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MOZART'S *THE MAGIC FLUTE*:  
STUDY GUIDE FOR UPPER  
AND LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS  
(AGES 11-19; USA MIDDLE SCHOOL  
AND HIGH SCHOOL)

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## STUDY GUIDE FOR UPPER AND LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

### INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended as a supplement to the publication of *The Magic Flute* [*Die Zauberflöte*] issued in the “Vox Imago” series by Electa/Musicom.it, sponsored by Intesa Sanpaolo.

It is in three parts:

- Part One offers ideas and introductory activities suitable for both levels of secondary schools.
- Part Two is aimed more specifically at lower secondary teachers (middle school).
- Part Three is for teachers of the upper secondary (high school).

The distinction between activities for both levels is not to be taken as mutually exclusive. Many activities suggested for the younger students will work for the older if they are made more complex, and many suggestions for the older students can be simplified for the younger.

It is probably unnecessary to point out to teachers the reason for an educational initiative such as this. Teachers already understand that the language of opera has enriched civilization for four centuries and continues to do so today, transmitting an extraordinary heritage of values—cognitive, emotional, ethical, and aesthetic—that are in no way inferior to those transmitted, for example, by contemporary spoken theater. The “massification” of taste, a vital interest of the consumer industry, tends to exclude individuals from access to forms of communication outside the norm—in our case, popular genres. That opera is one of these outliers is easily ascertained from popular taste. It is up to educational institutions to save the young from their destiny of ex-

clusion by giving them the opportunity to become acquainted with opera.

While verbal and the visual skills already receive considerable attention in education, opera’s chief characteristic—music—is well known to be overlooked in our educational system. Teachers face a challenging task: to overcome the prejudice that keeps the vast majority of adolescents out of the opera house.

The reasons have been stated many times<sup>1</sup> and can be traced back to a basic lack of familiarity with the linguistic code of opera, its rules of operation, and its conventions. Above all, in sharp contrast to spoken theater, music plays a leading role in heightening the message of the text: there is music that surrounds the words—orchestral music—and music that “fills out” the words by substituting song for speech. Furthermore, words in opera take second place to music to such an extent that if one were simply to read the libretto of certain operas, they would seem laughable. Music actually makes some librettos acceptable that would otherwise be forgotten or even ridiculed.

Music’s linguistic nature is still an undeveloped conception for students, who may have experienced it in the music they love without being able to understand it in opera. For them, music essentially functions as recreation: for play, amusement, enjoyment, or relaxation. This is how they are able to take in and enjoy a song or a short, catchy tune. To them, the very idea that opera can have the same effect (and the same goes for everything that does not belong to one of the popular genres), would seem ridiculous. They would not enjoy *The Magic Flute* the same way they would the latest hit show on television.

## PART ONE: ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES

**Introductory Activity:****A. Music as language**

For teens, the road to opera appreciation must begin with overcoming prejudice, starting with the realization that the music is not there just for fun or to entertain the listener, but to convey a message. Music is certainly a great source of enjoyment, but in opera it is primarily a means of communication that adds greater significance to the words than if they had been merely spoken. This is true not only in the theater, a place that students unfortunately rarely attend, but also in that most dominant medium—film, whether in the movie theater or through TV and related media.

**Activity 1. Comparison with film**

Cinema offers teachers an ideal opportunity to help students easily grasp music's communicative value in a production. No teen would laugh at the disturbing music that accompanies certain scenes in thrillers, such as Kubrick's *The Shining*. They will not find this "fun" or "entertaining," but they will also not dismiss it because they easily understand its expressive purpose. A carefully thought-out exploration of movie soundtracks, at least those with above-average music, can be a good introductory activity to the orchestral component of opera. As we will see, singing poses different problems and will require another kind of preparation, even though it is connected with orchestral music.

**Activity 2. From movie theater to opera theater**

Studying soundtracks helps students realize

the many functions music can have in a film: to anticipate a situation, lend a consistent expressive tone to a scene, function as an external commentary, recall past events, evoke times and places, describe a character, depict someone's state of mind, link different episodes, create breaks within a single episode, and so on. This leads to the obvious conclusion—these same functions are used in exactly the same way in opera, as listening to *The Magic Flute* will prove.

**Activity 3. Connections between music and image**

Here is an activity that extends and reinforces the previous one. Once students are ready to experience the expressive contribution that music makes to stage action, ask them to use their imaginations to match up a series of images with musical selections. Five or six images drawn from very diverse subjects would do, along with music of different genres and emotional content, from hard rock to a funeral march. Listen to the music twice: the first time to let the music sink in; the second time to make the final choices. At the end of the "game," review. You will be surprised by the variety of combinations the students will make. This is exactly what makes this exercise successful and raises their awareness. Each combination has its reason for being, and each deserves to be explored and understood. Even an idyllic scene combined with music for a catastrophe has its relevance; if anything, it is up to the others to interpret it.

**Activity 4. First encounter with Mozart**

The same exercise could now be carried out with the instrumental portions of *The Magic*

*Flute*, substituting, if desired, the images with verbal description of the scenes. It can be done after telling the students the original story, or even before that learn it. The plot, as well as the entire libretto, is included with this DVD.

We recommend these episodes, in their dramatic sequence:

1. A serpent chases Tamino (Act I, scene 1)
  2. Entrance of Papageno, the bird catcher (Act I, scene 2)
  3. Sarastro's palace (Act II, scene 1)
  4. The two armed men (Act II, scene 28)
  5. Arrival of Sarastro's enemies (Act II, scene 30)
- Now listen to the instrumental pieces that introduce those scenes, presented in a random order different from above, identifying the excerpts simply by their numbers. It may seem contradictory, but again no match is "wrong." A combination differing from Mozart's would indicate only a different interpretation of the scene, as a few words will make clear to the students.

Obviously, since we are interested in Mozart, we want to understand why Mozart chose (or created!) the music for the armed men that some student might have associated with the serpent—or perhaps with Papageno—clearly giving a very different meaning from Mozart's to one of the scenes. Listen to all of the pieces as many times as necessary. It is worth mentioning here the result of many scientific studies that confirm what common sense already tells us: our understanding of music increases with the number of repetitions. Listen several times to Mozart's orchestral passages (as we will do later with the vocal passages) to make them "nice" and familiar to the students, just like a song or a theme from a movie.

