founder of Molson Breweries, is born on Dec. 28 in England.
- 1764 ♦ At age 8, Mozart writes his first symphony.
- ♦ The *Quebec Gazette*, known today as the *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*, begins publication. It is North America's longest-running newspaper.
- 1770 ♦ Marie-Antoinette, the 14-year-old daughter of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, marries 15-year-old Louis-Auguste of France.
- ♦ Ludwig van Beethoven is born in Bonn, Germany.
- 1776 ♦ A resolution to pass the Declaration of Independence is agreed upon during the second Continental Congress. It is adopted on July 4 in Philadelphia. The first British Loyalists arrive in Canada after fleeing from the war.
- 1776 ♦ Captain James Cook embarks on his third expedition of the Pacific Ocean. He becomes the first European to visit Hawaii, then maps North America's west coast and attempts unsuccessfully to cross the Bering Strait. He returns to Hawaii in 1779, where his erratic behaviour leads to a confrontation with the locals, who beat him to death.
- ♦ Adam Smith publishes *The Wealth of Nations*, which chronicles the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.
- 1778 ♦ France and the United States sign the Treaty of Alliance and the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, which allies France and the U.S. against their common enemy, Britain. The treaty, and Louis XVI's subsequent declaration of war on Britain, help the United States win their independence.
- ♦ The opera house La Scala opens in Milan, Italy.
- ♦ Mozart's mother, Maria Anna, dies in Paris while accompanying the composer on a tour of Europe.
- 1781 ♦ Los Angeles is founded under the name El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora La Reina de los Ángeles de Porciuncula by a group of Spanish settlers.
- ♦ Mozart premieres *Idomeneo* in Munich, Germany.
- 1782 ♦ Against his father's wishes, Mozart marries Constanze Weber on Aug. 4. They have six children, including two sons who survive to adulthood. Mozart breaks with his employer, the archbishop of Salzburg, and is forced to teach lessons and beg his friends for money to make ends meet.



- 1786 ♦ Mozart premieres *The Marriage of Figaro* in Vienna on May 1. The opera is so well received that the encores stretch it to double its intended running time.
- ♦ Frontiersman Davy Crockett is born in Tennessee on Aug. 17.
- 1787 ♦ The U.S. Constitution is drafted in Philadelphia. Delaware ratifies the document and becomes the first U.S. state. Pennsylvania and New Jersey soon follow suit.
- ♦ Mozart's father, Leopold, dies on May 28 in Salzburg, Austria. Mozart premieres *Don Giovanni* in Prague on Oct. 29. The opera is widely thought to be one of the greatest musical pieces ever composed.
- 1789 ♦ After months of growing tension and financial worries, the French bourgeoisie prepare a new constitution that gives them, along with the peasants and the working class, power over the French government. Louis XVI tries to stop the group, calling itself the General Assembly, but is unsuccessful. The French Revolution begins with the storming of the Bastille on July 14 (celebrated to this day as Bastille Day in France and Quebec). Feudalism is abolished.
- 1789 ♦ The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen is ratified in Paris.
- ♦ George Washington is elected the first president of the United States.
- 1790 ♦ France takes away the clergy's special privileges and strips the Church of its land. It forces the Church to accept the new constitution. Heraldry and other emblems of the "ancient regime" are abolished.
- ♦ *Così fan tutte* premieres in Vienna on Jan. 26. Though it wasn't considered scandalous at the time of its premiere, the stricter morality of the 19th and early 20th centuries stopped it from being performed often. It has since become part of the popular repertoire.
- 1791 ♦ Chaos reigns in France and Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette are executed.
- ♦ The Constitutional Act of 1791 divides the colony of Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada.
- ♦ *The Magic Flute* premieres in Vienna on Sept. 30. While not an immediate success, the opera gains in popularity, having its 100th performance within a year of its premiere. After a short illness and at the age of 35, Mozart dies in Vienna on Dec. 5. He is buried in an unmarked grave, his body lost to the ages.

# THE MAGIC FLUTE: MOZART'S MUSIC

***“He roused my admiration when I was young;  
he caused me to despair when I reached maturity;  
he is now the comfort of my old age.”***

(Gioacchino Rossini, composer of *The Barber of Seville*, speaking of Mozart)

How often have you used the term “classical” to describe any “old” music that is played by an orchestra or on a piano? This is an easy label used today to describe all traditional Western instrumental and vocal compositions. However, the term “classical” music specifically refers to an era of musical development which occurred from 1750–1820.

