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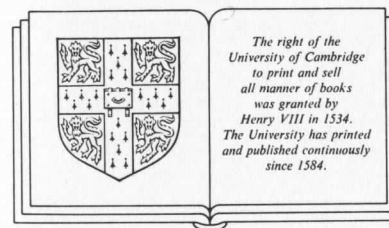
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W.A. Mozart *Die Zauberflöte*

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With *Die Zauberflöte* as with Michael Tippett's libretto for *The Midsummer Marriage*, or Hofmannsthal's for *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, the reader's initial sense of bewilderment gradually gives way to understanding and appreciation. The more one re-reads, ponders and reads about Schikaneder's libretto, the more impressed one becomes at its depth, breadth, charm, humour and mysteriousness.

6 *The music*

ERIK SMITH

Mozart in 1791

The completion of *Così fan tutte* in January 1790 was followed in Mozart's output by a relatively fallow period of over a year.¹ He was forced to make his living in such unpromising ways as orchestrating Handel to sound more up-to-date, or composing for glass-harmonica and mechanical organ (admittedly producing some masterpieces). It may have been that work was not available — he made a desperate and useless journey to the imperial coronation in Frankfurt from September to November 1790 in search of patronage — rather than because of the exhaustion brought on by the pace of the last years (one might say of all the years) of his short life and by the early stages of the illness that was to carry him off in December 1791. At all events, there was little to prepare us for the incredible six months beginning around April 1791 in which he composed, beside some smaller works, the Requiem (a good part of it), the clarinet concerto and two operas which differ fundamentally from their predecessors.

They stand at the start of a new century, which may be said to open a decade early in the arts, as it does politically with the French Revolution. Compared with the baroque richness of *Idomeneo*, *La clemenza di Tito* shows neo-classical austerity. This essay sets out to reveal the new characteristics (taking a few examples from the many available) to be found in *Die Zauberflöte*: in its structure it broke free from the bonds of the eighteenth century, in its harmony it found simplicity for the sake of classical nobility but also to please its popular audience — appropriately enough at a time when the French Revolution was abolishing the age of the aristocrat. And, alone among Mozart's works, it contains the facets of German Romanticism — the fairy-tale, the symbolical and, in a sense, religious meaning, the closeness to folk-song and the exotic setting. It has certainly left its mark, until our own time, on Parisian Grand Opera, on Wagner's

allegorical fairy-tales and right up to Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*.

Mozart's letters to his father from the time of the composition of *Idomeneo* and *Die Entführung* tell us about his views on dramatic construction and librettists, but there is little to be learned from the letters to his wife at Baden written in 1791. He alternately advised her to take good care of herself, and to be less flirtatious. He mentions a meal with Schikaneder on 7 June, but it seems likely that he had begun work on *Die Zauberflöte* after the completion of the Quintet K 614 in mid-April, because so little new music is entered in the *Catalogue* after that. On 11 June he wrote to Constanze, 'out of sheer boredom I have written an aria for the opera'. By 2 July he was asking her to get Süßmayr to return 'meine Spart'² of Act I up to the finale so that he could fill in the instrumentation. He entered the opera in his *Catalogue* as being completed before the end of the month. By then he had received the commission for *La clemenza di Tito*, which he composed and put on in Prague before returning to Vienna to write the overture and march for *Die Zauberflöte*, entered in his *Catalogue* on 28 September. The première took place two days later.

A new public

In composing for Schikaneder's Theater auf der Wieden, Mozart was writing his first opera for a popular audience. (His previous German operas, *Die Entführung* and *Der Schauspieldirektor*, had been written for the court.) His librettist was the experienced actor-manager Schikaneder himself, who well knew the ingredients to whet his public's appetite – humour, magic, stage machinery and more action than meditation. These factors were to have a radical effect on the musical structure.

Mozart's views on the Singspiels by his contemporaries were not complimentary. In 1781 he saw Umlauf's *Die Bergknappen* (very successful in its day) and commented: 'He took a year to write it, but you need not think that it's any good because of that. Entre nous, I should have taken it for a 14 to 15 day job.' And in June 1791, as we heard above (see pp. 31–2), he went to Müller's *Kaspar der Fagottist* and thought that there was nothing to it.

The new opera was to be quite different from these. For one thing there was a serious side to the story, with a musical depiction of the ideals of the Freemasons. For another there was that classical balance and homogeneity which distinguish Mozart's music perhaps above

that of all others and which would still reign over the new elements brought in by Schikaneder and the demands of the popular audience.

Innovations in musical form in *Die Zauberflöte*

Mozart's earlier operas followed the contemporary practice of combining arias, in binary or da capo form, usually on the sorrow or fury of unrequited love, with recitatives and, in the case of *opera buffa*, ensembles to advance the story. By the time of the da Ponte operas sonata and ternary forms were the basic pattern: two examples, 'Dove sono' in *Figaro* and 'Per pietà' in *Così*, include a complete return of the opening words and music. Most ensembles, for example the quartetto and terzetto of *Don Giovanni* (analysed in Julian Rushton's book on the opera in this series) or the Act II terzetto in *Figaro*, are also in a kind of sonata form, though there are subtle variations at the return of the opening to suit the developing situations and words. Like the arias mentioned above, each of these ensembles concerns a single more or less static situation with each character in one prevailing mood, which makes the return of the opening music at the recapitulation quite appropriate. The finales consist of a chain of movements of this sort, each concerned with only one step of the story.

But how did Mozart construct an aria or an ensemble out of a sequence of events and out of changing situations and moods? In the Act I finale of *La finta giardiniera* he had composed a busy rondo, in which different characters entered with the same theme, but with entirely different texts (see Ex. 1). This procedure is musically effective (and was very commonly practised amongst Mozart's contemporaries), but it hardly shows the composer's art of fitting exactly the right music to every piece of the text at its most exalted level.

Example 1



In *Figaro* Mozart departs from formal structure with its demand for a recapitulation of the opening melody on several important occasions. In 'Porgi amor' we get entirely new music instead of a recapitulation: the text is actually the same as at the start, but the

Countess has now abandoned the controlled sorrow of the opening for a mood of greater despair, which calls for different music. Only the orchestral coda returns to the calmer music of the introduction. 'Deh vieni' has no melodic recapitulation, though the mood and rhythm of the opening are always with us. Mozart again rounds off the aria with the orchestra repeating the end of the introduction. The sextet predicts most clearly the structures of *Die Zauberflöte*. After the opening subject (Figaro reconciled to his parents) and a new section (Susanna's arrival and fury) the recapitulation is due: but Marcellina needs a new tune to explain to Susanna that she is Figaro's mother, so she is *accompanied* by the opening subject now played by the woodwind. This use of what we might call a vestigial recapitulation becomes the norm in *Die Zauberflöte*.