**Dual-Purpose Experiences**

The meanings that we come to ascribe to a piece of music are determined by its internal structure. The "what it says" of a piece depends on the "how it is made." Our efforts to interpret (to attribute meaning) are the more reliable the better they are based—are justified and explained—on intelligent observation of the organizational processes of musical discourse. It follows that teaching students "intelligent observation," or the analysis of the structural elements of music, is the way to foster more and more advanced skills to understand it.

*Organizational processes, structural elements, means of expression, form, meanings,* etc. These are various terms used in different schools of thought to designate the objectively identifiable dimensions of music, as opposed to the more subjective and intuitive kind of interpretation: the description of content, the attribution of meanings, etc.

Developing a student's comprehension of a certain type of music necessitates linking the two dimensions. It is hard to imagine a good outcome for teaching listening if one or the other is missing. To work on "meanings" without analyzing how meanings are communicated will only stifle the student's imaginative fantasy. Conversely, an exploration of the expressive means as an end in itself without reference to the semantic universe to which music belongs, like any other human creation, becomes a blind and sterile exercise in cataloging, no less misleading than the above-mentioned investigation into musical techniques.

**Activity 5. The nexus between interpretation and analysis**

The reciprocal relationship between the

meanings and forms of expression, the understanding of the nexus between interpretation and analysis, is thus the basic criterion for teaching listening. To start, set up a simple comparison between two different passages from *The Magic Flute*, for example, the first two suggested earlier for the matching exercise: the scene where the serpent attacks and the scene that introduces Papageno. Note the differences in terms of dynamics (*crescendo* in the first, *piano* in the second); tempo (*andante* versus *allegro*); melody (movement by leaps in the first, mostly stepwise in the second); rhythm (volatile and full of little pauses as if breathless versus regular). Finally, to grasp the subtleties: timbre or tone color (full orchestra in the first, but no flutes, clarinets, trumpets, timpani in the second—thus a dense texture versus a thinner one). *Dynamics, tempo, melody, rhythm, timbre*: these are the composer's handiest "tools of the trade," part of the toolkit all composers use to create their works, to tell the theatrical story, and at the same time to give musical voice to their inner worlds.

### Introductory Activity: B. The reasons for singing

Throughout its history, opera has also had its famous detractors, coming—understandably—from the noble class of the literati. Francesco Saverio Quadrio, Ludovico Antonio Muratori, Samuel Johnson, Joseph Addison, and Charles de Saint-Evremond all made fun of the fact that the characters in opera have to communicate with each other by singing instead of talking. Literary culture alone is apparently not enough to produce a cultured person. What those

writers lacked is the same we can easily see lacking in our students: an understanding of music's contributions to the drama in terms of semantics, communication, and expression. And not just instrumental music, but also—and above all—the music that fills the words and transforms speech into song. Song is a language in two dimensions—the verbal and the musical. Each interacts with each other, but independently; each follows its own rules, also independently but interacting with the other. Until students understand this concept, their approach to understanding opera will remain problematic. These introductory exercises will be helpful.

### Activity 6. The parameters of singing

The first activity helps students see how the way a phrase is sung changes the meaning of the phrase. While it can be difficult to find test cases within a single opera (comparisons from different operas, in which the same phrase could be sung, are also difficult to find), they can be easier to find in other repertoire, especially in sacred music, where there are thousands of settings of the liturgical prayers. German song repertoire [*Lieder*] offers opportunities: for example, "Der Erlkönig," the "Elf King" by Goethe.

More than a hundred composers, chief among them Schubert, have set in song the interaction between the elf king, the father, and the child. Each time Goethe's verse is set in a different way with a different semantic effect.

The students can have fun with a process the ancients called *contrafactum*, or *parody*, for they already understand how to change the words of a song while keeping

the same tune. Everyone can understand how the words of their national anthem, if sung to a pop tune, would have a very different meaning. This is a virtue, if we want to call it that, of the music.

Since no other composer has set the words of the Queen of the Night "Do not tremble, my beloved son" ["O zittre nicht, mein lieber Sohn"], why not give students a chance to do it if possible? There are infinite ways to sing it, and what really matters here is that you see how changing the melody, rhythm, dynamics, tempo—in sum, one or more of the same basic elements investigated in the previous preparatory activities—changes the very meaning of that phrase.

Christoph Willibald Gluck's reflection in this beautiful simile reinforces the awareness of how music can shape the meaning of a phrase: "With respect to the words, music must have the same function that color and skillful chiaroscuro have in design." As the choice of color can add a new "meaning" to the design, so the choice of one or another of the elements of musical language is decisive in determining the meaning of the words. The connections between spoken and sung text open up a particularly rich area for study.

Let us start with a crucial observation so often made by composers, beginning at least with Vincenzo Galilei: that the musical setting of words should take into account how those words would be spoken. Diderot put it concisely when he wrote, "Song is an imitation—using the sounds of an artfully invented scale—of the accents of passion. Its model is declamation. It is necessary to think of declamation [or the spoken text] as a line, and the singing as another line that

flows on top of it." The kernel of Diderot's concept is in the "artfully invented scale," for it is here that we find the specificity of musical language. While speech unfolds along a continuum of sound, song picks out a *discrete* gradation of sounds along this continuum—exactly what a "scale" means. Each educational experience in *prosody*, that is, training in controlling the various parameters of speech (intonation or melody, speed or tempo, intensity or dynamics, rhythm, pauses, tone of voice) becomes not only an experience that merits an appropriate opportunity in school, on which we can only spend a minimal amount of time here,<sup>2</sup> but would be a springboard to access the semiotic universe of song. Suffice it to recall Cicero's words, "Est autem in dicendo quidam cantus obscurior:" there is, however, a somewhat hidden singing quality in speech. A basic rule applies as much to the music of speech as to song: the more an emotion inflames a character's voice, the greater the range from low to high, the intensity is strong or highly volatile, the timbre is harsh and forced, and so on. At the other extreme, a monotone voice, kept to a level between *piano* and *mezzo piano*, with a steady motion and a light tone, is indicative of restrained emotion, indifference, coldness, callousness, and so on.

### Activity 7. Expressing emotions

At a minimum, try this basic experiment with prosody: have the students read a few lines from the libretto; the first time as if in a rage, then again as if deeply depressed. Each time ask them to describe "what it was about the sound" that changed.