Mozart’s works are an example of music from the Classical period. After the Baroque era, which favoured “artificial” gestures in operas, elaborate contrapuntal\* music and restrained dynamics, Classical composers pursued simpler, more “natural” music. While Baroque composers wrote music to show off the vocal pyrotechnics of the performers, Classical composers wanted to capture raw human emotions like anger, love and sadness in their compositions, with more expressive variations in the melody (dynamics) and the speed of the music (tempo).

## WHAT WAS MOZART’S MUSICAL RECIPE FOR SUCCESS?

- ♦ homophonic textures (one clear melodic line and accompaniment)
- ♦ simpler melodies written in evenly structured phases allowing them to be easily recalled (like a catchy tune that is difficult to forget)
- ♦ the extensive use of the piano as a solo instrument
- ♦ simple two- or three-part forms in his music (playing the melody at the beginning of the music, changing the mood of the music in the middle and then repeating the melody again towards the end – what musicians call ABA sonata form)
- ♦ a focus on human, everyday-type characters in his operas

In his short lifetime, Mozart composed over 600 works including symphonies, piano sonatas, chamber music, choral masses, dances, concertos, art songs and operas. His legacy includes his ability to create a sense of lightness, simplicity and timelessness in his very sophisticated, complex and forward thinking musical style. The fact that his music still appeals to audiences today as it did over 250 years ago, makes it truly classical—in every sense of the word.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Ludwig von Köchel created a chronological catalogue of Mozart’s compositions (abbreviated as K or KV next to the title of the piece). With the discovery of new compositions this catalogue has been revised several times with the most recent sixth edition completed in 1964. *The Magic Flute* is catalogued as composition K. 620. Can you find out which famous Mozart opera is catalogued as K. 527?

\*Contrapuntal music is music where two or more separate voices that sound very different and move independently from each other are played simultaneously. The (often strict) set of rules by which composers create this type of music is called counterpoint, from which the term contrapuntal is derived.

# THE MAGIC FLUTE: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Original director Diane Paulus and the creative team suggest a strong sense of fun, playfulness and the whimsical nature of childhood stories in their production of Mozart's beloved classic. The overall production evokes the 18th century, but does not remain true to it. The costumes, staging, set pieces and props have been slightly contemporized to engage a modern audience in the music and story.

The concept for this production centres on a name day party. A young girl is celebrating her name day and her family and friends are invited to an evening celebration at the girl's residence. At this party the guests are entertained with an opera. The twist: the people themselves become the characters in the opera, blurring the lines between performer and audience.

Young girl.....	Pamina
Guest of the Tutor.....	Tamino
Father .....	Sarastro
Uncle .....	Monostatos
Aunt.....	Queen of the Night
Girl's cousins .....	Three Ladies
Head servant.....	Papagena
Head servant.....	Papageno
Girl's little brothers.....	Three Boys
Tutor .....	The Speaker
Servants.....	Animals, Priests, Queen of the Night's subjects

## SETTING

This storyline is set up during the Overture and the play-within-an-opera is performed on an 18th-century-like stage in the girl's garden. In Act I, the setting of the scene is shown through the use of 18th-century roll drops (a way of rigging backdrops for the stage) and props or small set-pieces on the stage in the garden. The whole opera takes place over the course of one night, beginning at evening and ending at dawn.

In Act II, the 18th-century stage is removed and the opera/play travels through the garden of the girl's residence. Moving the action off the stage and into the garden gives the impression of travelling deeper into the opera and storyline. As Tamino goes in search of Pamina, the hedges in the garden take the shape of a labyrinth. Throughout Act II the configuration of the labyrinth will continue to change as Tamino goes further and further into the temple to complete his trials. The trials of fire and water take place in the centre of the labyrinth.

The opera concludes with the play ending on the open patio of the garden at dawn. Everything is cleared except for a railing and outlining hedges. The movement



from a very dark, closed space to a large open and brighter space signifies the triumph of light over darkness.

It is all too tempting, being in the 21st century and with the advances in technology, to devise over-the-top stage effects for things like the thunder and lightening that are often associated with the entrance of the Queen of the Night. However, all effects and props are simplified so as to not overshadow the music and to adhere to the overall concept of 18th-century theatre.

## LIGHTING

Capturing light was very important in 18th-century theatre. Remember that back then theatres weren't equipped with large theatre lights to help set the scene or make the performers visible to the audience. Instead, candles and light reflecting off mirrors and other shiny objects provided the ambience to the story. Though *The Magic Flute* is performed in a modern opera house, watch out for 18th-century lighting techniques:

- ♦ Act I: candelabra from the house are brought into the garden to light the performance.
- ♦ Act II fire trials: the fire is symbolized through cut outs of fire pits with candles attached to the front.