Whatever freedom he allows himself in the return of melodies, Mozart always adheres to the *harmonic* pattern of sonata form – the move to the dominant or relative major, the so-called development in various keys (which may be more concerned with *new* subjects than with development, depending on the demands of the libretto), the recapitulation and often a coda in the tonic.

Five pieces become strophic songs, a form more common in the Singspiel than in *opera buffa*. Each one is about a single subject: Papageno's nature and aspirations in nos. 2 and 20, love in no. 7, the lust of Monostatos in no. 13 and the ideals of the temple in no. 15. (There are variations in the melody of the second verse of no. 7 and in the accompaniment of the later verses of no. 20.)

But in the other arias and ensembles, the text, in developing new emotions and situations, will not permit a repeat of the same music. In 'Dies Bildnis', Tamino is led through admiration of Pamina's portrait (first subject) and the awakening of love (second subject in the dominant) to the thought of finding her (development ending on the chord of the dominant seventh). The thought is almost too much for him (a whole bar's rest). What would he do then? Well, (although he is back in the tonic key), certainly not go back to mere admiration of a portrait, as sonata form would demand. The violins lead him on with a tender phrase, while he expresses with gradually increasing confidence his hopes of embracing Pamina. The vestigial recapitulation occurs in bars 52–6 to the words 'und ewig wäre sie dann mein' ('then she would be mine for ever'), to the melody originally heard in bars 10–14 to the words 'mein Herz mit neuer Regung füllt' ('fills my heart with new emotion').

Apart from formal considerations, there is an emotional effect in hearing a melody for the second time, never more so than in those quintessentially Mozartian moments when a melody first heard in the major returns in the minor. In 'Ach, ich fühl's,' which fits into the harmonic pattern of sonata form, neither words nor music are recapitulated, except for that magical phrase (bars 12–13 'meinem Herzen') which returns (in bars 30–1 'so wird Ruhe') but now with the poignant sweetness of the B flat major phrase turned to the heartbreaking sorrow of G minor.

The Queen of Night's aria no. 14 has the appearance of an *opera seria* piece, but here again the recapitulation is only suggested. The return of the tonic D minor at bar 73 coincides, not with a repeat of the opening (which never reappears at all), but with a one-bar coloratura phrase taken from the second subject at bar 30. Apart from that, only the strikingly dramatic exclamation 'flammet um mich her' ('[death and despair] flame around me') in bars 8–10 (see Ex. 2) reappears in bars 80–2 and again, with modified rhythm, in bars 90–3.

Example 2



The system of the vestigial recapitulation, used occasionally in earlier operas, becomes the rule in *Die Zauberflöte*. Even in the overture, where he was not dependent on the demands of the text, Mozart used a truncated recapitulation, cutting the first twenty-three bars of the Allegro and beginning with the first *forte*.

Papageno's suicide aria in the Act II finale is in rondo form, but only the four-bar refrain (Ex. 3) returns. Its jolly nature is in amusing contrast to the woeful words.

Example 3

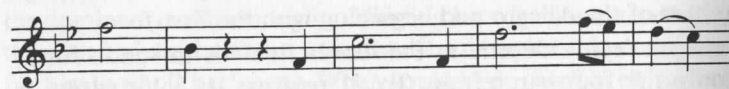


The ensembles are built on the same sort of principles as the arias. The quintet no. 5 could be described harmonically as a sonata rondo with coda, but not in the normal sense of a recurring melody, for Mozart constantly finds new words and new situations requiring new music. There are, however, a few phrases, sometimes very slight, which reappear to give the listener a faint feeling of unity. Here is the plan of the quintet:

- Bars 1–33 in B flat. Tamino commiserates with the padlocked Papageno. A perfunctory modulation brings
- Bars 34–77 in F. The Ladies release Papageno and they all moralize: a short modulation leads to
- Bars 80–132 in B flat with entirely new music. The Ladies present Tamino with the magic flute. More moralizing and another short modulation to
- Bars 133–71 in G minor. Papageno is ordered to accompany Tamino.
- Bars 172–83. A short E flat section in which Papageno is presented with the glockenspiel.
- Bars 184–213 in B flat. The new treasures are admired. After saying good-bye, the men remember to ask the way.
- The Andante in B flat forms the coda. The men are told of the Three Boys who will accompany them and they again take their leave.

Harmonically, then, this appears to be a rondo, but in fact the constant stream of melody has few repeats and no recapitulations. The phrase for 'O Prinz, nimm dies Geschenk' ('O Prince, accept this gift') in bars 80–4 (see Ex. 4) is used later for 'sind zu eurem Schutz vonnöthen' ('they are necessary for your protection') in bars 188–91: in both places the Ladies refer to the gift of the flute.

Example 4



Also, the descending legato scales of the violins, accompanying the general admiration for the flute in bars 109–16, become descending staccato scales for the woodwind in bars 185–7 where both of the magic instruments are praised. Papageno's section (bars 133–83) is pervaded by his fluttering motif in the violins (Ex. 5) which becomes a fainter flutter during the farewell (Ex. 6). The whole ensemble is built with great economy and brevity: the text is only repeated in the

Example 5



Example 6



way one might expect of a repeat in a play, that is where Tamino tells Papageno he is sorry he cannot help him, in the little moralizing homilies that are dotted through the entire opera, or in the farewell.

The next encounter between Tamino, Papageno and the Three Ladies, the quintet no. 12, shows a similar construction. Here, however, there is a single situation throughout: that of the Three Ladies trying to deflect the steadfast Tamino and the gullible Papageno from their new duties. Mozart, therefore, binds the first half of the quintet with a recurring instrumental phrase (Ex. 7) which at first represents the sweet blandishments of the Ladies.

Example 7

When Tamino adopts it by singing his rather platitudinous refusals to it, the Ladies drop it altogether and begin a new sweet strain at bar 112. When this, too, fails, they all join in singing of the resolution of men who will not speak foolishly. In the end the Three

Ladies are driven off by the threatening cries of the Priests (off-stage) – an anticipation, both dramatic and musical, of the routing of the forces of night at the end of the opera.