To introduce the two following educational

activities for comparing spoken and sung words, here is a quote from Ranieri de Calzabigi, Gluck's librettist: "I thought that the only appropriate music for dramatic poetry, especially for dialogue and the so-called 'arie d'azione' [action-driven arias], is the one that comes closest to natural declamation—animated, energetic—and that the declamation itself is nothing but imperfect music; that you could transcribe it if we had enough symbols to indicate the many tones, inflections, outbursts or words of consolation, varied shades; an infinite number, so to speak—as many as the speaking voice can make. Is not music—when set to any type of verse—nothing more than a most skillful, closely observed declamation enhanced by the harmony of its accompaniments."

### **Activity 8. Transform a spoken phrase into song**

Follow these steps. Make a recording of the results each time:

- choose a phrase from the libretto to set to music. For example, "Let us hurry to our Queen;"
- decide how the character who sings those words would feel, which will tell you the "tone of voice" he or she would use;
- experiment with different interpretations;
- follow the model by Calzabigi/Diderot: using simple dashes, transcribe the rise and fall of the vocal line;
- while recording, try different ways to sing the phrases spontaneously while following the diagram with the dashes and using an appropriate tone of voice;
- listen to the recordings and choose what sounds best; if necessary, make some adjustments to create a definitive version.

### **Activity 9. Transform Mozart's melody into speech**

We will do this by reversing the previous steps:

- listen to the melody numerous times;
- transcribe the rise and fall of the melody with corresponding lines;
- find different ways to recite the lines following the line diagram.

### **Two Strategies**

To prepare the students to see *The Magic Flute*, the teacher can use two simple strategies.

In simplest terms:

- A. start from the opera. Explain the plot, read the libretto, and listen while commenting on the most significant and interesting aspects. This is the most traditional and customary strategy.
- B. arrive at the opera. Get to know it in its entirety after conducting a series of activities *about* opera. At the beginning of a process of this kind, which draws on the students' creativity, *The Magic Flute* can be thought of as a "course materials packet" that you can use for different kinds of educational purposes.

With the older students we focus mainly on the first strategy. For younger students, mainly on the second. Here is some methodological background information to describe the second strategy.

The first criterion is to *combine listening with doing*. Students are invited to sing and play parts of the composition, to read the text of the libretto aloud, to envision acting and stage direction, and to invent their own alternatives to the story line, the words—even to Mozart's music.

The second criterion is to *take advantage of every opportunity to compare*, especially between the students' creations and the originals by Mozart and/or Schikaneder.

The third criterion involves letting students *make their own discoveries*—as much as possible—about those aspects we want them to learn. We teachers should limit ourselves as much as possible to posing questions to students—it is up to them to answer after having listened carefully to the music. In other words, we have them learn by doing as much as possible.

## **PART TWO: ACTIVITIES FOR THE LOWER SECONDARY OR MIDDLE SCHOOL**

### **Activity 10**

The overture (CD 1, No. 1) to the opera could provide an opportunity for the students to create a prequel. What might have happened in the realms of the Queen of the Night or Sarastro before the curtain rises? Why is the Queen so hostile to Sarastro? Why did Sarastro kidnap Pamina? Why are these two contending over Pamina? Where does Tamino come from? And Papageno? The main point to emphasize with the students is that they should coordinate what they are inventing with the music of the overture. An initial hearing will help them to understand the four principal movements into which it is divided: the solemn *adagio* introduction, the *allegro* ending at bar 96, the development beginning with the statement of the chords, and the recapitulation starting in bar 144. Everyone should listen to the overture together for the first time. Then have the students work in small groups of

not more than five, inviting them to discuss their ideas quietly. Finally, have the groups report their results, paying particular attention to how their ideas have been suggested by the music.

### **Activity 11**

The same activity can be useful for an acting exercise, rather than a verbal one. In this case, the groups can be larger. Each group will interact with the others in a pantomime. The less outgoing students might take on different jobs: stage director, stage designer, lighting designer; most importantly, someone in charge playing the musical cues, etc.

### **Activity 12**

This one is more complex and requires more time. Without telling the story of *The Magic Flute*, list the characters with only a minimum of description for each. Working again in groups, the children are asked to invent their own plot for the opera. Mozart's overture could be played in the background without being identified, having nevertheless an effect on the imagination of the students without their being aware of it. Each time is a new way of hearing, making Mozart far less removed than when we began working.

### **Activity 13**

Tell the story up to a certain point: for example, until the moment when Tamino and Papageno are about to enter Sarastro's kingdom. Let the students try to come with as many possible endings. In groups. Will Pamina get fed up with Sarastro? Will the Queen succeed in getting her back? Will

the two rulers rediscover feelings for each other? And Papageno? And Monostatos? Compare the different endings and then listen to the original ending. Which one do the students prefer?

#### Activity 14

This is an application and an extension of Activity 7. Look at a few selected lines of the libretto to see how the prosodic parameters affect the meaning of the lines themselves. Start with dynamics—the intensity of the vocal sound. How will Tamino use his voice after the frightening encounter with the serpent (CD 1, No. 3)? Shouting, still scared? Softly, as if awakening from sleep? *Where am I? Am I dreaming that I'm still alive? Or did some higher power save me? What's that sound? Where am I? What is this strange place?*

More generally, who speaks loudly during the opera? Who speaks quietly, even whispering if necessary?

#### Activity 15

And now for tempo, or speed. The first time, say Monostatos's lines slowly; the next time quickly: *All nature feels the joy of love, to bill and coo, flirt, snuggle, and kiss, and I am supposed to miss out on all this, because a black man is ugly?* Try to describe the difference between fast and slow versions. Afterward listen to Mozart's solution (Act II, scene 7; CD 2, No. 3).

#### Activity 16

Finally, on to timbre [tone color]. For example, take the opening scene of the three ladies:

*Let us hurry to our Queen to give her this*

*news. Maybe this handsome man can restore her peace of mind.*

First lady: *So go and tell her. I'll wait here in the meantime.*

Second lady: *No, no, you two should go. I'll watch over him!*

Third lady: *No, no that won't do. I'll guard him on my own.*

If we assign different timbres to the three ladies, we get three different ways for them to interact with each other: if the second lady uses a forceful tone, the third might answer with a comic nasal timbre. Many other possibilities exist to help communicate the expressive value of this element.

