

Toward an Anthropology of Apotheosis in Mozart's *Magic Flute*

A Demonstration of the Artistic Universality and
Vitality of Certain "Peculiar" Latter-day Saint Doctrines

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It seems there are certain notions held by Latter-day Saints, deviating almost diametrically from those promulgated by orthodox Christianity, that have the power to evoke from certain conservative Christian quarters the most vituperative fulminations. One thinks immediately of the idea expounded by Joseph Smith at King Follett's funeral¹ that humans have the potential to become gods through a process of perfection experienced by the gods themselves. The orthodox response to this notion in the form of the *Godmakers*² films and other manifestations of righteous indignation has been extraordinary. The paradox, however, is this: Scratch the orthodox surface of Christianity, explore at any depth occidental thought, especially the aesthetic search for ontological meaning in the arts, and you will find this and other related "Mormon" ideas in surprising abundance and unsurpassed persuasive power.

This paradox was brought into focus for me some years ago through a conference paper given by the late Ernst Benz, Professor of Church History at the University of Marburg. In his essay, "Der Mensch als *imago dei*" (Man as the Image of God), Benz traces the notion of the identity of humans and gods from the earliest times to the present day, observing that the concept of apotheosis—man becoming god—was once a widely held idea in the ancient world until it was forced underground by the doctrines of Augustine, that former, gnostic follower of the Persian dualistic prophet Mani, both of whom seemed nearly obsessed with the evil nature of all mortals, beginning with our conception in sin.

After Augustine, however, our now-heterodox and heretical idea that humans and gods are ontologically identical did not perish from the minds

of humans but continued to manifest itself from time to time: for example, in the German medieval mystics such as Meister Eckehart, Tauler, and Suso, whose *unio mystica* with God proved to them man's and God's essential ontological identity; in Jacob Böhme; in the Baroque poets such as Angelius Silesius; in the *Four Books on True Christianity* by Johann Arndt; and in the German Romantic nature-philosophy of Hegel and Schelling.

Professor Benz writes:

The mystical comprehension of the idea of *Imago Dei*, of the self-portrayal of God in man through the procreation and birth of the Son in man, leads directly, in the last analysis, to the concept of the apotheosis of man. This concept disappeared from church doctrine in the fifth and sixth centuries . . . but it always remained alive in the tradition of Christian mysticism by virtue of the continuity of the mystical experience. Yet European believers who dared to speak about apotheosis in the Christian sense of the renewal of God's image in man are not to be discussed here but rather the representatives of an American Church, which—based on the experiences and doctrines of its visionary founder—has made the idea of deification the very foundation of its anthropology, its concept of the community, even its social structure: the Mormon Church.³

Benz continues:

It is unknown what spiritual tradition provided Joseph Smith (who as the son of a simple settler in Sharon, Vermont, grew up under the difficult conditions of colonization) with his new understanding of God. As a boy he heard the revival-sermons of various preachers from various sects who came among the settlers. But what is characteristic about his religious development is precisely that he obeyed the angelic warning to join none of the existing sects, but to prepare himself for the imminent revelation of the eternal gospel whose herald he himself was to be. Today, historians of Christian theology might presume that he picked up by accident some half-understood bits of Schelling's idea of theogony, the idea of a God who evolves himself in his creation, who grows with it and in it becomes more and more aware of himself—but among the settlers of the Wild West there was no such possibility.

And so the complete reinterpretation which the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints makes of the orthodox Christian view of God is all the more surprising.⁴

My encounter with Ernst Benz's thinking was paradigmatic for me: since then I have kept my eyes open—somewhat more haphazardly than systematically—for heterodox ideas in the arts that correspond to those commonly regarded as unique to Mormonism. One of the most interesting and most important of these is found in *The Magic Flute*, Mozart's last opera, composed in the year of his untimely death, 1791.

Supposed Problems with the Libretto Examined

Since its premiere over two centuries ago, *The Magic Flute* has been defamed⁵ as resoundingly for Emanuel Schikaneder's⁶ wretched libretto as belauded for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's glorious score. And though it was for many years and remains today one of the most-oft performed works in the world's opera repertory, for all its *musical* appeal it seemed one of the least likely monuments of German culture ever to be taken seriously as a *literary* and *philosophical* text, judging by the dismissive comments of the libretto's many detractors.

