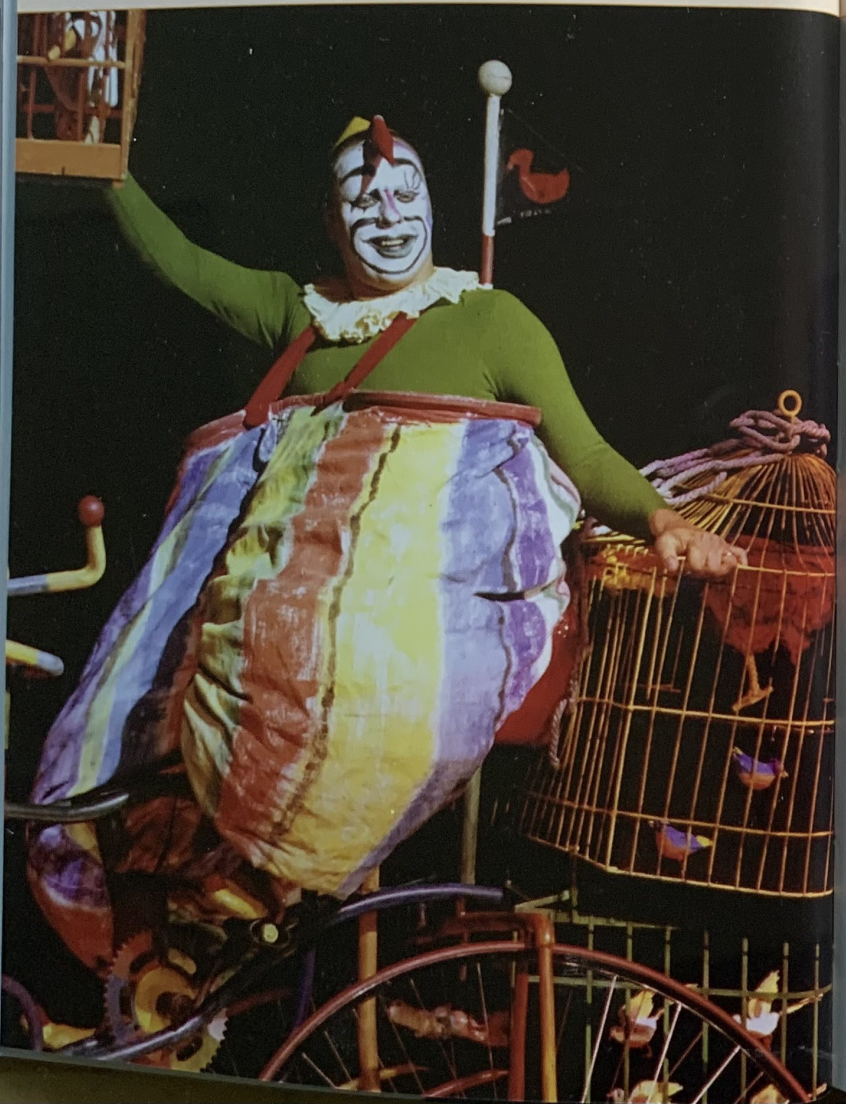
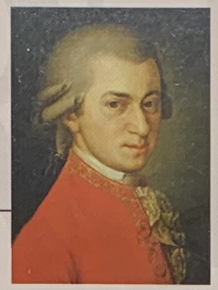
"I have an inexpressible longing to write another opera... I envy anyone who is composing one."

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART



Born: 27 January 1756, Salzburg (Austria)
Died: 5 December 1791, Vienna (Austria)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart stands alone in the history of opera. Other great opera composers, including Verdi and Wagner, made their mark only in opera, but Mozart's genius embraced every kind of music. Nonetheless, he always had a special passion and a unique gift for opera. During the last decade of his life, he transformed the genre beyond all recognition.

Like no composer before him, Mozart understood that, by exploiting the emotional power of the singing voice, he could give flesh and blood to the *serio* and *buffo* heroes of traditional opera. With his operatic masterpieces, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, and *Die Zauberflöte*, he went still further. Inspired by challenging librettos, he painted fully-fledged characters through subtle orchestration, harmonically ambitious recitatives, memorable arias, and intricate ensembles. It took Mozart 25 years to reach this pinnacle.

His precocious talent was immediately recognized by his father, Leopold, a respected Salzburg musician, who even helped the boy with his early compositions. But it was as a performer that Mozart first astonished. He was only five when he and his gifted sister, Maria Anna, played the harpsichord at the Bavarian court in Munich. And he was eight when a three-year "prodigy tour" took him to Europe's major cities. With opera flourishing as never before outside Italy, young Mozart was soon drawn to the genre. Returning to Salzburg in 1767, he wrote his first opera, *Apollo et Hyacinthus*, a three-act *intermezzo* in Latin. The next year, he composed *La finta semplice*, an *opera buffa* in Italian, for the archbishop's palace in Salzburg. And a

Matthias Görne as the birdcatcher Papageno displays his caged wares in a vibrant scene from Achim Freyer's production of *Die Zauberflöte* staged at the annual Salzburg Festival in 1999.

FIRST PERFORMANCES

1760
- **1767** Apollo et Hyacinthus
- **1768** Bastien und Bastienne
- **1769** La finta semplice
- **1770** Mitridate, re di Ponto

1770
- **1772** Lucio Silla
- **1775** La finta giardiniera
- Il re pastore

1780
- **1781** Idomeneo, re di Creta
- **1782** Die Entführung aus dem Serail
- **1786** Le nozze di Figaro
- **1787** Don Giovanni

1790
- **1790** Così fan tutte
- **1791** La clemenza di Tito
- Die Zauberflöte

1800

few months later, he presented *Bastien und Bastienne*, a German Singspiel, in Vienna. Before he was 13, he had written operas in three distinct styles and languages.

LEARNING IN ITALY

Italy, however, remained the true home of opera, and Mozart felt a need both to complete his education and to make his mark there. From late 1769, he spent 15 months in Italy. He began by learning the art of counterpoint, the harmonious juxtaposition of two or more musical parts. Then, having proved himself in private recitals, he was commissioned to write *Mitridate, re di Ponto*, an *opera seria*, for Milan's royal theatre. Acclaimed as a "little master", he went back there in 1772 to present *Lucio Silla*.



Constanze Weber, Mozart's wife, helped to preserve the composer's musical legacy after his premature death.