#### Activity 17

The most critical phase of this exercise in prosody concerns the melodic element. *The revenge of hell boils in my breast*, cries the Queen of the Night in her famous aria (CD 2, No. 5). How would her state of mind change if we declaim everything descending, or vice versa, ascending?

In each of the previous activities it is not only important to let the children experience the semantic potential of these parameters for themselves, but also to be aware of Mozart's actual choices for those same phrases and what meaning they have. In other words, after creating personal responses, always compare with Mozart.

#### Activity 18

This is a more complex and long-term activity. This will teach the students, as Calzabigi suggested, some basic criteria for transcribing prosodic elements, especially intensity, speed, and pitch.

To describe speed, musicians make do with adjectives or adverbs: *lento, adagio, moderato, allegro, presto*.

To change the speed, they write *accelerando* or *rallentando*.

For intensity they use *pianissimo, piano, mezzo-forte, forte, fortissimo*; they also use just the abbreviations: *pp, p, mf, f, ff*. For the *crescendo* (changing gradually from *piano* to *forte*), they use the sign <; for the *diminuendo* (changing gradually from *forte* to *piano*), the sign >.

To choose a melodic contour (a series of pitches), have students try an intuitive method: write dots above the words. The higher you want the sound to be, the higher you write them, and the lower the sound you want, the lower you write them. Or have them draw lines that move from low to high or from high to low. Scholars who study prosody use this method. It is also the basis of *neumes*, which have evolved to become the notes on staff lines. If we apply these symbols to the libretto of the opera, we will have a kind of *prosodic score*.

#### Activity 19

Here we make the students aware of the emotional essence of a piece. Have them listen to some with the task of ranking them on an “emotional scale,” for example from the saddest to the happiest.

Work with these—just the opening phrases (of all of the songs or just a few):

“Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja” (Papageno; CD 1, No. 4)

“Zum Leiden bin ich auserkoren” (Queen of the Night; CD 1, No. 8)

“Es lebet Sarastro” (Chorus; CD 1, No. 17)

“Nun stolzer Jüngling” (Monostatos; CD 1, No. 17)

“O Isis und Osiris” (Sarastro; CD 1, No. 20)

“Ach ich fühl's” (Pamina; CD 2, No. 11)

“Bald prangt, den Morgen zu verkünden” (the three boys; CD 2, No. 17)

“Der, welcher wandert diese Straße” (the two armed men; CD 2, No. 18)

The fact that the opera is sung in German is not an obstacle for the preceding activities. In fact, it can be useful—the choices made by the children are free because are not influenced by the words (unless they know the language, of course).

A rule for this game: do not expect an univocal answer. Feelings are different from child to child. Each has a different reaction to the music; each has a different “emotional map.” This does not mean you should avoid discussing the answers. On the contrary—communicating children's emotional reactions to a musical piece might be useful in helping them focus their interpretations by urging a comparison between their own and those of their classmates.

This activity allows (and encourages) a review of the beginning analysis practice suggested in Activity 5. Be sure to ask the question: what elements of the music motivated your interpretation of that particular song?

#### Activity 20

Examine the emotional changes within a single aria: Papageno's second aria, “Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen” (CD 2, No. 16). Have the students draw two outlines of Papageno's face on a piece of paper. In the first outline they will draw Papageno's face, indicating his emotional state in the first part of the aria (in 2/4). Do the same for the second outline for the next part (in 6/8). Finally, compare everyone's drawings: it is another chance to

reflect on the emotion of the music, to listen to the song, and to sing it together.

### Activity 21

Divide the class into groups of five. Each group reads the dialogue for one of the scenes on its own, for example the following:

TAMINO

How did you defeat that monster? You don't have any weapons.

PAPAGENO

I don't need any! The only weapons I need are these two hands.

TAMINO

So you strangled it?

PAPAGENO

Strangled!  
(*to himself*)  
I've never been stronger in my life.

THE THREE LADIES

(*threatening and calling out together*)  
Papageno!

TAMINO

Who are these ladies?

PAPAGENO

Really, I'm not sure who they are...

FIRST LADY

(*gives him a beautiful flask of water*)  
In exchange for your birds, our Queen gives you today for the first time pure water instead of wine.

SECOND LADY

And she ordered me do bring you this rock instead of cake. I hope you like it.

PAPAGENO

What? I'm supposed to eat rocks?

THIRD LADY

And instead of sweet figs, I have the honor of filling your mouth with this golden padlock.

Each group invents a *tableau vivant*, a living picture: the five characters are frozen in the attitudes and expressions that each group feels fits the scene. Afterward, listen to the scene.

### Activity 22

An activity for "advanced manipulation." Give students the texts (or summaries) for a few scenes sung in the opera. Then listen to the corresponding excerpts on the CD without telling the students which text belongs to the excerpts they are hearing. Since they are sung in German, the students will have a difficult time figuring this out. Their task is to connect the texts with the music, being guided by the *mood* that they hear created for the words and by the *meaning* they expect the words to have.

### Music to sing and play

*The Magic Flute* is a treasure trove of scenes that our students can sing and play in part, beginning with Papageno's two arias by and the chorale for the two armed men, as well the numbers Mozart wrote specifically for the voices of the three *Knaben* [boys].

### Activity 23

Here are the two most famous parts for Pa-

pageno: "Der Vogelfänger" ("I am a man of wide-spread fame") and "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" ("I'd give my finest feather") in the English version by Ruth & Thomas Martin (CD 1, No. 4; CD 2, No. 16).

1. I am a man of wide-spread fame,  
And Papageno is my name.  
To tell you all in simple words  
I make my living catching birds.  
The moment they attract my eye  
I spread my net and in they fly.  
I whistle on my pipe of Pan  
In short I am a happy man.

2. Although I am a happy man,  
I also have a future plan;  
I dearly love my feathered friends  
But that's not where my interest ends.  
To tell the truth I'd like to find  
A pretty girl of my own kind  
In fact I'd like to fill my net  
With all the pretty girls I've met.

3. Once all the girls were in my net  
I'd keep the fairest for my pet  
My sweetheart and my bride-to-be  
To love and cherish tenderly.  
I'd bring her cake and sugar plums  
And be content to eat the crumbs.  
She'd share my little nest with me  
A happier pair could never be.