- ◆ Some costumes and set pieces will be decorated with mirrors and shiny objects to help catch and reflect light to create mood and provide visibility.

### COSTUMES

The silhouettes of the costumes adhere to styles commonly found throughout the 18th-century, however colours and textures are more modern.

- ◆ Tamino is a young man coming of age and his costumes are more colourful to symbolize his youthfulness.
- ◆ Pamina is dressed in a light-coloured dress to help her stand out from the surroundings and demonstrate her good nature (in contrast to her mother's evilness).

- ◆ The Queen of the Night, Monostatos and the Three Ladies appear as a unified family through dark-coloured clothing, adorned with mirrors and shiny material, in a Persian or Turkish-like style.

- ◆ Sarastro is dressed in light-coloured pieces highlighting purity, wisdom, and virtuosity. Sarastro's elongated coat symbolizes his spirituality. The priests and the speaker are adorned in reds and golds.

- ◆ The servants are dressed in neutral 18th-century-like servant attire throughout the opera. When they transform into characters in the play or when they move set pieces around the stage, their servant costumes will be visible to the audience reminding us of the play-within-an-opera setting.

*Opposite: Lisa DiMaria as Papagena and Rodion Pogosov as Papageno.  
Below: Aline Kutan as the Queen of the Night with Isabel Bayrakdarian (kneeling) as Pamina.*



# FREEMASONRY

By Tamera Newberry

Mozart and Emanuel Schikaneder, the librettist, were both inspired to write *The Magic Flute* from their experience in the Masonic tradition.

Freemasonry is an all-male organization similar to a club or brotherhood. This tradition was established in the United Kingdom but has since spread throughout the world. The Freemasons are governed by a series of Grand Lodges, each in different regions, which authorize local clubs (called lodges). Each lodge has elected officers who run the club day-to-day. Meetings are held once a month and all members are expected to attend. The group's publicized occupation is to perform charitable work in their local community but much of the Masonic tradition is kept secret. There have been many rumours about the goals of their elite society and the benefits received by Freemasons. In fact, the brotherhood even has its own means of communicating through their secret handshakes, passwords and symbols.

The society of Freemasons is an exclusive club and in order to become a member there are a number of requirements that a candidate has to meet. First, they have to be of good character, with strong morals and an excellent reputation. They are investigated by the lodge before they are allowed to join. Candidates are required to have reached the age of maturity as dictated by their lodge. They have to be of sound mind and body, be free-born and pledge themselves to the lodge of their own free will. Each lodge has its own traditions, rituals and initiation rites that are developed and added to by each generation of Masons. Though the pledges are different at each lodge, there are a few characteristics that are consistent. A candidate has to pledge that they will follow the laws of their God (it doesn't matter what faith you are as long as you are not an atheist), the laws of their country, attend the lodge, not to harm the lodge in any manner and to help their fellow brethren and families in times of need.

**FUN FACT**  
The secrecy of the brotherhood was of such importance that in 1820, when a Mason threatened to reveal the secrets of his lodge, he mysteriously disappeared with no hint of his whereabouts.

There are three levels in the Masonic tradition distinguished by the level of learning a member has achieved:

1. *Entered Apprentice*—a candidate enters at this level.
2. *Fellow Craft*—an intermediate level where the mason has some knowledge but is still in the process of learning.
3. *Master Mason*—the final level of Masonry. This allows the members to participate in all ceremonies. Lodges may offer specialized courses to members of this classification but it will not change their status in the organization.

The rituals endured by Tamino initiated him into a brotherhood. Through this process, he became worthy to take Sarastro's place and to marry Pamina. This plot was inspired by Mozart's own struggle with rituals in the Masonic brotherhood to achieve Master Mason status. The connection to the Masonic tradition can also be heard in the music through the use of threefold repetitions (the number three is a common theme in Masonry ritual), and the consistent use of the key of E-flat, which Mozart used in his Masonic music and in the distinguished, stately but cheerful character that pervades the music.

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# THE MAGIC FLUTE: MASONIC TRADITION ACTIVITY

By Tamera Newberry

## TEACHER PROMPT

This activity could be done individually but may generate more ideas and excitement as a group activity.