THE SALZBURG YEARS

Yet, for lack of opportunity, over the next nine years he wrote only two operas, *La finta giardiniera* and *Il re pastore*, both in 1775. In contrast to instrumental music, opera required not only a commission, but also a libretto and singers – and Salzburg had neither a proper theatre nor an opera house. Mozart was also kept busy as court and cathedral organist. Gradually, though, he became desperate to leave the city. "You know how hateful Salzburg is to me," he wrote to a friend. Finally, in 1781, thanks to a commission from Munich, Mozart composed *Idomeneo*, his first mature stage work. By now, he had mastered the musical legacy of the past and was ready to create a new future. Later that year, he left Salzburg forever, breaking his ties with the city's formidable Prince-Archbishop Colloredo at the same time as escaping the loving but controlling embrace of his father.

OPERATIC GREATNESS

The next decade would enshrine him as the Mozart of legend, but it would also prove tumultuous. In 1782, he married the young soprano Constanze Weber, whose sister he had previously wooed. She was often ill and Mozart was frequently swamped in debt. The job he coveted as court composer was also firmly held by Antonio Salieri. But Mozart drove himself hard, composing

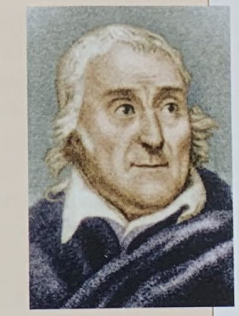


Leopold Mozart accompanies the young Wolfgang and his sister, Maria Anna as they perform in Paris in 1763.

prolifically and taking exhausting road trips to other cities. In July 1782, he made his grand entrance into Vienna's opera world with a farcical Singspiel, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, which was an immediate success. But the turning-point came in 1784 when he met the Italian poet and librettist Lorenzo da Ponte. Now Mozart could not only pick the subject of his operas, but could also draw strength from da Ponte's daring librettos: *Le nozze di Figaro*, with its rebellious servants, hints at class warfare; *Don Giovanni* celebrates – and eventually punishes – a philandering noble; and *Così fan tutte* suggests women can be as fickle as men. What has put these works at the heart of every opera repertory, however, is their music: beautiful, disturbing, and at times almost painfully intimate.

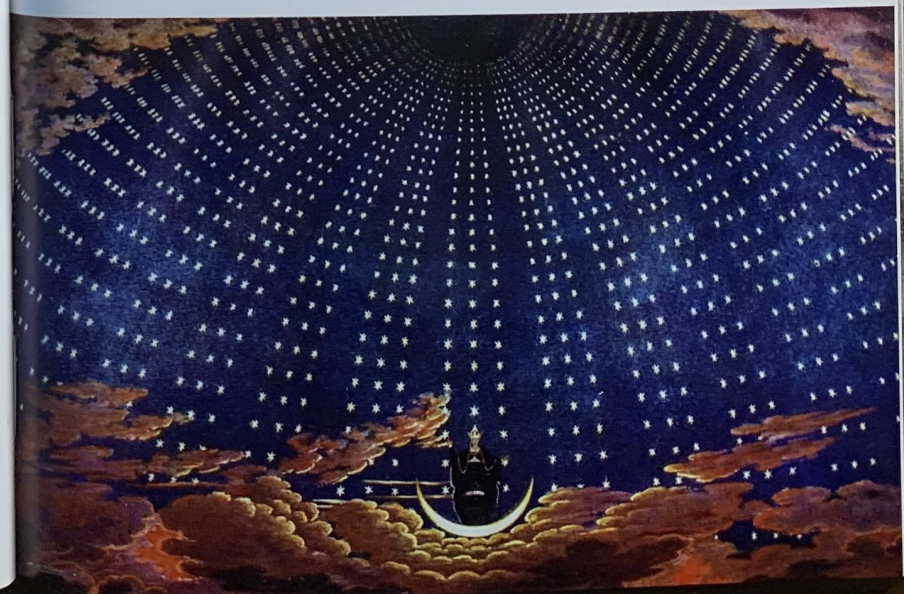
LORENZO DA PONTE

Starting with *Le nozze di Figaro* in 1785, Lorenzo da Ponte wrote librettos for three of Mozart's late masterpieces. Born into an Italian-Jewish family in 1749, da Ponte became a priest and a poet before legal troubles forced him to flee Venice. In Vienna, where he was befriended by Emperor Joseph II, he worked closely with Mozart between 1784 and 1789. He then resumed his wanderings as a down-at-heel poet, playwright, and librettist, eventually reaching the United States, where he died in 1838.



A LIFE CUT SHORT

In 1791, the last year of his life, Mozart added a fourth jewel to opera's crown, *Die Zauberflöte*. While working on it, he hurriedly wrote *La clemenza di Tito* for the coronation of the Emperor Leopold II in Prague. Following the premiere of this *opera seria*, Mozart then rushed back to Vienna to complete *Die Zauberflöte*, which opened on 30 September. But only weeks later he was struck down with fever, perhaps brought on by infection. He died on 5 December 1791, just seven weeks short of his 36th birthday. His last great choral work, *Requiem*, was left unfinished.



An engraving of the spectacular celestial décor used for the entrance of the Queen of the Night, designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel for a Berlin production of *Die Zauberflöte* in 1816.

MITRIDATE, RE DI PONTO

(Mithridates, King of Pontus)

✍ Opera seria in three acts, 3½ hours
⌛ 1770
🏛 26 December 1770, Teatro Regio Ducal, Milan (Italy)

🕮 Vittorio Amedeo Cigna-Santi, after Giuseppe Parini's translation of Racine's 1673 tragedy *Mithridate*, first created as an opera in 1767

Mitridate, written when Mozart was only 14, was commissioned by the Austrian governor general of Lombardy. As was common, the composer was given a libretto, one set only three years earlier by Quirino Gasparini. The opera was well received, with Mozart's brilliant coloratura arias bringing cries of "Viva il Maestro, viva il maestrino" and new commissions. But *Mitridate* was then largely forgotten for two centuries.

This opera taught Mozart that singers were the real stars of opera. Guglielmo Ettore ordered him to rewrite Mitridate's opening aria three times and even used Gasparini's version of the final aria at the premiere.

PRINCIPAL ROLES

Mitridate *tenor*
King of Pontus

Aspasia *soprano*
His reluctant betrothed

Sifare *soprano*
Mitridate's son, who secretly loves Aspasia

Farnace *alto*
Mitridate's other son, who openly courts Aspasia

Ismene *soprano*
Greek princess

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Nymphaea, the Crimea, around 66–63 BCE

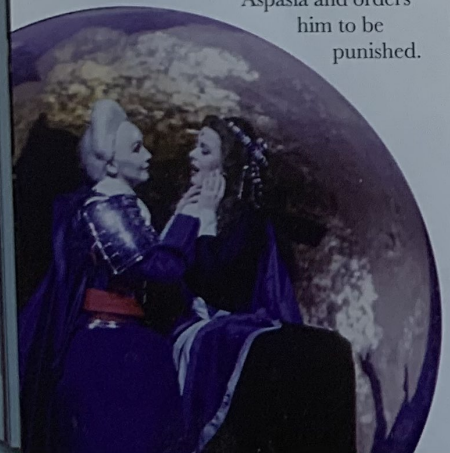
ACT ONE While fighting the Romans, King Mitridate leaves his betrothed, Aspasia, in the care of his sons, Sifare and Farnace. When word of Mitridate's death reaches Nymphaea, Sifare remains loyal to Arbate, the local governor, but Farnace backs the Romans. The siblings also compete for Aspasia, who favours Sifare. Mitridate returns with Ismene, a bride for Farnace. The king, who reported his own death to test the loyalty of his sons, learns that Farnace is wooing Aspasia and orders him to be punished.