This problem has been further perpetuated by the practice of omitting in most live performances as well as in recordings of the opera large portions of the spoken dialogue of this supposedly inferior text, presumably also because such omissions save time and space on recording media such as discs and tape.⁷

The bias against the libretto was in nowise diminished by the Peter Shaffer play and Milos Forman film *Amadeus*, where Emanuel Schikaneder is seen as half charlatan, half clown, a Viennese P. T. Barnum whose ribald productions in his Theater auf der Wieden (Theater in Wieden, a Vienna suburb) descended to the level of sausages being pulled from the rear-end of a papier-mâché horse.

It should be obvious, however, that Shaffer and Forman's gimmick was to show the world from the standpoint of Mozart's supposed rival Salieri in his insane asylum: certainly his distorted view of Schikaneder is intended to be no more objective or historical than his psychotic view of Mozart as an unworthy, puerile twit, portrayed by a cackling Tom Hulce wearing a halloween fright wig.

The *Amadeus* play and film further obscure reality by omitting entirely the fact that Mozart and Schikaneder were Freemasons, serious and respectable brothers of the lodge, and that they intended *The Magic Flute* to be an artistic reflection of their deepest-held religious and humanistic beliefs, not mere buffoonery.

Ironically, however, its very Masonic connections may have also contributed to the disrepute into which the libretto immediately fell. The opera appeared at a time when Masonry in Austria was experiencing a sharp decline as the result of allegations it and even more exotic secret societies—such as the Rosicrucians, the Asiatische Brüder (Asiatic Brethren), and the Fratres de Cruce (Brethren of the Cross)—were serving, at least potentially, as hotbeds of anti-monarchical, Jacobin insurrection—especially in the more far-flung areas of the Hapsburg realm where the Emperor felt less secure about his power.⁸

In mid-December 1785, almost exactly one year after Mozart joined the lodge Zur Wohltätigkeit (Charity), an Imperial decree (the Freimaurerpatent [Freemasonic Edict] of Emperor Joseph II) strictly controlling such societies appeared. The edict was like a bolt out of the blue, since many of the mainstream Masons in Vienna viewed themselves as strong supporters of Joseph II's enlightened, if sometimes overwrought, reforms.

Within a year, the number of Masons in Vienna declined from as many as eight hundred down to as few as one hundred. And though the numbers rebounded slightly with the ensuing reorganizations of the lodge structure, after the death of Joseph II in 1790 and that of his brother and successor Leopold II two years later, under Joseph's reactionary nephew Emperor Franz II, Freemasonry in Austria essentially ceased to exist. Thus the libretto of *The Magic Flute* and its esoteric Freemasonic elements were left vulnerable to misunderstanding and derision.⁹ Mozart, of course, who remained a Mason until the end of his life, died on December 5, 1791, just two months after the premiere of the opera, and was thus prevented from having said or written something that could have corrected any misunderstandings.

Not quite everyone immediately savaged the opera's libretto, however: *The Magic Flute* as literature appealed strongly to no less a writer than Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who saw the Weimar performance in early 1794. A year later he commenced writing a sequel to *The Magic Flute*, two acts of which were completed before the project was abandoned around 1798.¹⁰ Though it goes beyond the scope of this study, I believe that part two of Goethe's great masterpiece, *Faust*, became his virtual sequel to *The Magic Flute*, inheriting much of its essential thematic and mythical material. It is not an accident that Goethe, too, was a Freemason who would have resonated to the Masonic references rather than have been confused or repulsed by them.

One important argument in favor of the libretto is that Mozart himself quite possibly had a great deal to do with the construction of the libretto: it does seem to show throughout a Mozartian level of architectonic and aesthetic sophistication,¹¹ indicating that Mozart and Schikaneder might very well have worked together on the libretto as a team. In any case, as we will see, the libretto is in fact a sophisticated verbal complex, highly structured and powerfully mythopoetic.¹²

Emboldened by the possibility that Mozart himself played an important role in the creation of the libretto as well as the music, and by Goethe's respect for it as a literary text, I also argue that *The Magic Flute* is an important juncture of streams of German culture, both confluence and fountain-head of the supernal subject we are following. Into it flowed mythic examinations of the meaning of life from as far away and as long ago as

ancient Egypt. Out of it flow ideas as timely as the absolute equality and nobility of all genders, races, and classes; the bonding in a holy temple of a man and a woman into an eternal monad; love as the eternal prime mover; the perfectibility of society and the possibility of apotheosis; as well as other themes that exercised a powerful influence not only on Goethe but indeed on two full centuries of German culture. (Latter-day Saint readers will, of course, immediately recognize these as major ideas informing the revelations to Joseph Smith as well.)