The finales

The finales bear little relation to the tight constructions of those in the da Ponte operas. In each new section of the latter, predicament was heaped upon predicament to lead to the greatest excitement of the greatest number of people before the curtain came down. The Act II finale of *Figaro* is a perfect example, and the type lives on in Rossini. The finales of *Die Zauberflöte* are more episodic, for the libretto presented Mozart with a number of separate scenes not necessarily connected with those that follow. This is particularly true of the finale to Act II, which consists of four virtually separate and self-contained pieces:

1. In E flat, scenes 26 and 27, in which the Three Boys rescue Pamina from her suicide-bid.
2. In C minor (ending in C major), scene 28, in which Tamino passes the Two Men in Armour and is finally united with Pamina. Together they undergo the trials of fire and water. A hidden chorus hails their triumph.
3. In G major, scene 29, in which Papageno, disconsolate without the promised Papagena, is only saved from suicide by the Three Boys, who urge him to play his magic bells. This conjures up Papagena and they rejoice together.
4. In C minor (ending, with the same key-signature, in E flat), scene 30, in which the Queen and her Ladies, now joined by Monostatos, are foiled in their attempt to destroy the temple and are routed. Sarastro and the chorus celebrate the triumph of light over darkness.³

The Act I finale presents a continuous sequence of events in the normal fashion, with just one complete break in the middle, when the stage is left empty for a moment between the departure of Tamino at the end of scene 15 and the entry of Pamina and Papageno. Even then, these two scenes are cleverly linked, for in scene 15, with Tamino on stage, we hear the off-stage pipings of Papageno, and then in scene 16 when Papageno and Pamina have entered, we hear the off-stage flute of Tamino. The marvels of this finale cannot be fully described, but something must be said about the long scene in recitative, in which Tamino finds the Temple of Wisdom and meets the Old Priest, perhaps the most influential scene Mozart ever wrote in respect of later opera composers.

In Italian accompanied recitatives, the words were sung to that

unmelodic so-called approximation to dramatic speech which had become a convention. It was left to the orchestra to intervene with a musical characterization of events and emotions. (French recitative, especially Gluck's and, of course, Italian recitative in the operas of Monteverdi, had already shown far greater musical expressiveness.) In Tamino's great scene, he often (and the Priest occasionally) breaks into highly expressive *arioso*. The orchestra performs several functions, in providing rhythmic impetus as it punctuates Tamino's short phrases (bars 39–49), in depicting his actual movements on the stage (bar 58, for example, and bars 68–71), and in describing feelings – not so much the ones spoken of but those as yet unperceived. Thus, when Tamino tells the Old Priest that he has come to seek the realm of love and virtue, his melodic phrase (bars 88–90) is intertwined with a short melody on the clarinets which anticipates the march of the Priests at the start of Act II, though at this early stage Tamino is far from believing that he will find love and virtue among the Priests. More remarkable still is the wistful little phrase (Ex. 8) (bar 102, and then bars 103–4 and 106–7) which contradicts Tamino's stern refusal, sung in these bars, to have anything to do with Sarastro;

Example 8



it also contradicts the Priest's rather cool behaviour. This phrase expresses the germ of Tamino's conversion to the goodness and truth of the temple. The Priest does not say much to help Tamino, yet at his exit we hear that falling sixth (bar 139) once more and a falling diminished seventh in the next bar. Tamino now prays for conversion to the faith of light (bars 141–3); the mysterious off-stage chorus, setting his mind at rest about the fate of Pamina, brings it about. Music and mystery are used as in Masonic ritual.

In the intermingling of recitative and melody, of discussion and emotion, of solo voices and chorus, the old division between the recitative and the 'musical number' is at last broken down. This is one of the important ways in which *Die Zauberflöte* pointed forward to the much freer construction of nineteenth-century opera.

When there is a text a composer can allow the music to be shaped by the words alone without the need to impose a form of the kind required by instrumental music. But the great composers have rarely been content to accept this solution. Wagner's formal solution was, of course, in the leitmotif, which, though directly related to the text of the moment, had its cross-references in the rest of the music. Even twentieth-century opera composers continued to demand some kind of musical structure. Berg and Britten both used such forms as variations and the passacaglia in their operas; admittedly these structures are not perceptible except to the prepared listener, but they must represent a useful loom, as it were, on which to weave the music. In *Die Zauberflöte* Mozart predicts this approach, for his form, sonata or rondo, has a harmonic plan which is hidden because it lacks the melodic landmarks.

Perhaps the most striking feature of all about *Die Zauberflöte* is the economy and brevity of each episode.⁴ Words are not usually repeated. There are very few musical repeats, apart from the five strophic numbers: a 14-bar section in no. 1 ('Du Jüngling schön und liebevoll'), the two halves of the march, and very little else. If one asked an opera-lover brought up on Wagner and Verdi but not familiar with *Die Zauberflöte* to guess how long a duet Mozart had provided for Tamino and Pamina at the end of all their trials, the last music they sing in the opera, what might he guess? The answer is: two bars! *Die Zauberflöte* had no influence on the nineteenth century in this respect.

The setting of the text

We have seen that Mozart did not allow traditional concepts of form to impede him from telling the story in the most direct way and with exactly the right musical equivalent. More than that, he did not even allow the *text* to get in the way of the right musical expression. One might have thought that in at last setting an opera in his own language and after his own heart, he would have paid the greatest attention to reflecting the natural stresses required by the meaning of the words. But his opinion of librettists was not high: during the time of *Die Entführung* (when he had admittedly not yet met his two best librettists) he put them on a par with trumpeters – and his opinion of *them* is reflected in the very simple parts he trusted them with. He sometimes composed before he had received the actual libretto; he said of Osmin's aria: 'I have described the aria to Herr Stephanie

completely – and the essentials of the music were complete before Stephanie knew a thing about it.'

Die Zauberflöte is full of wrong stresses, permitted by Mozart because he regarded the character of the music as more important. The very first words in the opera are a case in point. Why does he put such weight on 'bin' in 'Zu Hilfe! Zu Hilfe! sonst bin ich verloren'? when the accent would fall correctly on 'verlören'. ('Help! or I'm *lost*', not 'I *am* lost'). The answer is partly in order to stretch out what would be a rather banal two-bar phrase (Ex. 9)

Example 9



into something suitably irregular for Tamino's panic. And the repeated high 'i' of 'bin' underlines that feeling of panic. Mozart often makes Tamino sing his higher notes on that vowel, usually considered to be so awkward on high notes. In fact, it appears in our next illustration.

Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön,
Wie noch kein Auge je gesehn!

The musical accents fall on 'Bildnis' and 'noch', while the sense demands that they should fall on 'bezaubernd schön' and 'kein Auge'. Yet the outburst on the top G, as Mozart wrote it, exactly expresses the release of pent-up emotion, which was more important to him. If the matter of the wrong accents had really worried Mozart and Schikaneder, they might have changed the text here to, say, 'Wie schön ist dieses Zauberbild' or to 'so reizend hold, so zaubrisch schön' as in the Simrock full score of 1814, which had the text re-arranged throughout to overcome these 'errors'.⁵

There are many other instances. Pamina sings 'Ach, ich fühl's, es ist verschwunden' with the main accent on 'ist' (where it does not belong, unless the sense was 'yes, it *has* vanished, whatever you may say!'). Mozart's indifference to the matter of accented words is proved by the fact that he sometimes made changes which put accents in the wrong places when they had been right before. There is a sketch correctly set as 'Pamina retten' (Ex. 10),⁶ which in the final version becomes 'Pamina retten' (Ex. 11), as though to say that he must rescue

Example 10



Example 11



Pamina and nobody else. Yet the latter version is musically the more interesting and also allows Tamino to dwell lovingly on the name of Pamina. He rebarred the duet no. 7 when he had nearly finished writing it, so that it now starts:

'Bei Männern *welche* Liebe *fühlen*,' instead of the original correct 'Bei *Männern* *welche* Liebe *fühlen*.'⁷

A different case of Mozart flouting the sense of the words is in the chorus in the Act I finale:

Es lebe Sarastro, der	sotto voce
göttliche Weise,	f
er lohnet und strafet in	sotto voce
ähnlichem Kreise.	f

The dynamics make something mysterious and disturbing out of music that might otherwise have been a little banal, but they certainly have nothing to do with the words.