ACT TWO Mitridate decides to marry Aspasia at once, but noticing her hesitation, believes she has betrayed him with Farnace. Aspasia and Sifare renew their vows, but decide to separate ♁. Mitridate orders Farnace's arrest for conspiring with the Romans. Farnace discloses that Sifare loves Aspasia. When she in turn confesses her love for Sifare, Mitridate condemns her to die along with his sons.

"Lungi da te mio bene"

ACT THREE Refusing to wed Mitridate, Aspasia readies herself to take poison ♁. The king leaves to fight the Romans, while his freed sons join him in battle. The Romans offer the throne to Farnace but, repenting his treachery, he helps his father defeat them. Fatally wounded, Mitridate pardons his sons and, before dying, blesses the unions of Sifare and Aspasia, Farnace and Ismene.

"Pallid'ombre, che scorgete"



Sally Matthews as Sifare and Aleksandra Kurzak as Aspasia pledge anew their love before separating in Act II of a 2005 production at the Royal Opera House, London.

LUCIO SILLA

(Lucius Sulla)

✍ Opera seria in three acts, 3½ hours
⌛ 1772
🏛 26 December 1772, Teatro Regio Ducal, Milan (Italy)

🕮 Giovanni de Gamerra

Lucio Silla was commissioned for Milan's Teatro Regio Ducal after the success of *Mitridate*. Mozart was given a month to write the opera's 18 arias, but his growing experience shows, notably in how the music reinforces the personalities of the key roles. The score matches the high drama of the story. But *Lucio Silla* was only a moderate success, and Mozart soon left Italy forever.

Lucio Silla was long overshadowed by Mozart's later ventures into *opera seria*, but it has gained popularity in recent years because its political subject is easy to present as a contemporary drama.

PRINCIPAL ROLES

Lucio Silla *tenor*
A tyrannical Roman dictator

Giunia *soprano*
The object of his lust

Cecilio *soprano*
A dissident Senator and Giunia's betrothed

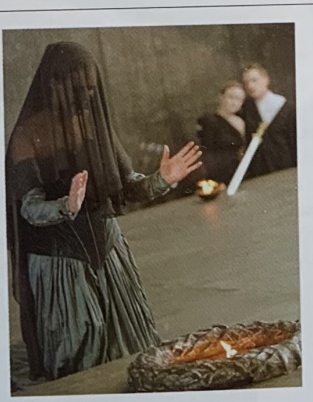
Lucio Cinna *soprano*
A friend to Cecilio

Celia *soprano*
Silla's sister and Cinna's bride

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Rome around 79 BCE

ACT ONE Cecilio returns to Rome from exile and is informed by his friend Cinna that his bride, Giunia, has been ordered to live in the palace of Lucio Silla, where she is being wooed by the despot. Lucio Silla's sister, Celia, urges him to treat Giunia kindly, but his brutal aide, Aufidio, tells him to take her by force. Giunia hates Lucio Silla, her father's murderer, and rejects his advances. Learning that she visits her father's tomb daily, Cecilio meets her there and joins with other Romans in praying for Lucio Silla's demise.



Giunia, sung by the Swiss soprano Eva Oltivanyi, prays before her father's tomb in a 1998 production at Garsington Opera, England.

ACT TWO Cinna suggests to Giunia that she marry Lucio Silla and then murder him, but she refuses ♁. Meanwhile, Lucio Silla proposes marriage to Giunia, saying that their union will put an end to the civil strife plaguing the crumbling Roman republic. Cecilio reiterates his love for Giunia ♁. He goes on to threaten Lucio Silla with a sword and is arrested.

"Ah se il crudel periglio"

"Ah se a morir mi chiama"

ACT THREE In despair, Cinna begs Celia, his betrothed, to pacify her brother, the dictator. Cecilio awaits death in jail and Giunia vows to die alongside him. Then, quite unexpectedly, from the steps of the Capitol, Lucio Silla pardons everyone. He frees Cecilio and reunites him with Giunia. And even though Cinna confesses his hatred of Silla, the ruler forgives him and approves his marriage to Celia. Finally, announcing that in future he will live as any ordinary Roman citizen, Lucio Silla abdicates the throne, bringing joy to the entire city.

IL RE PASTORE

(The Shepherd King)

✍ Serenata in two acts, 2 hours
⌛ 1775
🏛 23 April 1775, Archbishop's Palace, Salzburg (Austria)
🕮 Pietro Metastasio

Il re pastore was commissioned by the Prince-Archbishop Colloredo of Salzburg to celebrate a visit by the young archduke, Maximilian Franz. For this event, Mozart was handed Pietro Metastasio's 1751 *opera seria* libretto, which had already been set by a dozen composers. The score contains some beautiful arias and ensembles, but it did not earn Mozart a fresh commission. Five years would pass before he wrote another opera, which would be his first great stage work, *Idomeneo*.

PRINCIPAL ROLES

Alessandro *tenor*
Alexander the Great
Aminta *soprano*
The future king of Sidon
Elisa *soprano*
Aminta's beloved
Tamiri *soprano*
The usurper Strato's daughter

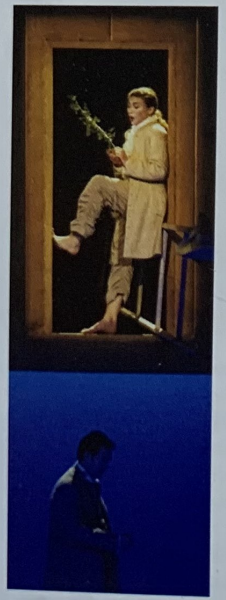
Performed before a young archduke, *Il re pastore* could have been interpreted as satirizing Habsburg conquests, but any offence was mitigated by its farcical plot and lively music.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Sidon, Lebanon, around 330 BCE

ACT ONE Aminta, a shepherd boy, is joined by his beloved Elisa. She reports that, having ousted the usurper Strato from the throne of Sidon, Alessandro is looking for the rightful heir. Accompanied by Agenore, Alessandro observes Aminta and is impressed. Meanwhile, Agenore recognizes his beloved Tamiri, Strato's fugitive daughter, who is living as a shepherdess with Elisa. He begs Tamiri to follow him, but she distrusts Alessandro. Agenore then hails Aminta as Sidon's new king. Aminta shows no interest in power until Elisa, assuring him that they will soon marry, convinces him to accept the honour 🕯.