1. I'd give my finest feather to find a pretty  
wife.  
Two turtledoves together, we'd share a  
happy life.  
We'd share a happy life, we'd share a happy  
life.  
And happily then ever after they'd frolic in  
gladness and laughter,

And all of their dreams would come true,  
their life would be heaven for two.  
They'd frolic in gladness and laughter—  
And all of their dreams would come true,  
their life would be heaven for two;  
Would be heaven for two, would be heaven  
for two.

2. I'd give my finest feather to find a pretty  
wife.  
Two turtledoves together, we'd share a  
happy life.  
We'd share a happy life; we'd share a happy  
life.

With no one to give him affection, he's  
swimming in hopeless dejection.  
But all that he needs is a kiss to put him in  
heavenly bliss.  
But all that he needs is a kiss  
To put him in heavenly bliss, to put him in  
heavenly bliss;  
In heavenly bliss, in heavenly bliss.

These songs can provide the impetus for a series of activities or games that will be useful—beyond having fun, which is sometimes good, even in school—to learn more about the songs themselves.

### Activity 24

The students arrange themselves in a circle. The first begins to sing "I am a man of widespread fame." The next one continues with the second line: "And Papageno is my name." And so it goes on, with everyone singing a line. When you reach the end, start all over again. Anyone making a mistake is out of circle. The last one remaining wins. This exercise can be repeated with the other songs.

**Activity 25**

A student chooses one of the pieces and sings it on “la la la.” A classmate must sing it with the right words.

**Activity 26**

The teacher (or a student) sings one of the songs with one wrong note on purpose. The other students should underline the syllable in the libretto on which the error occurred.

**Activity 27**

The teacher sings only the first few notes of a song. The students should be able to continue on. Then the teacher sings the same beginning notes, but this time with a

different tonality—in other words, another key. The students should be able to continue in the new key.

**Activity 28**

This is an old school activity that has been revived again in recent years: adding rhythmic accompaniment by a small percussion group to music played on a CD. We can apply it to some excerpts from *The Magic Flute*.

Here is a short example: the first eight bars from Act II (CD 1, No. 18). You can accompany this melody, as well as the rest of the piece, with whatever instruments you have.

**Marcia**

W.A. Mozart

**Andante**

The musical score for 'Marcia' by W.A. Mozart is presented in three systems. Each system includes a vocal line in treble clef and three percussion parts: Tamburello, Legnetti, and Piatto sosp. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked 'Andante'. Dynamics include 'p' (piano). The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number (1, 5, 8). The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a vocal line and accompaniment. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system concludes the excerpt with a final cadence.



Teachers can come up with more examples on their own. The main value of this practice is that the students should experience the rhythm with real music, rather than through the dry abstractions of solfège exercises or in rhythm exercises that are musically meaningless. This helps them become sensitive to the phrasing and the formal articulation of the music. For example, try alternating timbres or rhythms from one phrase to another in the piece you are accompanying. This will also improve listening skills and musical memory. A few practice sessions will lead students to *listen actively* to music—any music. The songs you sing as a group may also be accompanied by the rhythm band.

### Activity 29

Every kind of music has its own *rhythmic profile*, which is the result when we hear only the durations of sounds without their melodic contours. This concept can be explained easily to the students: imagine that they have laryngitis one day but still want to perform a song. Could they sing it *with their hands*? Maybe so—“to sing with their hands” means to clap or tap all of the sounds that make up the song in rhythm.

Have them perform the rhythmic profiles of the previous songs with their hands (or with a percussion instrument), as well as other excerpts that they already know from *The Magic Flute* (or alternatively, from other well-known songs).

This activity has several variants:

- One student performs a rhythmic profile without giving its title. Whoever recognizes it gets to take the next turn, and so on.
- The teacher has the students hear the

rhythmic profiles of five excerpts in random order. The students must put them in the correct order.

- Each rhythmic profile could be executed as a canon for two voices. For example, with the rhythmic profile of “I am a man of widespread fame,” the second voice enters when the first voice begins the second measure—or the third. Use different timbres for the two voices. For example, tambourine for the first voice; triangle for the second.

For students who can read music: write the rhythmic profiles on the board and perform them *backwards*, going from the last note to the first. In this case, of course, the result will be different from the original profile.

Play around with intensity. For example:

- start with everyone playing *pianissimo*, getting louder little by little (make a *crescendo*) and finish *fortissimo*.
- start *fortissimo* and end *pianissimo*.
- make sudden contrasts between *pianissimo* and *fortissimo*.

One group of students keeps the beat, while another articulates the rhythm. At a cue from the teacher they switch parts.

Without losing tempo, one student after another articulates the rhythmic profile of the first two measures. Try not to stop during the excerpts! At the end, is the phrase the same tempo as it was at the beginning? Keep going with other rhythmic excerpts.

### Create a Production

The most ambitious project that we could possibly develop around *The Magic Flute*

at school is for the students to mount their own production. There are basically two ways of doing this: the first follows Mozart and Schikaneder’s opera; for the second, the students use *The Magic Flute* as a starting point to invent their own production. Here in Part Two we will look at the first way. In Part Three, which is geared to the older students, we will outline the second. You can easily see how you could either enrich the activities from Part Two or simplify the activities from Part Three to make them useful for your students.

### Activity 30

The most obvious way—but not less valuable or effective—is to stage an abridged version of the libretto, selecting the most important events and stitching them together, for example, with a narrator. Assign the parts, not only for the characters but also for the technical jobs: mimes, set designers, costume designers, lighting technicians, directors, etc.

Perform the original dialogues in English unless the students are studying German. It is especially important to perform the arias because they are the high points of the performance.

The acting may be assigned to different groups that operate in parallel. In each group a student can play one or more parts. You could also act out one long scene. Or you may decide that each group of students will perform certain parts of the libretto. In this case the result will be a collage of various scenes performed by the students (there would be several Papagenos, Queens of the Night, etc.)

The show will be all the more Mozartian if

there could be sung episodes along with the spoken ones: Papageno’s two arias, for example, could be learned by everyone. The result will really be a *Singspiel*!