Mozart's music is in *Die Zauberflöte* always the perfect expression of the *meaning* of the words and the emotion behind the text. In no other opera does almost every phrase express the meaning in an unmistakable manner. Two passages which do so more clearly than almost any other are actually songs without words – Papageno's humming through his padlocked mouth, and the 'pa-pa-pas' of the two bird-people's wooing.

There is also instrumental music vividly expressive for mime, as when Papageno first spies Pamina and cautiously enters her room (no. 6). Is there anything so descriptive in the earlier operas apart from the duel in *Don Giovanni*?

Every page of the score has examples of musical phrases which



Plate 2. Act I, scene 14: opening bars of the duetto 'Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen'

conjure up the characters: for example Pamina's gestures in her suicidal mood with its broken phrases finally healed by the courteous intervention of the Three Boys, in the restraining gesture that precedes 'Sollte dies dein Jüngling sehen' ('If your youth should see this') (Ex. 12).

It is, of course, in the nature of opera that the music should express the meaning and the emotion of the moment. Mozart had long practised the fine art, a particularly interesting exercise being in the

Example 12



entr'actes of *Thamos* (c. 1776–7), where the autograph bears explanations in the hand of Leopold Mozart ('the false character of Pheron', 'the honesty of Thamos', 'the treacherous conspiracy of Mirza and Pheron', etc.).

We know what emphasis Mozart laid on the character of Osmin's aria of rage in *Die Entführung*. Surely *Die Zauberflöte* shows the illustrative capacity of music at its most complete. But he did not easily arrive at that perfection. He owed much to da Ponte and Schikaneder. It is not by chance that *Idomeneo* and *Die Entführung*, for all the great beauty of the music, do not approach *Figaro* and *Die Zauberflöte* in popularity. In *Die Entführung* Mozart and Stephanie decided, presumably together, to set neither Selim's words nor the actual abduction and capture of the Europeans to music. In this way they eliminated most of the potential for drama, avoiding a true dramatic confrontation between Constanze and the Bassa in favour of the comic tiffs between Blondchen and Osmin. Apart from that, some of the music really does not fit the character of the text, for example that of the quartet no. 16. So much the worse for the text, since this is one of the most beautiful ensembles ever composed, none of it more so than the gentle *Siciliana* to which the ladies sing most unsuitably about their lovers' intolerable suspiciousness.

By contrast, the music of *Die Zauberflöte* not only mirrors the meaning of the text, but illustrates all the important actions and emotions of the opera. The dialogue is only needed for explanations, ritual and extra comedy.

The language of melody

It has been suggested that Mozart's melodic invention was drying up at this time and that he was consequently forced to borrow more than usual from his earlier works. Both A. Hyatt King (*Mozart in Retrospect* (Oxford, 1955)) and Jean Chantavoine (*Mozart dans Mozart* (Paris, 1948)) provide many examples of thematic relationships between parts of *Die Zauberflöte* and other works. It is a fascinating pursuit, though in the nature of the limitations of diatonic music there are bound to be many similarities. Mozart does seem to have connected particular emotions with particular phrases. There is surely the same kind of exultation in 'Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön' (Ex. 13) as in Pamina's 'Tamino mein' in the Act II finale (Ex. 14) (and several times more in the scene that opens with it and in the flute solo that follows). There is exultation of a very different kind,

Example 13



Example 14



but exultation nonetheless, in the Queen's 'Sarastro Todesschmerzen' ('Sarastro [must feel through you] the pangs of death') (Ex. 15).

Example 15



The same phrase in the minor illustrates revenge, as in the Queen's 'Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen' ('Hell's vengeance boils in my heart') (Ex. 16) or in the Old Priest's 'weil Tod und Rache dich entzünden' ('because you are fired by death and vengeance') (Ex. 17).

Example 16



Example 17



One can also find melodic similarities with other works of the same period, such as Papageno's trembling 'motif' 'O wär' ich eine Maus' ('If only I were a mouse') (Ex. 18) to the 'Quantus tremor est futurus'

Example 18



(‘What trembling there will be’) in the Requiem (Ex. 19). And there are echoes of music of another period, such as the lovers’ farewell ‘Ach, goldne Ruhe’ (‘Ah, golden peace!’) in the terzetto no. 19 (Ex. 20) to Ilia’s ‘Peggio è di morte’ (‘It is worse than death’), *Imeneo* no. 21 (Ex. 21) (the quartet, another parting of lovers).

Example 19



Example 20



Example 21



The phrase which opens the final chorus ‘Heil sei euch Geweihten’ (Ex. 22) had also appeared in the final chorus of *Idomeneo* (‘Scenda Amor, scenda Imeneo’) and in the reconciliation scene of *Figaro* (‘Contessa, perdono’ – an expression of ‘All’s well that ends well’).

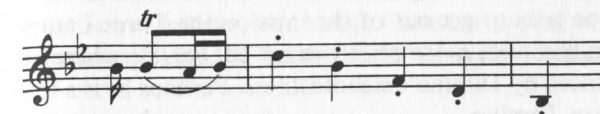
Example 22



Yet, the same phrase (admittedly introduced by a stern *unisono*) played in C minor by the woodwind and cellos at the opening of the scene with the Two Men in Armour, sounds full of foreboding and desolation.

None of these can be described as a ‘leitmotif’, but we do find that Mozart attached more or less the same meaning to a phrase wherever it occurs. A curious example, hard to explain in this sense, is in the striking phrase that opens the quintet no. 5 (Ex. 23). It also appears three times as Tamino tries the temple doors (when the third door opens, there is, in contrast to this descending arpeggio, a *rising* triad).

Example 23



The same theme appears about twenty times in the *Idomeneo* recitative (no. 23) in which the High Priest describes the terrors inflicted by the monster. What have these serious moments got to do with Papageno’s comic predicament? Perhaps the answer is that to Papageno the predicament was not comic at all and that Mozart, true dramatist that he is, sees things through his characters’ eyes. When at last Papageno is united with Papagena and they foresee the arrival of a numerous family, the violins play this motif with a *rising* arpeggio (Ex. 24).⁸

Example 24



Musical characterization

If Mozart characterized every moment’s thought and feeling, he also had a musical view of each character as a whole – the Queen alternating pathos with spitting venom, or Monostatos, small surely (the opposite of his colleague Osmin), always neurotically jingling

(the accompaniment illustrates this more than his vocal part) except for the moment when he complacently cocks his ear to hear what his reward shall be. The expression of Tamino and Pamina is normally in the long, noble, legato line. The feminine wiles of the Three Ladies, sentimental and spiky by turns, are beautifully displayed, but the mere fact of having to write in harmony for three more or less equal voices makes it difficult to differentiate strongly between the Three Ladies, the Three Boys, the Slaves in no. 8 and the Priests in no. 18.