"Vanne a regnar, ben mio"



Annette Dasch as Aminta (*top*) and Juan José Lopera as Agenore in a semi-staged production at the Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels, in 2003.

ACT TWO Agenore prevents Elisa from seeing Aminta, as he is discussing matters of state with Alessandro. Eager to make peace before he leaves for new conquests, Alessandro proposes that Aminta marry Tamiri, his enemy's child. Elisa prefers to die than lose Aminta, while Tamiri is so angry with Agenore for giving her up that she orders him to attend her wedding. Tamiri begs Alessandro to change his mind and Elisa blames him for her distress. Aminta surrenders his royal gowns, saying he cannot be king without Elisa 🕯. Finally, recognizing his error, Alessandro appoints Aminta and Elisa as Sidon's rulers and promises that Agenore and Tamiri will also be given a kingdom.

"L'amerò, sarò constante"

IDOMENEO, RE DI CRETA

(Idomeneus, King of Crete)

✍ Dramma per musica in three acts, 3½ hours
⌛ 1780–1781
🏛 29 January 1781, Cuvilliés Theater, Munich (Germany)
🕮 Giambattista Varesco, after Antoine Danchet's 1731 libretto, *Idomenée*, scored by André Campra

Idomeneo, Mozart's third and greatest *opera seria*, anticipates his later masterpieces. Written after a long period in which he concentrated on instrumental music, it stands out for its arias of great beauty and passion, a remarkable quartet, powerful choruses, and rich orchestration. Initially, it was presented only three times, and it only reached Britain and the United States in the mid-20th century. Today, it is considered a major work.

At 25, Mozart still lacked the power to pick his cast. In the case of *Idomeneo*'s premiere, he described the men who sang Idomeneo and Idamante as "the two worst actors any stage has ever borne".

PRINCIPAL ROLES

Idomeneo *tenor*
King of Crete
Idamante *mezzo-soprano* or *tenor*
Idomeneo's son and heir
Ilia *soprano*
Trojan princess
Elettra *soprano*
Greek princess
Arbace *tenor*
Idomeneo's aide
High Priest *tenor*

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Crete around the 12th century BCE

ACT ONE The Trojan princess Ilia is held captive in Crete where, to prove his love, Prince Idamante releases all Trojan prisoners. Meanwhile, returning home after many years, King Idomeneo is feared drowned. To save himself, he promises Neptune to sacrifice the first person he meets on shore. He is received by a young man whom he at last recognizes as his son, Idamante. The Cretan people celebrate Idomeneo's return, but he is plunged into despair.

ACT TWO Idomeneo orders Idamante to leave for Argos with Elettra, a Greek princess who is in love with the prince. Heartbroken, Ilia tells Idomeneo of her love for Idamante 🕯. To punish Idomeneo's betrayal, Neptune sends a monster in a storm to assail the island. The king offers himself as a sacrifice, but Neptune angrily intensifies the storm. The people of Crete flee in terror.

"Se il padre perdei"

ACT THREE As Idamante prepares to fight the monster, Ilia finally confesses her love for him, but Idomeneo again orders Idamante to flee 🕯. With the people growing restive, the king realizes he must sacrifice his son to Neptune. Idamante kills the monster and is ready to die. But when Ilia offers to take his place, Neptune instead orders Idomeneo to abdicate, naming Idamante and Ilia as the new rulers of Crete.

"Andro ramingo e solo"



Norman Shankle as Idomeneo and Karine Babajanian as Elettra, Stuttgart Opera, 2005.

DIE ENTFÜHRUNG AUS DEM SERAIL

(The Abduction from the Seraglio)

✍ Singspiel in three acts, 2¼ hours
⌛ 1781–1782
✝ 16 July 1782, Hofburgtheater, Vienna (Austria)
🕮 Gottlieb Stephanie, after a 1781 play by Christoph Friedrich Bretzner

Die Entführung aus dem Serail was Mozart's first opera for Vienna and his first full-length Singspiel, the name given to Germanic opera with spoken dialogue. It is no coincidence that the heroine is called Konstanze: a month after its premiere, Mozart married Constanze Weber. Designed to appeal to the fashion for all things Turkish, the story's frivolity is more than compensated by musical fireworks, with 21 arias, duets, or ensembles.

Modern audiences may be tested by this opera's lengthy German-language dialogue, but Emperor Joseph II was more impressed by the score. "An awful lot of notes, my dear Mozart," he is said to have remarked.

PRINCIPAL ROLES

Bassa Selim *speaking part*
A Turkish pasha in North Africa

Konstanze *soprano*
A Spanish noblewoman

Blonde *soprano*
Konstanze's English maid

Belmonte *tenor*
Konstanze's betrothed

Pedrillo *tenor*
Belmonte's servant

Osmin *baritone*
Selim's vizier

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Around Bassa Selim's palace in a North African city

ACT ONE Belmonte is looking for his kidnapped love, Konstanze, at Selim's palace. He is chased away by Osmin, Selim's vizier, but he meets Pedrillo, his servant, who is also a hostage. Pedrillo reports that Konstanze is Selim's favourite and that Blonde, her English maid, has been handed to Osmin. Belmonte yearns to be reunited with Konstanze ♁. He then overhears Selim demanding her love. Selim is rebuffed, and gives Konstanze a day to change her mind. Pedrillo presents Belmonte to the court as an "architect".

"Konstanze, Konstanze"

ACT TWO Blonde skilfully parries Osmin's advances, while Konstanze laments her plight ♁. Blonde is thrilled to hear of Belmonte's escape plan, which is set in motion when Pedrillo gives Osmin a sleeping draught. As Belmonte falls into Konstanze's arms, he and Pedrillo are chastized for doubting their lovers' fidelity.

"Martern aller Arten"

ACT THREE The women are given the signal to escape, but they are spotted and taken to Osmin, who promises terrible punishment. Selim is all the more furious when he learns that Belmonte's father is his sworn enemy. Then, as Belmonte and Konstanze prepare to die, Selim decides to free the two couples and all but Osmin celebrate.



Christoph Späth's Selim tries unsuccessfully to seduce Konstanze, sung by Desirée Rancatore, in this 2006 production at the Teatro Lirico di Cagliari.