Studying the libretto in order to play the parts will help clarify the meanings. At the same time, discuss the characters and their personalities. How do we imagine them? Finally, how would they say their lines from the libretto? For example, when Tamino awakens and says, “Where am I? Am I dreaming that I’m still alive? Or did some higher power save me?”

Do not forget gestures. How will the characters use gestures along with their lines? Each person can describe theirs, and the group will benefit from the most interesting observations. Gesture, movement, stage action, and the utilization of space merit careful consideration and should not be left to chance.

When it comes to extravagant gestures, students do not need lessons from anyone. However, they can easily become inhibited when it comes to accompanying their lines with gestures. Get them going in several ways, starting with the most obvious—that a gesture can simply reinforce the significance of a word, as when we exclaim, “Look!” and point with an index finger. In this case, we call it the *convergence* of word and gesture. Find phrases in the libretto that call for particular gestures and have the students practice *convergence*.

Now work on *divergence*: when the gesture communicates something different from what we say with words. If you exclaim, “Look!” while you cover your face with your hands, or put your fists on your hips and tap your foot, or squint up at the sky, or else

scratch your head—each time the gesture adds something, and the message you send is richer and more articulate.

In both of the preceding cases, the gesture and the word are simultaneous. If we want to make our expressive palette more colorful, we can make use of *time*. I can still say “Look!” and then point my finger (convergence). But if the gesture anticipates or follows the word, this temporal displacement of gesture and word can be divergent. *First* put your fists to your hips, and *then* say “Look!” or vice versa.

When one character argues with another, the sense of argument is very different if the two stand at a distance rather than face to face. Add this new concept to our previous skits.

### Adding Music to the scenes

An opera is like a “soundtrack” for a play. Having the students add sound to their dialogues in *The Magic Flute* is a way for them to retrace the composer’s journey, even in a rudimentary way, thus bringing them closer to the compositional process. Adding sound requires not only special techniques; it also requires an awareness of the expressive possibilities of music and sound. This is where we see the importance of working from the beginning to make students aware of the narrative functions of music in a production.

### Activity 31

Adding instrumental commentary can be done in two ways. First, using existing music, choose among the instrumental pieces that Mozart used in his opera, beginning with the overture (but if you want, you can

use other instrumental music by Mozart). It is essential that the choice of excerpts be made by the students themselves, rather than by the teacher. It will be interesting to compare students’ various choices, which will correspond to their differing interpretations of the dialogues. Have the students listen attentively to the opera, comparing the way they made use of a musical excerpt with Mozart’s original.

### Activity 32

The second way to add sound works well when the teacher has already been working with instruments and other ways of making sound. Have the students create their own “soundtrack” using sounds and noises of all kinds.

The excerpts can be added into the text in several ways:

- as a prelude: start with the music and then continue with dialogue;
- as an interlude: put the music between two pieces of dialogue;
- as a postlude: start with dialogue and then continue with the music;
- as counterpoint: music and dialogue are simultaneous.

### Activity 33

In a music school, the project can be more fully developed. We can have a small orchestra. Many passages in Mozart’s score are adaptable, and each passage is potentially adaptable for our orchestra.

We are unable to recommend particular adapted scores in this guide because every school has different instrumental offerings. Each school must seek out a resourceful col-

league who can take on the task of adapting Mozart to whatever instrumentation is available to the beginning orchestra.

### PART THREE: ACTIVITIES FOR UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL OR HIGH SCHOOL

With older students we can delve into deeper reflections on the ethical values dealt with in Mozart’s opera. In this opera the conflict between good and evil seems to be embodied by Sarastro and the Queen of the Night. But is that really how things stand? Could the benevolent ladies who save Tamino have evil tendencies? It is not always easy to distinguish good from evil, truth from falsehood, violence from the struggle to be free, noble love from untamed passion, etc. These are questions that continue to occupy the commentators on *The Magic Flute*.

The most widely accepted interpretation of this opera is discussed in the essays contained in this DVD, which the teacher may assign students to read: “Behind the innocent guise of the fairy tale stands an ethical message that rewards perseverance, protects virtue, and determines a just reward for the righteous who have suffered” (Livio Aragona). “At the heart of Schikaneder’s fairy tale is the enlightened initiation of an innocent” (David Buch). To be able to control one’s own emotions before being able to teach others. Going deeper into the scholarship, some reflection on Mozart’s opera would acquaint students with the important subject of Freemasonry, with its emphasis on initiation and mysteries, but, far more important than outward appearances, with humanitarian ideals, of “the struggle

against ignorance and superstition, universal brotherhood, and the search for the light of truth” (Mario Marcarini). These are the ideals of the Freemasonry to which Mozart subscribed and to which he dedicated several other works.

The excesses, and in some ways the absurdities, of the story of *The Magic Flute* are indeed interpreted by its commentators as a toll that the user must pay to move towards the unknowable: “that absurdity is the pivot around which the entire plot turns is made clear, first, by the [various] types of characters... by the variety of exotic requirements... by the presence of initiates or the evocation of demons. The plot is full of recognitions, apparitions, kidnappings, oaths, omens, secrets, revenge, covenants, initiation rituals, the solving of enigmas. As for the settings, the text speaks of temple..., forest, garden, grotto, cave, waterfall, castle, mountain. To the four elements (air, water, earth, fire) are added at the stars, the sun and moon, wind, lightning and thunder, day and night. The animals called for are birds, serpents, and lions, while gold and silver predominate among the metals. Finally, there are objects, strongly emblematic symbols of meaning: portrait, throne, cage, padlock, chain, hood, veil, columns, pyramids, dagger, chalice, wine, roses, palms, flying machines” (Alberto Basso).

The whole libretto is usually interpreted in the light of Masonry. But the music of Mozart? Among his interpreters there are those who have even gone so far as to interpret every feature of the score as a symbol of a Masonic ritual, as did the French author Jacques Chailley in his book, *La flute enchantée - Opéra maçonnique* [*The Magic*

*Flute: Masonic Opera*], (Paris, Laffont, 1983). This reading is rejected by the majority of interpreters. This could be the basis for an interesting discussion on the *limits of interpretation*, to quote Umberto Eco, but perhaps such a sophisticated topic is best left to more specialized scholars than those in secondary schools.