Papageno is usually seen as a totally simple merry fellow, but his suicide attempt should prevent a heedlessly merry interpretation of the rest of the part. Mozart brings Papageno's lugubrious side to our attention with surprising excursions into the key of G minor (the 'key of suffering'; see p. 130), not only in the suicide scene but also in no. 5, bar 134, where he tries to get out of the mission the Three Ladies have imposed on him and, more briefly in no. 12, bar 71, where he remains unconvinced by Tamino's steadfastness. Perhaps he is a less simple fellow than Tamino.

Of course, each character, except the Queen, also enters the musical styles of the others when taking part in ensembles. Sometimes one is not sure whose world it is: the duet 'Bei Männern', no. 7, seems to have the simplicity of Papageno's folk-tune-like melodies, but it is Pamina who starts it. In fact its long-spun melody, the legato aspect of which is emphasized in the decorated second verse, may be more appropriate to Pamina than to Papageno after all.

Sarastro is the most difficult character to assess, both dramatically and musically. His rôle in the story is strangely ambivalent: he turns from the supposed ogre of the opening scenes to the supposedly godlike leader of the later parts. He seems to have abducted Pamina on account of his own passion, which is hinted at in their encounter in the Act I finale. He calls her 'O Liebe' and admits 'du liebest einen andern sehr. Zur Liebe will ich dich nicht zwingen, doch geb ich dir die Freiheit nicht' ('O love, you love another very much. I will not force you to love, yet I do not give you your freedom'). If this is not the behaviour of an ogre, it smacks more of a Bassa Selim than of a wise priest. And why does he employ the unsuitable Monostatos and punish him so mockingly? We are concerned with the music here, not with the problems of the libretto, but did Mozart himself show ambiguous feelings about Sarastro and his establishment? The weird dynamics of the hymn of praise to Sarastro were mentioned above. Gerl obviously prided himself on his low notes, so Mozart – to the despair of many a bass-singer since – allowed him to display them

rather ostentatiously, especially the unaccompanied low F on 'doch'. Is this to be taken entirely seriously?

The strange little duet, no. 11, in which Two Priests sing of the dire consequences of heeding women's wiles, seems to be comic in intention. The perky setting of the words 'Tod und Verzweiflung war sein Lohn' ('His reward was death and despair') and Mozart's jocular quotation of them in his letter of 11 June strengthen this view.

It is difficult to love Sarastro's music quite as much as the rest of the opera. One reason may be that much of the opera is often performed too slowly.⁹ 'O Isis' is a fine if slightly sanctimonious air. But 'In diesen heiligen Hallen', though full of excellent sentiments, shows in its melody a curious regular repetition of the same pattern, as though Sarastro pacing around felt himself hemmed in by the 'sacred walls' at every second bar (Ex. 25).

Example 25



The harmonic scheme

Mozart chose the keys for the pieces that make up an opera for three entirely separate reasons. He observed a general rule that each opera as a whole and, from *Die Entführung* onwards, each finale, though consisting of many pieces in different keys, should begin and end in the same key. In the later operas elaborate patterns become noticeable in the keys of successive pieces: thus, for example, *Figaro* has the succession E flat – B flat – G – C at the end of Act I, again at the start of Act II and almost immediately again at the start of the finale to Act II. In *Così* there are other patterns: the first five pieces of Act I move down a third at a time – G – E – C – A – F minor. The key-signatures of the first nine numbers in Act II are based on triads: G – B flat – E flat, D – F – B flat, E – G – C minor. In *Die Zauberflöte* there is no real pattern of this sort (another superfluous sophistication to be cast aside when dealing with essentials), but all the pieces of Act I before the finale are in the keys of the triad of E flat – E flat (or its relative minor), G or B flat.

The second reason for choosing a key is in the inherent character of that key. We shall come to the Masonic significance of keys later, but there are emotions and subject-matters which Mozart tended to attach to a particular key (as he did to a particular melodic phrase). This was partly on account of the wind-instruments that were at home in a particular key, often for purely practical reasons. So music of pomp and battle was normally in D and C, the keys for trumpets and timpani (though they were also played in B flat and E flat, especially in the later works). The clarinet, which conveyed tender feelings, took over the key of E flat more and more, though also happy to perform in B flat and A, but never in G.¹⁰ D major is also a *buffo* key, G major a rustic key and so on.

Hermann Abert in his great biography claims that 'the key of the mystical basic idea is E flat, that of the world of the Priests is F, that of the dark hostile powers is C minor, while G major is reserved for the cloudless world of the comic figures. The key of suffering is G minor. At the most important points the representatives of the opposing powers leave their sphere to enter sharper keys, the Queen D minor and Sarastro E Major.' But, alas, the exceptions are often discovered almost before the rules! One must ask, for example, what Papageno (no. 20) and Monostatos (in no. 8, scene 19) are doing in the Priests' F major.

Mozart clearly did associate particular keys with particular subjects, though probably in an instinctive rather than in a schematic way. For instance, the key of C minor throughout *Die Zauberflöte* is nearly always connected with death or the threat of death:¹¹ the opening scene in which Tamino is pursued by the serpent, two phrases in the scene with the Old Priest 'weil Tod und Rache dich entzünden' ('because you are fired by thoughts of death and vengeance') and 'Wenn du dein Leben liebst so rede, bleibe da' ('If you love your life, speak, stay!'). In the second finale there are Pamina's thoughts of suicide, the chorale of the Armed Men with its reference to 'Todesschrecken' ('death's terrors'), the invasion of the temple by the forces of evil. Less obvious is the rôle of the key of A flat, a rather rare key in Mozart. In *Die Zauberflöte* it nearly always denotes rescue or relief after danger: the rescue of Tamino by the Three Ladies, the appearance of the Old Priest, the approach of the Three Boys to the demented Pamina, the passage after the chorale when Tamino is about to be joined by Pamina for good. Though the contrast is generally with the threatening C minor, it is interesting that Mozart turns for relief not to the relative major,

E flat, but to its subdominant A flat (strictly speaking, the first two of these examples are in A flat as the subdominant in E flat sections). But these recurring keys, like the recurring themes mentioned above, seem to be due to a subconscious procedure. If he had set out to use keys schematically, he would surely have differentiated between the grief of Pamina and that of her wicked mother, instead of using G minor for both.