LA CLEMENZA DI TITO

(The Clemency of Titus)

✍ Opera seria in two acts, 2¼ hours
⌛ 1791
✝ 6 September 1791, Graflich Nostitzsches Nationaltheater, Prague (Czech Republic)
🕮 Caterino Tommaso Mazzolà, after Pietro Metastasio

La clemenza di Tito is Mozart's penultimate opera, but it resembles his earlier works, especially as it is an *opera seria* based on a stock libretto. Commissioned at short notice to write an opera for Leopold II's coronation as King of Bohemia, Mozart completed the score in under three weeks. Rich in lively arias and duets, the work places unusual prominence on female voices, including two written as "trouser roles" of women playing men.

An opera portraying a magnanimous ruler might have seemed appropriate for an emperor's coronation, but Leopold II's Spanish-born queen, Marie-Louise, dismissed it as "porcheria tedesca" – German rubbish.

PRINCIPAL ROLES

Tito *tenor*
Roman emperor

Vitellia *soprano*
Daughter of former emperor

Sesto *soprano* or *mezzo-soprano*
In love with Vitellia

Servilia *soprano*
In love with Annio

Annio *soprano* or *mezzo-soprano*
In love with Servilia

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Rome, Italy, around 80 CE

ACT ONE Vitellia is furious that Tito is to marry a foreign princess. She tells Sesto to prove his love for her by killing the emperor. When Annio reports that Tito has changed his mind, Vitellia orders Sesto to wait. Instead, Tito decides to marry Sesto's sister, Servilia, but she loves Annio ♁. When Servilia reveals this to Tito, he generously withdraws his proposal. Seeing Servilia's joy, Vitellia believes she has again "lost" Tito and dispatches Sesto to murder the emperor. By the time Vitellia learns that she has been chosen as Tito's new bride, Rome is burning. Sesto returns with news that Tito has been killed.

"Ah, perdona al primo affetto"



Michael Schade as Tito and Dorothea Röschmann as Vitellia in Martin Kušej's modern dress production at the Salzburg Festival in 2003.

ACT TWO Discovering that Tito is not dead, Sesto confesses his crime to Annio, who urges him to seek the emperor's mercy. Vitellia tells Sesto to flee, but he is arrested for treachery.

Incredulous, Tito wants to hear Sesto admit his guilt. Sesto asks only to be forgiven before he dies. Alone, Tito signs the death warrant, and then destroys it. Unaware of Sesto's reprieve, Annio and Servilia beg Vitellia to intercede. Vitellia, now full of remorse ♁, instead tells Tito of her own role in the plot. Stunned, Tito asks: "How many of you betrayed me?" Yet, out of clemency, he forgives all of them.

"Non più di fiori"

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

(The Marriage of Figaro)

✍ Opera buffa in four acts, 3 hours
⌛ 1785–1786
🏛 1 May 1786, Hofburgtheater, Vienna (Austria)

🕮 Lorenzo da Ponte, after Beaumarchais's 1784 play, *La folle journée, ou Le mariage de Figaro*

Le nozze di Figaro is considered by many to be Mozart's greatest opera and, arguably, the most perfect opera ever written. Uniting Mozart and librettist Lorenzo da Ponte for the first time, it combines breathtaking arias and ensembles with a strong, highly entertaining plot. The music also plays a central role in revealing the psychology and temper of the main characters: the count's arrogance, the countess's melancholy, Figaro's fury, and Susanna's mischief. Amidst all the humour and confusion, then, Mozart's score expresses raw emotional truths. Further, he blends arias and recitatives so seamlessly that much of the narrative recitative is as melodic as the set pieces. Today, *Le nozze di Figaro* is a cornerstone of the opera repertoire.

Beaumarchais's play, *Le mariage de Figaro*, was banned as subversive. But by eliminating political satire and replacing class resentment with sexual rivalry, Mozart and da Ponte won permission for their *opera buffa*.

PRINCIPAL ROLES

Count Almaviva *baritone*
A rakish Spanish noble

Countess Almaviva *soprano*
His long-suffering wife

Figaro *baritone*
Count Almaviva's valet

Susanna *soprano*
The countess's chambermaid and Figaro's betrothed

Cherubino *soprano* or *mezzo-soprano*
A page boy

Marcellina *soprano* or *mezzo-soprano*
A housekeeper

Bartolo *bass*
A doctor

Basilio *tenor*
A music teacher

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Aguas Frescas, a castle near Seville in Spain

ACT ONE Figaro is to marry Susanna, the countess's maid, but the philandering Count Almaviva wants to exercise his feudal right to the first night with the bride. Susanna reassures Figaro, but he is furious. Marcellina in turn says Figaro promised to marry her in exchange for a loan. Cherubino, a young page who loves the countess above all women, is banished for chasing Barbarina, the gardener's daughter. Cherubino begs Susanna for help ♂. When the count arrives, Cherubino hides. Basilio, the music teacher, then appears and the count also hides. The count then hears of Cherubino's passion for his wife and orders the page to join the army. Figaro cheers him on ♂.

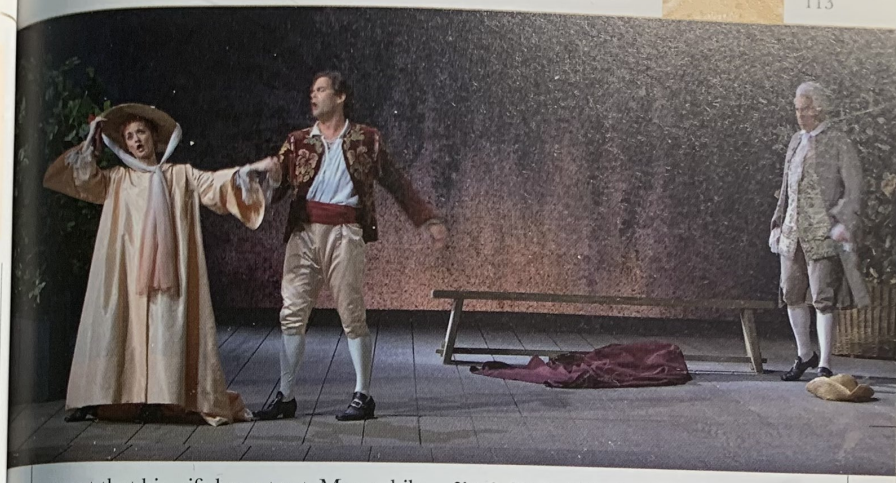
"Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio"

"Non più andrai"

ACT TWO As the countess laments her unloving husband ♂, Figaro unveils a scheme. He will warn the count that his wife has a tryst. Meanwhile, Susanna will arrange to meet the count, but Cherubino will take her place, dressed as a woman. When the count appears, Cherubino hides in a dressing room. The countess pretends Susanna is trying on her wedding dress. Suspicious, the count leaves to get a hammer, letting Cherubino escape. When the count returns, Susanna emerges. Antonio, the gardener, says someone leaped out of the window, but Figaro "confesses" it was he. Marcellina marches in to claim Figaro.

