

Mozart's Magic Flute Casts Spell in deJong Concert Hall  
by Rosemarie Howard  
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Framed by the columns and steps of a temple to the Egyptian gods, Isis and Osiris, the story of Prince Tamino's quest for the hand of Pamina, daughter of the Queen of the Night, unfolds. "The Magic Flute," one of Mozart's last works, and certainly one of his most enduring and memorable, is being presented on the stage of the deJong Concert Hall at Brigham Young University October 24 through 28.

In a nutshell, the story deals with the universal battle between good and evil, light and darkness. Prince Tamino and his bird-catching friend, Papageno are given magical instruments to aid them in their quest: a flute forged by the King of the Sun (Pamina's father), and a glockenspiel.

Prince Tamino and Pamina must eventually choose between the paths offered by two opposing forces who are mortal enemies: the Queen of the Night, and Sarastro, high priest of the Temple of the Sun. If they obey the Queen of the Night, she will allow them to marry. If they listen to Sarastro and obey the gods, strengthen their hearts with patience and restraint, and embrace the refining trials that await them, they will not only be married, but gentle peace will "return to the heart of man. Then is earth the kingdom of heaven and mortals are like unto the gods."

A parallel story, that of Papageno's pursuit of Papagena in his pursuit of love and marriage, provides comic relief as well as a contrast between the quest for godhood, peace, and perfection—and human frailty.

Unlike French and English operas of Mozart's day, "The Magic Flute" avoids the recitative of Italian opera used to convey the action of the plot. The characters speak most of their lines, in a close parallel to the tradition of most Broadway musicals.

In this production, dialogue is spoken in English with the lyrics sung in German, the language the opera was originally written in. Easily read English subtitles displayed above the stage proscenium make the lyrics accessible to the audience and add immeasurably to the understanding and enjoyment of the production's message.

Leading roles are double and triple cast, with the role of Tamino being sung by Brian Stucki, Nathan Northrup, and Sangin Han. Pamina is sung by Lindsey Husted and Elizabeth Pike; Papageno by Justin Whittaker, and Jeremy Whittaker; Papagena by Sarah Fawcett and Jean Morrison; and the Queen of the Night by Rachelle Hulme, and Katherine Swigert. Sarastro is performed by Brent Wells and Tad Harris.

Justin Whittaker's performance of Papageno was both entertaining and well sung. Rachelle Hulme's portrayal of the Queen of the Night was impressively done.

October 19, the parts of the three ladies (from the court of the Queen of the Night) were beautifully sung by Lauralyn Lowe, Elaine Green, Courtney Attack. Their interaction as they fought over Prince Tamino was amusing and well-played.

These parts are triple cast, being sung as well on alternate nights by Suzanne Wooten, Natalie Hackett, and Lindsey Stewart, as well as Melissa Heath, Marti Castle, and Kara Palmer.

The battle between light and dark is visually as well as verbally evident throughout the production. Costuming and scenery are effective and full of layered meaning--some of which seemed to be lost on a few of the audience members in attendance last Thursday evening.

Costume designer, Anne Marie Kirkham Black, has transformed ordinary objects such as paperclips, license plates, garden hose, and a shower curtain, into imaginative designs that delight the eye. Paperclips glitter as chain link armor, and rolls of gaffer's tape shimmer as golden trim on the robes of the Priests of the Sun.

Designed by Rory Scanlon, the set also uses the ordinary in extraordinary ways. Behind the porch of the Egyptian temple, a parachute, manned by an uncredited team of stage workers, billows as a representation of both the depths of dark torment, and the heights of a gleaming white temple. The contrasting set effects are created by the lighting, also designed by Rory Scanlon, assisted by Nathan James.

The BYU Symphony Orchestra, performed admirably under the direction of conductor, Bryce Rytting—who also has a few lines to speak during the show.

It is evident that a team of wonderfully creative people have collaborated and cooperated to create a production that is visually and aurally pleasing and uplifting.

The opera opened October 18, and continues October 24-28. All performances begin at 7:30 p.m. in the deJong Concert Hall of the BYU Harris Fine Arts Center. Tickets are \$10 for the public and \$8 for BYU or student identification card holders. To purchase tickets, please call the BYU Fine Arts Ticket Office at (801) 378-4322.