

**"The Magic Flute" is a fantastical opera by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart that intertwines themes of love, wisdom, and the quest for enlightenment through a fairy tale narrative.**



### **Plot Summary**

The story begins with Prince Tamino, who is being pursued by a monstrous serpent. He is rescued by three mysterious ladies, who kill the serpent and present him with a portrait of Pamina, the daughter of the Queen of the Night. Tamino instantly falls in love with her and vows to rescue her from the clutches of the powerful and seemingly evil Sarastro.

Upon learning of Tamino's intentions, the Queen of the Night appears and commands him to rescue Pamina, providing him with a magic flute for protection. Accompanying Tamino on his quest is Papageno, a birdcatcher who desires a companion of his own. The two embark on a journey filled with trials and challenges, guided by the magic flute and the help of three spirits.

As the story unfolds, Tamino and Pamina undergo various trials to prove their worthiness and seek enlightenment. They discover that Sarastro is not the villain he initially seemed to be; rather, he represents wisdom and enlightenment, guiding them toward a higher understanding of life and love. The Queen of the Night, in contrast, reveals her true vengeful nature, attempting to manipulate her daughter and Tamino for her own ends.

## Themes and Characters

- Love and Enlightenment: The opera explores the transformative power of love and the journey toward enlightenment, symbolized by the trials Tamino and Pamina face.
- Masonic Allegory: The work is rich in Masonic symbolism, reflecting the ideals of brotherhood, wisdom, and the quest for truth, as both Mozart and the librettist Emanuel Schikaneder were Freemasons.

## Key Characters:

- Tamino: The noble prince on a quest to rescue Pamina.
- Pamina: The Queen of the Night's daughter, who seeks her own freedom and enlightenment.
- Papageno: The comedic bird-catcher who provides comic relief and represents the everyman.
- Queen of the Night: A powerful figure who initially appears benevolent but reveals her darker motives.
- Sarastro: The high priest who embodies wisdom and guides Tamino and Pamina toward enlightenment.

## Conclusion

"The Magic Flute" is not just a simple fairy tale; it is a profound exploration of human experience, love, and the pursuit of knowledge. Its enchanting music and rich symbolism have made it a timeless classic in the opera repertoire, captivating audiences for over two centuries.

**Pamina sung by Soprano Kathleen Battle** was born (August 13, 1948) in Portsmouth, Ohio, the youngest of seven children. She sang in church and school, and envisioned a future in music.

Her voice has been called *"...without qualification, one of the very few most beautiful in the world"* In a career filled with countless accolades, honours and major milestones, what has perhaps distinguished her most is her almost magical ability to create an unwavering emotional bond between herself, her music and her audience.

The range of Miss Battle's repertoire spans from the Baroque era to contemporary works. Her greatest successes range from Handel (Cleopatra in the Metropolitan Opera's premiere staging of Giulio Cesare) to Richard Strauss (Sophie, Zdenka, Zerbinetta). For her Covent Garden debut as Zerbinetta in Ariadne auf Naxos. She has distinguished herself as one of our generation's finest interpreters of Mozart (Susanna, Despina, Pamina, and Zerlina), as well as the bel canto operas of Rossini (Il Barbiere di Siviglia) and Donizetti (L'Elisir d'Amore, La Fille du Regiment).

**Tamino sung by Francisco Araiza** (born October 4, 1950), is a Mexican operatic tenor. He was named Kammersänger of the Wiener Staatsoper in 1988 and has been a permanent member of the Opernhaus Zürich since 1977. He made an international operatic career starting with the great Mozart and Rossini tenor roles also including roles like Edgardo, Alfredo, Duke of Mantua, Riccardo III, Don Alvaro, Don Carlo, Cavaradossi, Pinkerton, Rodolfo, Calaf, Andrea Chénier, Des Grieux,

Faust, Hoffmann, Werther, Romeo, Don José, Lenski and the young Wagnerian heroes Lohengrin, Stolzing, Loge, Parsifal and Siegmund.

**Sarastro sung by Kurt Moll.** Moll was born (April 11, 1938) in Buir, near Cologne, Germany.<sup>[1]</sup> As a child, he played the cello and sang in the school choir, and the conductor encouraged him to concentrate on singing. He studied voice at the Köln Hochschule für Musik with Emmy Müller. He joined the Cologne Opera at 20 and remained until 1961. He then sang for three years in Mainz and five years in Wuppertal. In 1969, he accepted an engagement with the Hamburg State Opera, and he then sang in all the major opera houses of Europe.

He made his US debut with the San Francisco Opera as Gurnemann in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* in 1974. His Metropolitan Opera debut followed four years later, when he sang the Landgraf in *Tannhäuser*, Rocco in *Fidelio*, and Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*. From that time he has performed all over the world. He retired from stage in 2006. His voice was notable for its range, a true infra-bass including full, resonant low and very-low notes with relaxed vibrato; also for its unusual combination of extreme size and purring, contrabassoon-like timbre.

**Papageno sung by Manfred Hemm.** Manfred Hemm was born in Austria, studied in Vienna and made his debut singing Figaro in "Le Nozze di Figaro". After a triumphant success at the Opera House in Graz as **Leporello** in the production of Austrian filmmaker Axel Corti, Claudio Abbado and Claus Helmut Drese invited him to the Vienna State Opera. His time in Salzburg led directly to his famous interpretation of Papageno at the Metropolitan Opera in New York with James Levine.

**The Queen of the Night sung by Luciana Serra** (born November 4, 1946 in Genoa) is an Italian soprano.

Serra made her international debut in 1966 at the Hungarian State Opera House in Budapest, but did not achieve general acclaim until the late 1970s, when she took on coloratura roles in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Bellini's *La sonnambula*. Her 1987 performance in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and her 1988 performance in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* are still praised for the clarity of her voice.

Considered the natural heir of Toti Dal Monte, she is, as well, an interpreter of Maria Callas' roles, most of all in Donizetti and Bellini's works. The clarity of her voice makes it particularly suitable for Mozart and Rossini's works, too. She regularly teaches both at Villa Medici in Rome and at the Accademia La Scala in Milan. Her lessons are attended by many young people who are at the beginning of their career.

Her fame reached a peak during the 1980s, when she performed the "Queen of the night" in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Royal Opera House in London.

In 1988 Serra debuted at the Vienna State Opera singing the Queen of the night in a new production of *Die Zauberflöte* conducted by Nikolaus Harnoncourt and staged by Otto Schenk.

## Set design by DAVID HOCKNEY



**“I wanted to design operas because I want to have something to look at.”**

### **Hockney and the Stage**

All in all, Hockney has designed sets for eleven operas over the course of seventeen years, starting in 1975. He has had various levels of involvement, including designing sets, costumes and posters. Much like his paintings, Hockney brings his distinctly Pop sensibility to his set designs, which are characterised by bright and vivid colours that often clash against one another. They often feature surrealist elements, using size and scale to create a sense of perspective.

Hockney’s work in theatre is distinct, incorporating his unique style to create a visual spectacle that is both dramatic and deeply engaging. He uses bold colours and vivid imagery, creating a visual language that complements the music and narrative of each production.

His designs are not simply backdrops, but integral parts of the performance, enhancing the storytelling and creating a unique theatrical experience. This is evident in his set designs for Mozart’s “The Magic Flute,” which have been described as “an integral part of the opera, almost a character in itself.”