The third reason for the choice of key is so obvious that it is rarely commented on: when Mozart invented a melody (to a given text and situation) to be sung by the voice available (he always composed with particular singers in mind) only one key was possible. For Tamino's glorious outburst at the opening of the Bildnis aria his top note had to be G – and that automatically made for an aria in E flat. Likewise, he had to modulate into F for Pamina's cry 'Tamino mein' for the sake of the soprano's radiant A. No other note would have done.

The orchestration

The accompaniment is always subservient to the main idea, the telling of the story, the depiction of the emotions. It never serves a purely decorative function as did the wind obbligati in *Idomeneo*, *Entführung*, *Così*, and even the contemporary *Clemenza di Tito*.

If this was partly because the orchestra of the Theater auf der Wieden was markedly inferior to that of the Nationaltheater, Mozart, as always, makes a virtue of a necessity and creates a score which could not be more ideally suited to its purpose. The only obbligati are of the two magic instruments, and these are used sparingly. The magic flute is only played twice (not counting the stage-direction that Tamino plays it in the dialogue of Act II, scene 17) and even then Mozart soon interrupts the rondo with flute obbligato to get on with the story (with just enough time to charm the wild beasts).

The chorus, too, is confined to essentials. In its first appearance in the Act I finale and at the conclusion of the trials it is not permitted a full-length melodic piece like the chorus in a similar position in *La clemenza* but has little more than a few bars of a glorified fanfare.

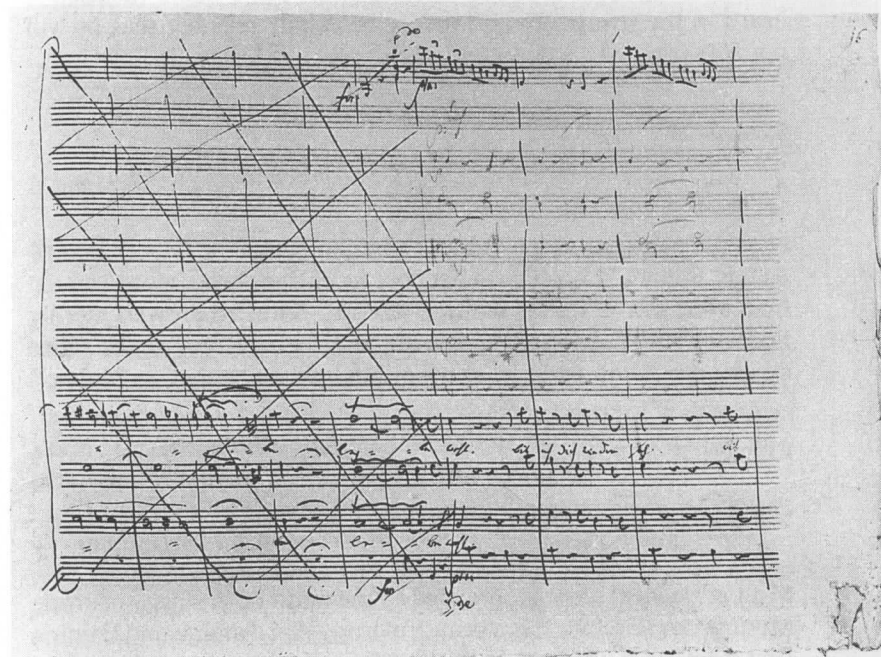
The accompaniment is kept as simple as possible.¹² An article by Gernot Gruber in the *Mozart Jahrbücher* of 1967 and of 1968–70 states that of the changes of instrumentation made by Mozart in the autograph, thirty simplified or reduced the scoring while only seven increased it. Most of the changes are very slight. Two of the most striking changes occur in no. 1. Originally there were trumpets and

Plate 3. Act I, scene 1: opening of the *Introduction* in Mozart's autograph

timpani playing from the start (see Plate 3). They do add to the tension of the scene. (Roger Norrington and Kent Opera included them at one performance in Bath in 1980.) But Mozart must have decided to cut them to avoid anticipating the brilliant trumpet entry as the Ladies kill the serpent.¹³ The other change occurs at the end of the piece, where Mozart originally had a $\frac{6}{4}$ chord followed by a full cadenza for the Three Ladies, rather an amusing idea in view of their boastful behaviour. But he crossed it out (see Plate 4).

When an instrument does have an independent line, not merely a doubling part to support a voice, it must have a special significance. The bassoon does in two awe-inspiring moments: in no. 4 (doubled by the viola), as the Queen describes Pamina's terror at her abduction, and in no. 21, as Pamina recounts the mysterious origin of the flute.

The encounter of Pamina and Sarastro in the Act I finale can serve to illustrate Mozart's use of the accompaniment. In earlier works, or in *La clemenza di Tito*, this confrontation would probably have taken place in recitative, possibly in *recitativo accompagnato*.

Plate 4. Act I, scene 1: last six bars of the deleted cadenza for the Three Ladies in the *Introduction*

But in *Die Zauberflöte* Mozart opened the frontiers between recitative and ensemble, so that this scene fits quite naturally into its surroundings. Pamina opens calmly and nobly 'Herr, ich bin zwar Verbrecherin' ('Lord, though I am guilty') with long notes over slow chords, but at the thought of 'der böse Mohr' ('the wicked Moor') her indignation becomes evident in the accompaniment figure in the violins (see Ex. 26). Sarastro replies with long notes and dignity,

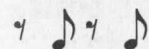
Example 26



but when he begins to speak of love the flute joins him and leads him over his hesitation to a rather embarrassed repetition of the words 'einen andern sehr' ('you greatly love another'), and now, as he

thinks of his own love for her, his heart-beats make themselves heard in the strings (Ex. 27) before he calmly tells her that he will not free her.

Example 27



At this, Pamina's thoughts of her poor mother make her more agitated than ever, as the violins indicate (Ex. 28). Sarastro answers sternly in unison with the dotted rhythm of the strings and, as Pamina calms down, the scene ends in conventional accompanied recitative.¹⁴

Example 28



Most of the next scene is pervaded by the motif of the busy, neurotic Monostatos (Ex. 29). It is a beautiful irony that Tamino and Pamina first meet, as it were, under his auspices. For a moment the strings change to a smoother figure for this encounter (Ex. 30).

Example 29



Example 30



Immediately the chorus cry out 'Was soll das heissen?' ('What does this mean?'), the only time they abandon their formal duties, to create the most vivid tension – with just five notes in unison (Ex. 31). The effect is closer to 'Hagen, was tust du?' ('Hagen, what dost thou?') at the death of Siegfried in *Götterdämmerung* (Ex. 32) than to anything else in Mozart.

Example 31



Example 32



The scoring, though enormously varied, never exists for the mere sake of its own colour, as it does, for example, in the late dances for the Redoutensaal, but always, as in the greatest music of Wagner and Verdi, for the specific purpose of giving the right dramatic and emotional colour to the scene or to the moment.