"Porgi, amor, qualche ristoro"





Giorgio Strehler's classic 1980 production, originally conducted by Sir Georg Solti, was revived scores of times at the Paris National Opera, and is seen here at the Opéra Bastille, Paris, in 2003.

ACT THREE The count has ordered Figaro to marry Marcellina, but Figaro says he needs the consent of his parents, whom he does not know. Marcellina asks if he has a birthmark on his arm. When he so admits, she swoons. Bartolo the doctor says Marcellina is his mother and he is his father ♂♀. Seeing Figaro hugging Marcellina, Susanna slaps him. Marcellina explains; the count is lost for words. The countess still hopes to win back her husband ♂. As Figaro's wedding celebrations begin, Susanna slips the count a note arranging their rendezvous.

"Riconosci in questo amplesso"

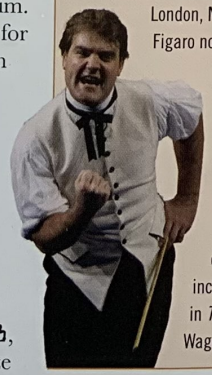
"Dove sono"

ACT FOUR Figaro hides in the garden, as Susanna and the countess arrive in disguise. Susanna is overjoyed to see Figaro ♂, but he does not recognize her. Cherubino takes the countess for Susanna and tries to kiss her. The count steps forward and receives the kiss; Figaro rushes out and the count strikes him. As "Susanna" slips away, Figaro spots "the countess", then hears Susanna's voice. With the count now looking for "Susanna", Figaro proclaims his love for "the countess". The count is outraged until "Susanna" unmasks as the real countess. Humbled, the count begs forgiveness. "I am kinder," she says. "I will say yes." Everyone is happy.

"Deh vieni, non tardar"

BRYN TERFEL

In recent years, no singer has become more identified with Figaro than the charismatic Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel. As his first lead role at the major opera houses of Santa Fe, London, New York, Vienna, and Milan, Figaro not only made his name internationally, but also led him to two other great Mozartian bass-baritone roles, Leporello and Don Giovanni. With a stage presence to match his fine voice, Terfel has since also expanded his repertoire to include such roles as Scarpia in *Tosca*, Falstaff, and Wotan in Wagner's monumental *Ring* cycle.



DON GIOVANNI

✍ Dramma giocoso in two acts, 2¾ hours
⌛ 1787
✝ 29 October 1787, Graflich Nostitzsches Nationaltheater, Prague (Czech Republic)
🕮 Lorenzo da Ponte, after Giovanni Bertati's libretto for Giuseppe Gazzaniga's 1787 opera

Don Giovanni was commissioned for Prague after the city acclaimed *Le nozze di Figaro*. Mozart turned anew to Lorenzo da Ponte, who took his story from another Don Giovanni opera recently presented in Venice. Da Ponte's wit and poetry inspired Mozart's brilliant score, which brings humour and tragedy – as well as memorable arias and complex ensembles – to the essentially grim story of a serial seducer who escapes all retribution except death. Throughout, the deep humanity of the music reinforces the drama: it can even be argued that the music does half the acting.

Mozart displays mischief during Don Giovanni's final supper scene by "quoting" from three contemporary operas, including *Le nozze di Figaro*. Recognizing *Figaro*, Leporello remarks: "I know this piece a little too well".

PRINCIPAL ROLES

Don Giovanni *bass* or *baritone*
A licentious young noble

Il Commendatore *bass*
Killed by Don Giovanni

Donna Anna *soprano*
Il Commendatore's daughter

Don Ottavio *tenor*
A gentleman, Anna's betrothed

Donna Elvira *soprano*
A noble lady abandoned by Don Giovanni

Leporello *bass*
Don Giovanni's rascal servant

Zerlina *soprano*
A peasant girl

Masetto *bass*
Zerlina's betrothed

PLOT SYNOPSIS

In and around Don Giovanni's villa

ACT ONE Leporello waits while his master, Don Giovanni, seduces yet another woman. Don Giovanni runs out masked, with Anna in pursuit. Her father, the Commendatore, challenges Don Giovanni. As Anna flees, the Commendatore is slain. Anna finds his body and demands that Ottavio, her fiancé, avenge the murder. Elvira laments her love for Don Giovanni, saying he seduced her with the promise of marriage. As Don Giovanni walks off impatiently, Leporello adds up his master's conquests ♂. Don Giovanni takes a fancy to Zerlina and invites her betrothed, Masetto, to a party at his villa. Alone with Zerlina, he begins flirting ♂. Elvira rushes in to warn Zerlina against the rake. Anna is now sure that Don Giovanni is the masked killer of her father, while Ottavio vows to discover the truth ♂. Leporello reports that Elvira disrupted the party, but Don Giovanni wants to enjoy himself with new conquests ♂. As Elvira, Anna, and Ottavio arrive wearing masks, Don Giovanni leads Zerlina away, but she cries for help. Don Giovanni finds Ottavio waving a pistol. The trio take off their masks and threaten him. Don Giovanni is shaken, but defiant.

"Madamina, il catalago è questo"

"Là ci darem la mano"

"Dalla sua Pace"

"Finch'han dal vino"



English soprano Emma Albertazzi (1814–1847) as Zerlina in a contemporary illustration of the opera.

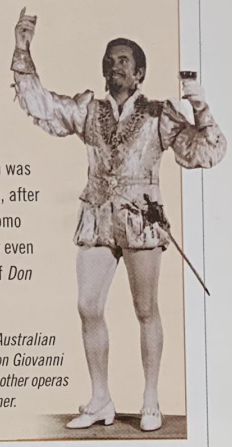
ACT TWO Don Giovanni exchanges clothes with Leporello so he can seduce Elvira's maid. Elvira hears Don Giovanni begging her forgiveness and wants to believe him. Leporello, now dressed as his master, embraces Elvira, while Don Giovanni, dressed as Leporello, serenades Elvira's maid ♂. Masetto comes looking for Don Giovanni and is promptly punched by "Leporello". As "Don Giovanni" flees Elvira, Anna and Ottavio spot him and he immediately reveals he is Leporello. Ottavio vows to kill Don Giovanni. But Elvira still loves the noble ♂. At the cemetery, Don Giovanni jokes about a woman who took him for Leporello. Suddenly, a voice is heard warning that his laughter will soon end. Seeing the Commendatore's statue, Don Giovanni mocks its threat. Leporello invites the statue to dine with his master, and it nods. Don Giovanni is unperturbed. He summons musicians to accompany his dinner. Elvira appears, but is insulted. As she leaves, she screams. The statue of the Commendatore appears. Don Giovanni offers him dinner, but the statue instead invites Don Giovanni to dine with him. Leporello begs his master to refuse, but he agrees. Taking the noble's hand, the statue tells him to repent. "No!" "Repent!" "No!" Then, with a final cry, Don Giovanni is consumed by flames. His enemies arrive and each one decides to start life afresh, now satisfied that Don Giovanni has finally paid for his sins.