Whatever his symbolic intentions may have been, Mozart's musical powers make them pale in comparison to the intensity of expression of each aria, duet, ensemble, chorus, instrumental prelude, or interlude. It is a miracle that puts to rest the controversy over the Masonic symbolism and its allegorical contents, just as the *Divine Comedy* with respect to its poetry.

### Precedents

Livio Aragona's essay, along with the other contributions to the DVD and the book in their different ways invite us to consider—even before beginning our musical investigations—an issue that is more current in our educational tradition: *sources*.

### Activity 33

By way of introduction, we pose a question that lies at the heart of study of a different genre: Ernest Gombrich's *Art and Illusion*. Restate it as a broad-based question for the students: "In order to become a painter, what we must learn to see?" The students' answers are predictable: reality, nature, objects, etc. But it will be rather more difficult for them to arrive at the basic truth that Gombrich brings to light in his book: "We must learn to see how other artists have painted."

This concept is not drawn out of thin air, or

even based on the evidence of culture. It is created in a personal way out of the principles, content, methods, and techniques that past generations have gradually accumulated and made available to posterity. Mozart could not have existed had it not been for Monteverdi, Bach, Gluck, and others. The story itself as constructed by Schikaneder is no less than the culmination of a long line, well-illustrated in the essays on the DVD, which can serve as a guide for an exploration of the notion of culture itself, and ultimately, the reason the students themselves are sitting in our classrooms. Why? We human beings are, so to speak, "a hodgepodge of precedents"—intellectually, emotionally, physically, and so on—thanks to our "precedents"—in other words, to culture, in its broadest sense.

These precedents are but the gift of past generations put at our disposal for our use and enjoyment, that they may enrich us as human beings. Provided we know how to use them, we can make them our own. The alternative is to live like a Tarzan, lacking the tools that would enable us to belong to human society. This is why students come to school—to learn about the vast universe of "precedents." And this is why there *is* a school.

### Baroque and Classic-Romantic Forms

Let us now leave Schikaneder's libretto, with the legion of literary precedents upon which he may have drawn, and move on to the musical details and their undeniable precedents. The *strategy of comparison* suggested in Part One guides the next activity, which concerns some of the essential characteristics of *The Magic Flute* and is

well documented in the essays in the book and DVD. Because the activities that follow offer a comparison between *The Magic Flute* and other operas, we will also need materials from other sources.

### Activity 34

In the same year that Mozart wrote *The Magic Flute*, he also composed *La clemenza di Tito*. It is a return to the genre of grand *opera seria* by Metastasio: what matters here is to grasp the homogeneous nature of the psychological atmosphere that pervades the whole work. Just hearing the opening bars of the most famous arias will be enough to make it obvious. Have the students compare it to the beginnings of various excerpts from *The Magic Flute* to hear the mix of genres used by Mozart: at one extreme the solemnity of trials of the initiates, designed to purify their souls and lead them to a better understanding of true human values; at the other extreme, the clowning of Papageno and Papagena, the wild outbursts of Monostatos, and the loving tenderness that connoisseurs of Mozart's operas will recall from *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*. It is this multiplicity of genres that has led scholars to offer opposing interpretations of the score of *The Magic Flute*: is it Masonic ritual or a fairy tale, a dream, or the clowning typical of a *Maschinen-Komödie* ["machine theater," in which marvels are depicted on stage by means of stage apparatus to the delight of the lower classes], etc.

### Activity 35

Now we approach our study of the stylistic variety found in *The Magic Flute*. The splen-

did aria "Non più di fiori vaghe catene" sung by Vitellia in *La clemenza di Tito* is a typical example of an eighteenth-century aria; it exhibits a thoroughly typical procedure: the continual repetition of phrases (an even more famous example is the famous "Ombra mai fu" from Haendel's *Serse* [*Xerxes*]). There is nothing of this type in *The Magic Flute*: almost every aria unfolds without phrasal repetition from beginning to end. Emanuele Senici adds an observation that is part of a broader theme that students can follow: "... this antiquated genre [is] aligned with the aristocracy, while the dynamic one is labeled an expression of the middle classes."

### Activity 36

The repetition of a melodic formula is only one aspect, obvious even to a student, of an expressive choice that is more complex and far more significant. This simplification, which contrasts with the varied spectrum of emotions in *The Magic Flute*, puts *La clemenza di Tito* in the same class with the single-emotion arias from the baroque operas by Alessandro Scarlatti and Haendel (see again Emanuele Senici). This appears in opera as well as the instrumental repertoire and is a major difference between the music of the Baroque and the Classical and Romantic styles.

In every Baroque scene, the character's music reveals his or her state of mind: it remains constant from the beginning to the end of the scene (albeit a relative constancy because the musical discourse continues). In scenes of the Classic and Romantic theater, the principle of *contrast* applies: states of mind are changeable. They are not so much "states" as "emotional impulses." The im-

pulses are sometimes barely perceptible, sometimes extreme. We experience this extreme mutability at the beginning of the opera: from Tamino's cry for help while being pursued by the serpent to the overt ogling of the three ladies. The most recognizable change is the psychological evolution of the most disturbing character in the opera, the Queen of the Night, in her aria "O zittre nicht" ["Do not tremble, my beloved son"] (CD 1, No. 8). Review Activity 6 to reinforce the understanding of this concept.

This is an important idea for the students to learn from *The Magic Flute*: the range of emotions experienced by the characters is typically expressed through the music. Music is often defined as the "language of emotions." Exploring the emotions transmitted by the music helps students to become aware of their own.

### Activity 37

This is an extension of Activity 7. Have the students read a scene from the libretto aloud with a new assignment: begin in a certain mood, for example enthusiasm, and at some point continue in a different mood, for example boredom, or vice versa. Later try a more challenging assignment: read the text while gradually changing from one mood to another. Papageno's first aria is ideal for this exercise. At the end of both experiments, compare with Mozart (CD 1, No. 4).

### Activity 38

All of the Mozart scholars highlight an important feature: the great stylistic variety in *The Magic Flute*. However, the ability to grasp this variety requires training—in a sense, we must cultivate an "eighteenth-century ear."