As in all of Mozart's greatest operas, almost every piece has its unique tonal colour. Only five orchestral combinations are used for two pieces, none for three. For the Priests, basset-horns and trombones are present as a colour, not as solos (no. 10 even omits violins and double-basses for a special twilight effect). But Sarastro speaking informally, as it were, in nos. 15 and 19, does without them.

Mozart especially favoured the clarinet in his late years, perhaps because of its Freemasonic association, or his affection for the brilliant virtuoso Stadler, or just because he liked its sound. Clarinets appear, of course, in the tutti pieces – the overture and the end of the opera. They are naturally omitted from all pieces with basset-horns since they were played by the same musicians. If we exclude the C clarinets, which rather lack the warmth of the B flat and A clarinets and are principally used in pieces of a more military band-like character, nos. 11 and 13, the use of the clarinets indicates a subject of special importance, not specifically Masonic, in fact usually that of love – when the Three Ladies fall head over heels in no. 1, in Tamino's aria no. 3 and the duet no. 7 (all these in E flat). But it also characterizes the first mention of the Three Boys in no. 5 and the important announcements by the Three Boys at the opening of each finale. The most telling example is at Tamino's words 'Der Lieb und Tugend Eigentum' ('The realm of love and virtue') in his scene with the Old Priest. In the autograph we can see that Mozart, after writing four notes for the flute (which he used in the whole of this scene), crossed them out and

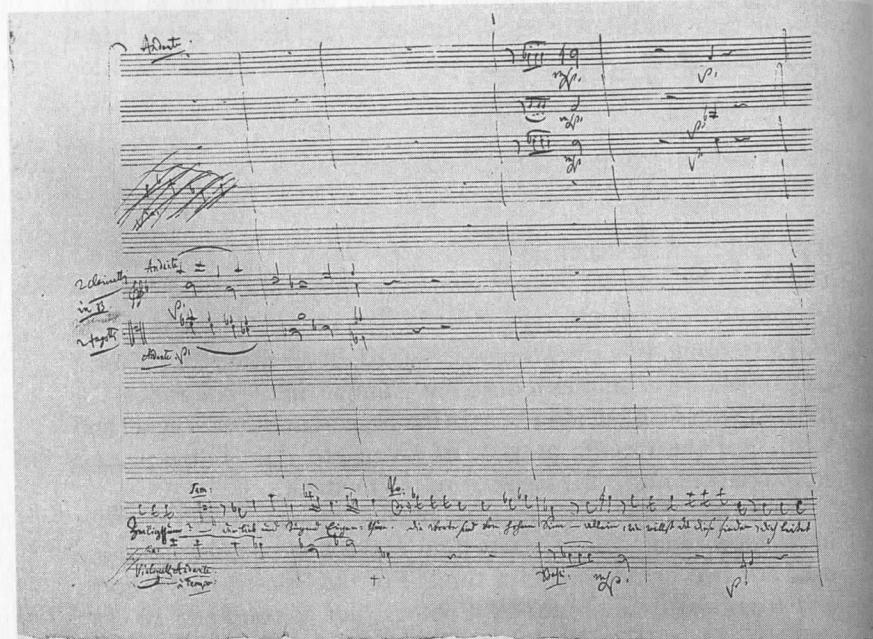


Plate 5. Act I, scene 15: revised scoring in the scene for Tamino and the Old Priest

rescored them for the clarinets (see Plate 5) – which make no appearance apart from these two bars, if we discount the C clarinets mentioned above, between the beginning of the first and the second finale. The melody they play (referred to above as a sort of leitmotif) suggests the opening of the Priests' march no. 9 (where it is played by a flute and basset-horns). This detail of scoring must have been important to him, but seems to stem rather from the musical dictates of his inner ear than from a system of symbolical use of instruments (see 'Masonic symbolism' below).

The Three Boys sing for the most part without double-basses, which gives them a suitably air-borne effect. When they appear at the start of the Act II finale it is with a wind-band, like the one in *Così* suitable for a twilight serenade (here it is an aubade).¹⁵

Mozart is very conscious of the subtlest details of scoring: he calls on the first violins to play on the fourth string at 'schon nahet sie sich' in no. 1; he used trumpets and timpani both *con sordini* at the

opening of finale I. The scoring for the trial by fire and water by no means attempts to depict those elements realistically but achieves a mysterious solemnity: under the flute's lonely melody, the brass chords followed by the timpani introduce a threatening gesture. Another subtle effect is the 'sempre pianissimo' (apart from two *sforzato* chords) in Monostatos' aria, giving a dream-like effect.

Masonic symbolism

There is no doubt about Mozart's strong links with the Masonic movement even before he was admitted into it in December 1784, for he had had Masons among his friends and had set Masonic texts. But the matter under investigation here, the musical effect of the Masonic influence, admits of less certainty. There are a number of musical characteristics to be found in Mozart's specifically Masonic works and partly in Masonic music by other composers. The problem is that all these characteristics also appear in other non-Masonic works: one could infer from this that even the instrumental music of the last years was composed very much with Mozart's Masonic ideals in mind. Let us examine some of these traits.

1. The harmony. Because of the Masonic significance of the number three, the key signature of 3 flats (and to a lesser extent of 3 sharps) had a special importance: so did C major, the key of light. In fact, Mozart does use these keys frequently but by no means exclusively in *Die Zauberflöte* and in his Masonic works, yet Sarastro only sings in E flat in his last few bars, while a character most opposed to light, Monostatos, has a C major aria.

There are also harmonic progressions said to have a special Masonic meaning, such as I – V – VI that opens the march of the Priests (no. 9) among many other examples in *Die Zauberflöte* (and appears in much non-Masonic music besides).

2. Rhythmically, three chords, as used in a specifically ritual manner in the opera, are obviously Masonic. Moreover, dotted rhythms are said to signify the resolution of the Mason and a dotted knocking rhythm to denote the candidate seeking admission. These are frequently present, but so they are in *La clemenza di Tito* (in such moments of firm resolution as no. 6, bar 4, no. 18, from bar 30, the end of no. 23 and the start of no. 24).

3. Certain melodic figures are supposed to have a Masonic meaning, for example a chain of pairs of legato notes, as in the accompaniment to the final chorus (Ex. 33), those moving in thirds and sixths, those associated with rising scales and arpeggios and so on. All these are present in *Die Zauberflöte* (and in the Masonic cantatas) but scarcely less so in the music of the Three Ladies than in that of the more enlightened circles.

Example 33



4. Counterpoint symbolized an order of equality rather than of general subservience to one melody and was therefore appropriate to the brotherhood of the Masons. Though its use in *Die Zauberflöte* is striking, it is, of course, even more widely used in eighteenth-century Church music.

5. Clarinets and basset-horns were favourite instruments in Masonic music. Mozart used the basset-horn in *Die Zauberflöte* quite specifically for solemn occasions (not, though, in the Priests' chorus, no. 18), yet he also used it in *Die Entführung* and *La clemenza di Tito*, but not in the Masonic cantatas.