"Deh, vieni alla finestra"

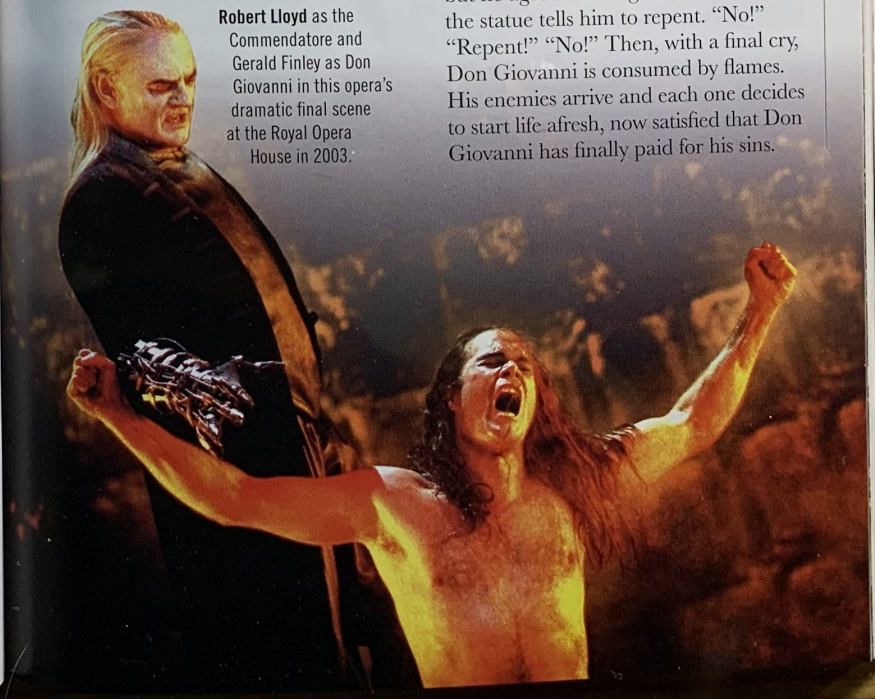
"Mi tradì, quell'alma ingrata"

DON JUAN

The legend of Don Juan was born as a morality tale designed to warn against loose-living. It was brought to the stage in 1630 in Tirso de Molina's play, *El burlador de Sevilla*, which inspired Molière's better-known *Dom Juan, où le festin de Pierre* in 1665. More than a century later, Mozart's operatic version was viewed more lightly. This, after all, was the age of Giacomo Casanova, who probably even attended the premiere of *Don Giovanni* in Prague.



John Brownlee, *the great Australian baritone, was a popular Don Giovanni and also sang lead roles in other operas by Mozart, Verdi, and Wagner.*



Robert Lloyd as the Commendatore and Gerald Finley as Don Giovanni in this opera's dramatic final scene at the Royal Opera House in 2003.

COSÌ FAN TUTTE

(Thus Do All Women)

- Dramma giocoso in two acts, 3 hours
- 1789
- 26 January 1790, Hofurgtheater, Vienna (Austria)
- Lorenzo da Ponte

Così fan tutte, ossia La scuola degli amanti, or *Thus Do All Women, or The School of Lovers*, was not recognized as a masterpiece until the 20th century. Although it contains sublime arias and duets as well as two remarkable 19-minute ensembles, its plot was long considered decadent. Somehow, it was acceptable for *Don Giovanni* to depict men as philanderers, but not for *Così fan tutte* to portray women as fickle. Today, the opera stands on its own, rightly celebrated for its lively plot and beguiling score. Yet it is more than simple *divertimento*. Mozart's music gives the story a poignantly realistic dimension by exploring both the universal fear of betrayal and the thrill of unexpected love.

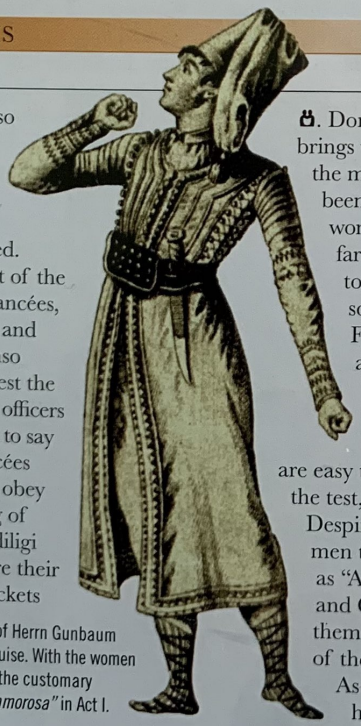
PRINCIPAL ROLES

- Don Alfonso *bass* – A town philosopher
- Fiordiligi *soprano* – A lady of Ferrara
- Dorabella *mezzo-soprano* – Fiordiligi's sister
- Ferrando *tenor* – Dorabella's betrothed
- Guglielmo *baritone* – Fiordiligi's betrothed
- Despina *soprano* – A scheming chambermaid

Così fan tutte echoes elements in Mozart's own life: he married the sister of a woman he had once loved; and his wife, Constanze, frequently away on health cures, left him to his own devices.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Naples, Italy



A contemporary engraving of Herrn Gunbaum as Ferrando, in Albanian disguise. With the women absent, some tenors remove the customary moustache to sing *"Un'aura amorosa"* in Act I.

ACT ONE Don Alfonso warns two young army officers, Ferrando and Guglielmo, that no woman can be trusted. Outraged, they boast of the constancy of their fiancées, the sisters Dorabella and Fiordiligi. Don Alfonso suggests a wager to test the women's fidelity. The officers accept his conditions: to say nothing to their fiancées and, for 24 hours, to obey his orders. Dreaming of their weddings, Fiordiligi and Dorabella admire their lovers' portraits in lockets ♁. Don Alfonso brings word that the men have been mobilized. The women join him in bidding farewell to the soldiers ♁.

"Ah, guarda sorella"

"Soave sia il vento"

Fiordiligi and Dorabella are heartbroken, but the chambermaid Despina assures them that men are easy to find. As part of the test, Don Alfonso bribes Despina to introduce two men to the girls. Disguised as "Albanians", Ferrando and Guglielmo throw themselves at the feet of the astonished sisters. As Fiordiligi proclaims her unwavering faithfulness ♁, the men feel confident of winning the wager. But when Don Alfonso orders the men to feign suicide, the sisters at last show concern. A doctor – Despina in disguise – pretends to cure them. To help their recovery, the men ask for a kiss, but are rebuffed.

