

June 4, 2020 – Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*

On this week's Thursday Evening Opera House I'll be presenting everyone's favorite Mozart Singspiel, *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*). It was premiered on September 30, 1791 in Vienna's Theater auf der Wieden, which was operated by librettist Emanuel Schikaneder (the first Papageno). Mozart's penultimate opera, it is a fairy tale work overlaid with Masonic and humanist symbolism.

Three Ladies (soprano **Hildegard Hillebrecht**, mezzo-soprano **Doris Cvetka Ahlin**, contralto **Sieglinde Wagner**) save Prince Tamino (tenor **Fritz Wunderlich**) from a monster and give him a portrait of Pamina (soprano **Evelyn Lear**), daughter of their mistress, the Queen of the Night (soprano **Roberta Peters**). Tamino falls in love with Pamina's beautiful image, and the Queen charges him with rescuing her from the hands of the supposedly evil Sarastro (bass **Franz Crass**), the high priest of Isis. She gives him an enchanted flute to aid him through perils, and sends the bird catcher Papageno (baritone **Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau**) with him as a guide.

On arrival at the Temple of Isis, Tamino is told by the Speaker (bass-baritone **Hans Hotter**) that only truth and wisdom reside within, and Sarastro bids him enter and learn. Pamina, lusted after by Sarastro's Moorish slave Monostatos (tenor **Friedrich Lenz**), returns Tamino's love, and the two agree to undergo tests to prove their virtue and constancy. Papageno is also tested and even though he makes a poor showing, is rewarded with Papagena (soprano **Lisa Otto**). With the aid of the magic flute, Tamino and Pamina pass through the ordeals of fire and water. Sarastro gives Tamino the symbols of rule, and all celebrate the triumph of light over the powers of darkness, represented by the defeated Queen of the Night.

Karl Böhm conducts the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus in this 1964 Deutsche Grammophon recording, CD number 449749.

In the coloratura aria "Die Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen," the Queen of Night (**Diana Damrau**) and her daughter Pamina are having a disagreement concerning Pamina killing the Queen's enemy, Sarastro: <https://youtu.be/JzFi-7H9TKs>.

As a bonus, we'll hear excerpts from the first act of a 1937 recording of *Die Zauberflöte* featuring **Gerhard Hüsch**, **Helge Roswaenge**, and **Erna Berger**.

Next Thursday, June 11th, please join me for Mikhail Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. **Yevgeny Nesterenko** and **Bela Rudenko** sing the title roles. Heard in other principal roles are **Tamara Sinyavskaya** (Ratmir), **Boris Morozov** (Farlaf), **Alexey Maslennikov** (Finn), and **Galina Borisova** (Naina). **Yuri Simonov** conducts this 1996 recording.

The Thursday Evening Opera House is heard every Thursday evening at 7 o'clock in the Eastern time zone on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina. We're streamed online at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, or you can listen on WCPE's Android or iPhone apps.

Bob Chapman

W. Robert Chapman, Host of the Thursday Evening Opera House