## ACTIVITY

Now that you have read about the Masonic brotherhood, it's time to make your own society. Begin by outlining the common interests of the members in your society. Why have you come together? What is your purpose as a brother or sisterhood? What will you do together? Are there requirements to your society, dues to pay, rituals to participate in? Consider the following when creating your society:

- ♦ Common interests of members
- ♦ Goals of group
- ♦ Prerequisites for joining members
- ♦ Initiation rituals
- ♦ Hierarchy of members
- ♦ Type of government (democracy, autocracy, etc.)
- ♦ When do you meet?
- ♦ Rituals and traditions
- ♦ Openness or secrecy

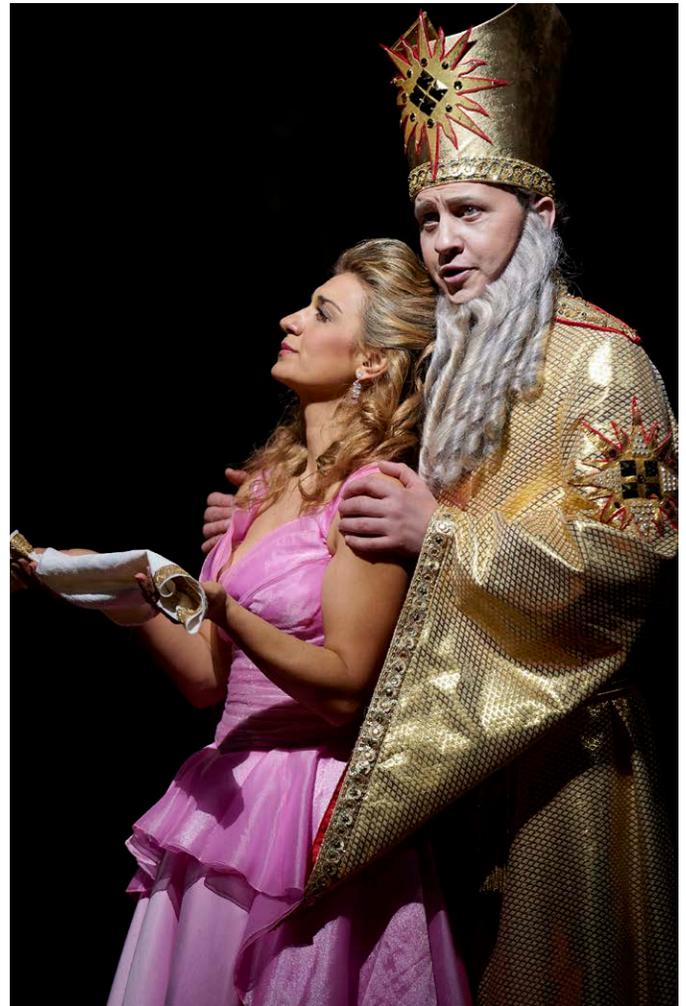
## FOLLOW-UP

Have students outline their societies to the class. Ask the students if there are any negative aspects of a society or a secret society. What are the positive aspects of rituals and traditions? What are some negative aspects? What if someone does not want to participate in a ritual? Are they still allowed to join your society? What are some issues that could arise from societies?

## TEACHER PROMPT

The follow-up discussion can be expanded to include themes of peer pressure, hazing, bullying and cliques that relate to your students lives. Allow the students to lead the discussion and prompt them to see the link between the Masonic theme in the opera and the social conventions of their own lives.

*Tamera Newberry is a former Queen's University, Artist and Community Education intern with Education and Outreach at the COC.*



*Isabel Bayrakdarian as Pamina and Mikhail Petrenko as Sarastro.*

# THE MAGIC FLUTE: SYMBOLISM IN OPERA

## DESCRIPTION

The activity will be designed for a language arts class, as there is a strong emphasis on symbolism in the opera. This lesson will be focusing on the topic of symbolism through an analysis of the main themes in the opera *The Magic Flute*.

## CRITICAL LEARNING

- ◆ Students will learn how symbolism can be shown through ways other than linguistic techniques
- ◆ Students will acquire a general understanding of the key aspects of opera
- ◆ Students will be able to take knowledge that they have gained from class lessons and integrate it into a creative exercise, therefore fostering critical thinking
- ◆ Students will improve their presentation skills and their ability to do successful group work

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ◆ How can symbolism be integrated into a work without the use of language?
- ◆ Are perceptions and/or interpretations surrounding symbolism always identical?
- ◆ How is symbolism integrated into the opera *The Magic Flute*?
- ◆ How can students transfer the symbolism that is in *The Magic Flute* to their own creative assignments?

## CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

- ◆ 1.7 - analyze oral texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, focusing on the ways in which they communicate information, ideas, issues, and themes and influence the listener's/viewer's response
- ◆ 2.1 - communicate orally for a range of purposes, using language appropriate for the intended audience
- ◆ 2.3 - communicate in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style effective for the purpose, subject matter, and intended audience

## DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

- ◆ Prior to attending the opera, have a period in the computer lab/resource centre so the students can do research on the story and main themes of *The Magic Flute*.

- ◆ Have a class discussion at the end of the period to ensure that all of the students have a general understanding of the story/main themes of the opera.
- ◆ This will allow the students to have some background before attending the opera.
- ◆ Provide them with a worksheet that they will be required to fill out, which will ask them to document the various ways that the main themes are symbolically shown in the opera.
- ◆ Divide the class into groups in the next class, and assign one of the main themes to each group.
- ◆ Ask the students to collaborate within their groups and come up with a list of ways that their theme is symbolically integrated into the opera.
- ◆ Have each group report back to the class through a discussion, which will allow students to see that interpretation is a key aspect of symbolism.
- ◆ Using the information on their symbolism sheets as a guide, have the students create visual or linguistic representations of the theme of their choice.
- ◆ Have the students write a two-page report on: what aspects of the opera were symbolic of their theme; and how does their representation symbolize the same theme.
- ◆ Lastly, have the students present their representation projects to the class.

## CONCLUDING ACTIVITY

- ◆ Symbolic Representation Assignment

## METHOD OF EVALUATION

- ◆ Teacher observations during class time (formative assessments)
- ◆ Symbolic Representation Rubric (summative evaluation)

## RESOURCES REQUIRED

- ◆ Listening examples of various operas
- ◆ Access to a computer lab/resource centre
- ◆ Introduction to *The Magic Flute* worksheet
- ◆ Symbolism in *The Magic Flute* chart
- ◆ Symbolic Representation Assignment sheet
- ◆ Symbolic Representation Rubric

# LESSON PLANNER FOR *THE MAGIC FLUTE*

## LESSON 1

(Day of the Performance):

- ♦ Bring in various listening examples of opera to familiarize the students with how it sounds
- ♦ Present a five-minute lecture on what an opera is
- ♦ Hand out the Introduction to *The Magic Flute* handout
- ♦ Allow the students to work on the handout in the resource centre
- ♦ Have the students finish the Introduction to *The Magic Flute* handout for homework
- ♦ Hand out the Symbolism in *The Magic Flute* chart and explain, but do not assign it

## LESSON 2

(Day after the performance):

- ♦ Have a class discussion to get student feedback on the performance
- ♦ Take up the Introduction to *The Magic Flute* handout
- ♦ Divide the class into groups and assign each of them one of the main themes
- ♦ Tell the students that they are to collaborate with their peers to complete their portion of the Symbolism in *The Magic Flute* chart
- ♦ Take up the Symbolism in *The Magic Flute* chart
- ♦ Assign the students the Symbol Representation project
- ♦ Allow for a question session in order to ensure that the students are on the right track

## LESSON 3

(Two days after the performance):

- ♦ Allow the students to work on their Symbolic Representation assignments
- ♦ Circulate throughout the class to answer any student questions
- ♦ Provide guidance to the students that are unsure about what they are going to do
- ♦ Have the students sign up for presentation dates (determined by the teacher)



*Isabel Bayrakdarian as Pamina and John Easterlin as Monostatos*

# INTRODUCTION TO *THE MAGIC FLUTE* (W. A. MOZART)

What were the years of Mozart's life? Based on this, what musical period was he active in?

List four characteristics of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart or his music.

When was this opera written? When was the first public performance?

Discuss the historical context of the story in *The Magic Flute*.

How was the historical context of the opera integrated into the plot?

List some of the main characters in the opera and the relationships that they have to one another. (Include their voice-types as well!)

Give a brief synopsis of one of the acts of *The Magic Flute*.

Based on your research, what are the main themes of the opera?

# SYMBOLISM IN THE MAGIC FLUTE

MAIN THEME	PROP EVIDENCE	STAGING/ CHOREOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE	PLOT EVIDENCE	MUSICAL EVIDENCE
Adventure				
Masonry: Good vs. Evil				
Enlightenment vs. Ignorance				
The Virtues of Knowledge, Justice, Wisdom and Truth				

# SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT

## OBJECTIVE

To demonstrate your understanding of symbolism, you are going to produce a piece that is symbolic of one of the main themes of *The Magic Flute*.

## CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

- ♦ 1.7 - analyze oral texts, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, focusing on the ways in which they communicate information, ideas, issues, and themes and influence the listener's/viewer's response;
- ♦ 2.1 - communicate orally for a range of purposes, using language appropriate for the intended audience;
- ♦ 2.3 - communicate in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style effective for the purpose, subject matter, and intended audience.

## INSTRUCTIONS

A. Using the symbolism worksheet as guide, pick the theme that is of interest to you or your group, and produce a symbolic representation of it in the most creative way possible. This can be a piece of artwork, a poem, a monologue, or any other form that symbolically represents your theme. If you are not using a form that is suggested, be sure to have it approved by the teacher.

B. Write a two-page report on your symbolic representation. Your report must include:

- ♦ a description of how your theme was symbolically represented in the production of *The Magic Flute*
- ♦ a summary of how your representation symbolizes the theme you have chosen.

C. Present your symbolic representation to the class:

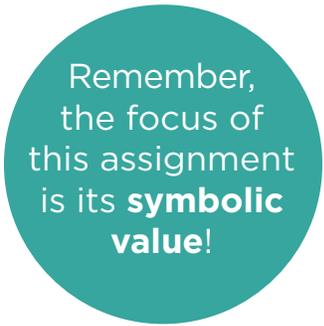
- ♦ Explain to the class the theme you chose and how it was symbolically represented in the opera, using examples from the four categories of the symbolism chart
- ♦ Present your project to the class (read your poem, explain your piece of artwork, act out your monologue, etc.)
- ♦ Explain how your representation is symbolic of the theme you chose

## CRITERIA

- ♦ Your representation should clearly symbolize the theme of your choice
- ♦ Your project should display a high degree of creativity
- ♦ Your representation should be original
- ♦ The analysis portion on your representation should demonstrate a high degree of critical thinking
- ♦ The quality of writing in your report should be reflective of a senior secondary university course
- ♦ Consult the checklist/self assessment and rubric for this assignment

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE HANDED IN

- ♦ Your symbolic representation
- ♦ Your two-page written report
- ♦ Your Symbolism in *The Magic Flute* chart



Remember,  
the focus of  
this assignment  
is its **symbolic**  
**value!**

# SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION RUBRIC

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CRITERIA	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	MARK ASSIGNED
<b>KNOWLEDGE/ UNDERSTANDING</b> Has the student demonstrated an understanding of the key concepts of symbolism in <i>The Magic Flute</i> ?	Student has completed the task with a limited understanding of key concepts.	Student has completed the task with some understanding of key concepts.	Student has completed the task with a considerable understanding of key concepts.	Student has completed the task with a thorough understanding of key concepts.	/10
<b>THINKING/ INQUIRY</b> Has the student thought about how their representation is reflective of a theme from the opera?	Critical thinking skills have been utilized with a limited amount of effectiveness.	Critical thinking skills have been utilized with some degree of effectiveness.	Critical thinking skills have been utilized with a considerable amount of effectiveness.	Critical thinking skills have been utilized with a high degree of effectiveness.	/5
<b>COMMUNICATION</b> Has the student clearly and creatively presented their analysis on their representation (written and oral)?	Written work is completed with a limited degree of clarity and creativity.	Written work is completed with some degree of clarity and creativity.	Written work is completed with a considerable degree of clarity and creativity.	Written work is completed with a high degree of clarity and creativity.	/10
<b>APPLICATIONS</b> Has the student applied knowledge from <i>The Magic Flute</i> chart, as well as class lessons on symbolism to the topic at hand?	Student has displayed a limited ability to connect the information from <i>The Magic Flute</i> chart and class lessons to their symbolic representation.	Student has displayed some ability to connect the information from <i>The Magic Flute</i> chart and class lessons to their symbolic representation.	Student has displayed a considerable ability to connect the information from <i>The Magic Flute</i> chart and class lessons to their symbolic representation.	Student has displayed a high degree of ability to connect the information from <i>The Magic Flute</i> chart and class lessons to their symbolic representation.	/5
<b>OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL:</b>					/30



## THE COC OFFERS A WIDE VARIETY OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 12.

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Canadian Opera Company

Tel: 416-306-2392  
Fax: 416-363-5584  
[education@coc.ca](mailto:education@coc.ca)

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*Above: Living Opera at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. Photo: Gillian Story*