The subject has been examined most thoroughly by J. Chailley in *The Magic Flute, Masonic Opera* (English translation London, 1972) and by Katharine Thomson in *The Masonic Thread in Mozart* (London, 1977). Professor Chailley believes that almost every melody, rhythm, key, harmony and detail of orchestration in *Die Zauberflöte* has its place in an immense system of Masonic symbolism. Though the beliefs and sentiments of the Freemasons were increasingly present in Mozart's mind, in a way which could not but affect his music, it goes against what we know about Mozart from the rest of his music to believe that his musical invention began to be based on forces other than purely musical or dramatic ones, in the way Schumann used cryptograms.

The musical style

It has been observed that Mozart combines a great variety of styles with perfect homogeneity in *Die Zauberflöte*, with its Viennese popular songs, Italian coloratura arias and *buffo* ensembles, accompanied recitatives and ariosos, hymns, chorales and fugues. The simple Singspiel style, derived from folk-songs, appears especially in Papageno's rôle and in the earlier parts of the opera. The frequent thirds which inevitably result from the three-part writing for the Three Ladies (and also the Three Boys) tend to lead to the 'somewhat melancholy character of German folk music' as Hermann Abert wrote of 'Du Jüngling schön und liebevoll' in no. 1.¹⁶ Apart from the music for the Queen, Tamino's aria with obbligato flute and a few bars of Pamina's in no. 7, and her aria, no. 17, the opera is free of coloratura.

Die Entführung had been very different in that respect. 'Too many notes, my dear Mozart,' the emperor had been said to remark of it. By 1791 Mozart might have come to agree with him.

He still composed music suited to his singers, of course, but it had to fit the situation. He had admitted to 'sacrificing to Mme. Cavalieri's nimble throat' when composing the rôle of Constanze in 1781. He now wrote coloratura music of far greater virtuosity still for Josepha Hofer in the part of the Queen. This was in her line, since she had, according to some accounts, dazzled Vienna with her high coloratura in Wranitzky's *Oberon* in 1791, though one witness had called her 'a very disagreeable singer without the high notes for this rôle which she squeaks her way through' (Abert, *Mozart*, p.646 note). The point is that her music is absolutely appropriate for two distinct reasons: *opera seria* is traditionally the vehicle for kings and queens; and the weird sound of stratospheric coloratura emphasizes the mysterious and sinister nature of the Queen.

The high-point of Mozart's assimilation of counterpoint into his own style came with the 'Jupiter' symphony in 1788. After his renewed acquaintance with the music of Bach (instigated by the visit to Leipzig in 1789) and of Handel (through his work on Handel's oratorios in 1790) he showed a special affection for counterpoint in a style by then archaic, in his fantasias for mechanical organ K 594 and 608 and in the Requiem. The Masonic Funeral Music K 477 of 1785 had been composed on a *cantus firmus* – perhaps the Protestant form was suggested by the English origin of Freemasonry in the eighteenth century – but now the scene of the Men in Armour begins as a full chorale prelude; the *cantus firmus* (taken from the old chorale 'Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein' ('O God, look down from Heaven')), sung in octaves and doubled in the wind, is accompanied by a four-part fugato in the strings. It is a scene of great power and earnestness, in remarkable contrast to the mellifluous Allegretto that follows it 'Was hör ich? Paminens Stimme?' ('What do I hear? Pamina's voice?'), when the Two Men in Armour, who had seemed so inhuman, reveal themselves as really good fellows after all with 'Ja, ja, das ist Pamina's Stimme' ('Yes, yes, it is Pamina's voice'). Here again is that incongruous but delightful mixture of the supernatural with the informal, which is so beautifully reflected in Mozart's music.

Tradition has it that Schikaneder constantly urged Mozart to keep the music simple for his popular audience. When the composition of the overture could be put off no longer (it was always an eleventh-hour procedure), one can imagine Schikaneder, having reluctantly

swallowed the counterpoint of the chorale prelude, saying with a nervous laugh, 'I suppose you're going to write a fugue and frighten the audience away before we've even begun' and Mozart drumming his fingers with a far-away look saying slowly, 'Schikaneder, you've given me an idea ...'

If one agrees with the claim made above that *Die Zauberflöte* shows the illustrative capacity of music at its most complete, the question still remains why we should regard as a supreme achievement a setting, however perfect, of a Singspiel text which, but for Mozart's music, would have been forgotten long ago like the rest of Schikaneder's output. There is, of course, the intrinsic beauty of the music. This also exists in his instrumental music, but the achievement of *Die Zauberflöte* is something more. If, then, it is not to be found in the music alone, still less in the libretto, it must have been produced by the reaction between the two.

How does the music of Mozart's operas relate fundamentally to his libretti? *Figaro* lives in the essentially eighteenth-century realm of irony; first of all the irony of comic or slightly dubious situations set to celestial music, then the irony of the situations in themselves. How often do the most moving moments arise from the laughter over a comic or somehow false situation – Susanna's retorts to the Count in their duet, the absurd dénouement revealed in the sextet, even 'Deh vieni', sung (at least to start with) to tease the over-suspicious Figaro. The hilarity releases the flood-gates of our emotion. *Don Giovanni* is all irony, in being about divine retribution in an age which had ceased to believe in it and about a man who set out to love all women and was incapable of loving even one. In *Così*, most of all, every emotion, however sublime the music that expresses it, is mocked by some irony.

Irony was not Schikaneder's strong point. (Sarastro's facetious remark to Monostatos on ordering his bastinado 'Don't thank me. It's my duty', proves this.) Nor was irony required by the opera or by the audience. How does the music for the genuine innocence of Pamina, Papageno and the Three Boys differ from the mock innocence of Susanna emerging from the closet to tease the Count with 'Signore! Cos'è quel stupore?' ('Sir, why so amazed? Take your sword and kill the page')? Not at all, really, it is the relationship between words and music that has changed.

In *Die Zauberflöte* the hidden meanings below the surface are no longer the ironical ones of da Ponte, but those of allegory, not just the Masonic allegories, but the central allegory of our journey through

life and in the shadow of death. The characters are not depicted as vividly and naturally as those in the da Ponte operas. But this very failing helps to give Pamina and Tamino their universal quality, which perhaps provides the clue to the puzzling question – why is *Die Zauberflöte* capable of moving us most of all the operas?

For once, there is a truly happy end, not the improbable bliss promised in *Figaro* and *Così*. It is a victory of light in a dark world, a victory which Mozart sincerely desired. And it can never be far from our minds when hearing this uniquely rich view of life, as full of humour as of humanity, that Mozart had only a few months to live. It is our story set to the music of the spheres, though Shakespeare (*The Merchant of Venice*, V, i) thought it impossible that mortals should hear it:

Such harmonie is in immortall soules,
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grosly close it in, we cannot heare it.