Ask the students to explore the difference between the personality of Papageno and Sarastro or the Queen of the Night as expressed in the music. Mozart differentiates his characters according to their social status:

- for Papageno, a comical personality, he uses popular music (bass or baritone voice);
- for Sarastro, the venerable sage, sacred music (deep bass voice);
- for the Queen of the Night, arias typical of the eighteenth century *opera seria*, especially the "revenge" aria, full of virtuosity (coloratura soprano);
- for the two armed men, an old-fashioned contrapuntal style linked to the traditions and practices of Roman Catholicism. The bass line that accompanies the chorale is typically Baroque. Mozart recalls the style of the late seventeenth-century composer Heinrich von Biber.

The essay by Philip Gossett in this volume is a valuable guide for further information.

### Activity 39

This activity asks, "What is an overture for?" Compare Mozart's overtures with others. The functions of introductory music can be different:

- a) it prepares for the entertainment by setting an overall mood. This is the function of the Baroque overture (such as the one for Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, entitled "Toccata," which functions as a signal with trumpets heralding the start of the show);
- b) it can immediately open the first scene. An example: Puccini's *La bohème*. In *The Magic Flute* this function is performed not by the overture, but by the brief pas-

sage that accompanies Tamino's entry (Mozart called it "Introduction");

- c) it can summarize the key message of the story. Verdi's overtures to *Nabucco* and *La forza del destino* are good examples. Mozart wrote his overture after he had finished the opera. It is a sort of "rethinking of key moments using only orchestral means:"

- religious moment: the beginning. Three chords, trombones: solemn ceremony, sacred. It alludes to the rites of purification, to the world of the sun, to Sarastro, the benevolent magician, etc.

- *allegro*: the first theme tells us that this is a comedy. The fugal treatment tells us that this is also an adventure story. The pulsating theme suggests dynamic situations, escape, pursuit, etc. These images are enhanced by the fugal treatment.

These "recapitulations" of the plot gave rise to the symphonic poem of the nineteenth century.

### Create a Production

In our suggestions for the younger students we have provided some pointers on how to engage students in an abridged *Magic Flute*, consisting of sung and spoken excerpts from Mozart's opera. Here we consider a different way of working that will appeal more to the students' creativity. Remember that this method can be used in a simplified form for the younger students.

### Activity 40

Ask the students to invent their own story inspired by the content of *The Magic Flute*. It will be more interesting for the students

if this activity is done before they learn the original story, to which you will compare it at the end by listening to the opera. The activity goes better if you work in groups, perhaps of five students each. Each group devises its own story; then you to combine them into one plot using the elements judged best from each group.

This is just one way of working, and teachers may prefer others, depending on their experience. What matters in these creative activities is that *The Magic Flute* is always part of the picture. For this you need to set out some questions or ideas to guide the students' creativity. A few examples:

- What kinds of things could you do if you had a magic flute?
- Give a name and function to the characters in the opera, leaving it to the students to figure out how they interact and what will happen.
- Substitute some characters with others taken from other stories. What would happen if Don Quixote played Tamino's role?
- Give the students only places and situations: the two royal palaces, a hunter, a boy chased by a serpent. The libretto is full of unusual situations to choose from.
- Let the story revolve around Papageno: a friendly bird catcher witnesses a dramatic event—the war between the Kingdom of Night, ruled by the Queen of the Night, and the Kingdom of Day, ruled by the sorcerer Sarastro. Other characters: Pamina, the Queen's daughter, kidnapped by Sarastro; Tamino, sent to rescue her.
- Who will be good in this story? Who will be bad? And will there be characters who are completely good or bad? And what if they were all both bad and good?

**Activity 41**

The students are again divided into groups. This time each group gives names and essential characteristics to only a few characters in *The Magic Flute*. For example, the first group has the leader of an exotic religion, a pair of young lovers, and two armed men; the second group a bird catcher, an ugly old crone (Papagena the way Papageno first sees her), three children, a wicked queen, or other combinations. Each group invents a story with its characters. Combine them all into one story. As always, compare with the original story at the end.

**Activity 42**

Each of the previous activities will be more valuable if you continue on and turn the students' creations into a production. Turn sketches into dialogues and connecting narrations. Decide on locations and actions. Come up with scenery, lights, and costumes. Assign roles, allowing for the possibility of more than one actor for the same role. Plan for dances with a choreographer to direct the group. There should also be stage director, as well as a facilitator for arrangements with the school (space, time, etc.), a person in charge of scavenging for materials, someone to do PR to promote the show off campus, and so on.

An indispensable ingredient: music. This opens a range of possibilities, depending both on the musical knowledge of the students and the way they have put their story together. Here are some ideas.

**Activity 43**

The simplest exercise is to continue Activ-

ity 31 with the students, but keep in mind you are now using your students' plot, not Schikaneder's. Of course, there is nothing to prevent you from using Mozart's music. Tell them they can *also* use Mozart's music because the students definitely love to put in music they already know. Perhaps they'll want to use pop songs, but instead of regarding it as a desecration, think of it as a way to break down the wall between pop and classical in the students' minds.

The pieces can be sung chorally, but perhaps you might feature a soloist. If there are students in class who play an instrument, give them the job of playing something simple at an appropriate time. Without making it the only thing you use, recorded music can be used as a commentary on the action, interludes, etc.

**Activity 44**

If you are at a performing arts school with an orchestra at your disposal, continue along the lines of Activity 33. As in the previous example in which the plot is no longer Schikaneder's, either use Mozart's music or perhaps music already in the school's repertoire.

Where can we put this minuet for violin? Or the march for trumpet class? In addition to these suggestions, set some of the texts that students have written to music. The best of these possibilities would be to set student-written texts to student-written music. Once again, remember to compare your new creation with the opera that got us started in the first place: *The Magic Flute*. Without a doubt, the comparison with Mozart will make students appreciate their own work—more than those of the Austrian com-

poser. An injection of self-esteem is always healthy. But what will be most beneficial for their musical growth will be to uncover the similarities and differences—not only the concepts we have tried to instill in them, but

their own new discoveries about Mozart's opera. This is a path that will always lead to greater appreciation.

Translated by Elizabeth Parker

NOTE

1. See *I giovani e l'opera lirica* [*Young People and Opera*], edited by Carlo Delfrati, Milano, Accademia Teatro alla Scala, 2011. Free copies available upon request from the Accademia (<http://www.accademiascala.it/en/>).
2. Allow me to mention to those interested: CARLO DELFRATI, *La voce espressiva*, Milano, Principato, 2001.