"Come soglio immoto resta"

ACT TWO When Dorabella welcomes the idea of some fun, her sister suggests she pick between the two men. To complicate matters, they swap lovers, Dorabella preferring the "dark-haired" fellow (Guglielmo), and Fiordiligi, the "blonde" (Ferrando). Don Alfonso and Despina lead the women to their "Albanian" suitors. Guglielmo claims to be ill – from love – and Dorabella surrenders ♁. Fiordiligi rejects Ferrando, but then appears to be wavering ♁. Guglielmo is proud Fiordiligi has remained faithful to him, while Ferrando is upset to learn that Dorabella has even given away his portrait. Finally Fiordiligi admits she loves a second man, but decides to join her lover at the front. Hearing this, Ferrando demands that she plunge a sword into his heart – and she too is won over. Despina announces that the sisters are ready to marry. The officers complain to Don Alfonso, who explains that "thus do all women" – *così fan tutte* ♁. The notary – again Despina – reads out the marriage contract and, as the women sign, Don Alfonso announces their lovers' return. The "Albanians" vanish and reappear in their own guises. When they point to the marriage contracts, the women admit their guilt. When they then show off their "Albanian" disguises, the sisters beg forgiveness. Don Alfonso tells the couples to make up and all conclude that it is better to laugh than to weep.

"Il coro vi dono"

"Per pietà, ben mio, perdona"

"Tutti accusan le donne"

PERHAPS NOT SO FUNNY

Mozart's music is as magical as ever, but opera-lovers have long been disturbed by *Così fan tutte*'s cynical undertone. On one level, it offers an amusing new twist to a familiar story: this time, women, not men, are tempted to be unfaithful. But on another level, it presents a deeply jaded view of romantic love. For all its slapstick and humour, *Così fan tutte*'s temper is melancholic: unusually, an *opera buffa* ends without joy or laughter.



Lillian Watson as Despina (*centre*) looks on as Wendy Dawn Thompson's Dorabella and Sarah-Jane Davies as Fiordiligi nurse the "Albanians", Garsington Opera, 2004.

DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE

(The Magic Flute)

✍ Eine Deutsche Oper in two acts, 2½ hours
⌛ 1791
🏛 30 September 1791, Freihaustheater auf der Wieden, Vienna (Austria)
🕮 Emanuel Schikaneder

Die Zauberflöte, Mozart's only opera written specifically for a popular audience, is as delightful as it is complex. It can be enjoyed as a fairy-tale, with its magic flute and bells, its animals, clown, and romantic couple. But it is also rife with symbols of Freemasonry and, as such, promotes virtue, love, and wisdom. It is best known for its catchy melodies, the most famous being the Queen of the Night's show-stopping arias, with their furious high F's. Mozart wrote this opera while composing *La clemenza di Tito* and much of his *Requiem*. They exhausted him. He died nine weeks after *Die Zauberflöte*'s premiere.

Wagner viewed *Die Zauberflöte* as the cornerstone of German opera, describing it as "a masterpiece of almost unsurpassable perfection, one which virtually ruled out further expansion of the genre".

PRINCIPAL ROLES

Sarastro *bass*
A mystic lord

Tamino *tenor*
A prince

Queen of the Night *soprano*
Pamina's fearsome mother

Pamina *soprano*
An imprisoned princess

Papageno *baritone*
A birdcatcher

Papagena *soprano*
His beloved

Monostatos *tenor*
A Moor in the service of Sarastro

Speaker of the Temple *bass*

Three Ladies *sopranos*

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Ancient Egypt, in and around Sarastro's castle

ACT ONE Three Ladies save Tamino from a serpent. Impressed by his beauty, they inform the Queen of the Night. Papageno is dreaming of trapping maidens in his bird net ♂ when he hears about the serpent. He claims to have strangled it, but the Ladies padlock his lips for lying. Tamino falls for a picture of Pamina, the queen's daughter. The queen tells him he can win Pamina if he rescues her from the monster Sarastro ♂. Tamino is given a magic flute, and Papageno, silver bells. At Sarastro's castle, the Moor Monostatos is enraged to be rebuffed by Pamina. Recognizing Pamina, Papageno reveals Tamino's passion for her. Together, Papageno and Pamina dream of finding love. Meanwhile, entering a temple, Tamino is ready to fight Sarastro. As voices tell him Pamina is alive, his flute-playing attracts friendly animals ♂. Papageno and Pamina are caught by Monostatos, but Papageno's bells set the Moor and slaves dancing. When Sarastro arrives in a chariot drawn by lions, Pamina complains about the brutish Moor, but Sarastro cannot allow her to return to her evil mother. Monostatos drags in Tamino and the lovers recognize each other. Sarastro decides to test Tamino and Pamina for membership of his brotherhood.

"Der Vogelfänger bin ich, ja"

"O zittre nicht, mein lieber Sohn!"

"Wie stark ist nicht Zauberton"

FREEMASONRY

Mozart joined the Freemasons in 1784 and wrote several cantatas for their ceremonies. With *Die Zauberflöte*, he created a majestic operatic homage to the movement's ideals of wisdom, friendship, nature, and sacrifice. In the libretto, written by a fellow Mason, Emanuel Schikaneder, Sarastro's mystical sect represents a Masonic lodge and is guided by symbols and rituals of the brotherhood.





Stéphane Degout as Papageno and Claire Ormshaw as Papagena in a 2005 production at the Opéra Bastille, Paris, directed by Alex Olle and Carlos Padrissa and designed by the artist Jaume Plensa.

ACT TWO Tamino is ready to fight for friendship and love, although he is not allowed to speak to Pamina. The Queen of the Night reappears, telling Pamina to kill Sarastro with a dagger ♂. After the queen vanishes, Monostatos again tries to woo Pamina. With Papageno ignoring Tamino's orders to remain silent, an old hag offers him water. She gives her age as 18 years and two minutes, and names Papageno as her sweetheart. She then disappears. Tamino and Papageno are brought food and their magic flute and bells. As Papageno cheerfully digs into the feast, Tamino's flute summons Pamina, but she is heartbroken when he refuses to speak ♂. Papageno's only wish is for some wine and a "little wife". The old hag reappears to offer him marriage or eternal captivity. When he reluctantly accepts her, she turns into Papagena. But he is still unworthy of her. Ready to kill herself, Pamina learns that Tamino still loves her. They have yet to overcome various trials but, together, they triumph over flames and floods. In vain, Papageno plays his pipe to call Papagena, but when he rings his bells, she appears ♂. Monostatos joins forces with the Queen of the Night, but they vanish at sunrise. Finally, with Tamino and Pamina clothed in priestly gowns beside him, Sarastro gives thanks to Iris and Osiris for the reward of beauty and wisdom.

"Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen"

"Ach, ich fühl's"

"Pa, pa, pa... Papagena! Papageno!"