A Sophisticated Libretto Demands a Careful Reading

Let us turn now to the opera itself and to some specific questions about the libretto: One conventional view is that the plot and the characters of *The Magic Flute* suffered from a shift in the middle of the drama, a shift that allegedly occurred after Mozart had already composed the lion's share of the music. The Queen of the Night, who had started out as a good character, and Sarastro, who started out as a bad one, suddenly change roles.¹³

An explanation commonly advanced for this shift is that in June 1791, five months before the premiere of *Die Zauberflöte* on September 30, a competing Viennese house, Das Theater in der Leopoldstadt, began producing an opera entitled *Kaspar der Fagottist oder die Zauberzither* (Caspar the Bassoonist or the Magic Zither). According to this version of the story, Mozart and his libretto-writing team decided half way through the opera to turn their plot upside down, in order not to appear to have borrowed from their competitors.¹⁴ It is not clear how such a change would have prevented the appearance of appropriation, and, if this explanation were viable, one wonders why the libretto team did not drop the remarkably similar title as well!

In my view, the plot, rather than being simply broken in the middle, was intended as a sophisticated symbolic vehicle, carefully crafted from start to finish as a lesson in epistemology, or what is commonly known in German as *Sein und Schein* (Reality and Appearance), an exercise in learning to see through appearances and in learning to examine premises and assumptions. In short, the first part of the opera is an intentional deception, which certain protagonists are invited to penetrate and debunk. And just as some protagonists of the opera learn to question allegations, innuendo, circumstantial evidence, rumor, and other manifestations of apparent truth, members of the audience are invited by the opera to participate in the same epistemological exercise, whereby they learn to discover the true *Sein* beneath the deceptive *Schein*. (Such an investigation into truth and falsehood presented in the form of a cosmic drama with audience participation can be compared with the Latter-day Saint temple rite.)

A Review of the Plot and Characters Commences

As the curtain rises, we see a prince named Tamino being pursued by a serpent, a fitting mythical creature, since we shall later have reason to view Tamino as an Adam figure.¹⁵ His quiver of arrows for his bow empty, and unable to elude the snake, he calls upon the merciful gods to save him, then he falls unconscious:

Help! Help! Otherwise I am lost,
 chosen as the victim of the cunning serpent.
 Merciful gods! It's already closing in!
 O save me! O protect me!

Three ladies-in-waiting of the Sternflammende Königin (Starflaming Queen), otherwise known as Königin der Nacht (Queen of the Night), dispatch the monster with their silver javelins. Smitten by the gentle and handsome appearance of the unconscious prince, a heated argument ensues over which of the ladies should remain with him and which should go report his presence to the Queen (fig. 1). Finally, not trusting any one of their number to be alone with him, all three reluctantly depart (1.1).

When the prince awakens, he sees a curious character named Papageno approaching, a simple soul who makes his living catching birds for the Queen and her Three Ladies, and whose feathered costume makes him look as much like a bird as a man. (Even Papageno's name bears a certain resemblance to the German word for parrot: *Papagei*.) In his aria he explains how adept he is at catching birds but expresses his desire to have a net for girls, whom he would catch for himself by the dozens, locking them up in cages until he decided which one was his favorite. He would barter for some sugar for her and then make her his wife (1.2).

Frightened of Tamino, and to keep him at a distance, Papageno claims to have the power of a giant. Therefore Tamino thinks it must have been Papageno who slew the serpent. Suddenly catching a glimpse of the dead snake, in a comedy of mock heroics, a terrified Papageno takes credit for killing it, whereupon the Three Ladies reappear and hang a lock upon his mouth as a punishment for lying (1.3).

Then the ladies reveal to Tamino that Pamina, the daughter of their queen, is the prisoner of an evil sorcerer named Sarastro, who has kidnapped Pamina from her mother's arms. When Tamino sees Pamina's picture, which he describes as a divine image, the prince feels his heart burning with what can only be love, and he sings of his longing for an eternal union with her (fig. 2): "Oh, if I could only find her! . . . Full of rapture I would press her to my warm bosom, and then she would be mine eternally" (1.4-5).

Now the Queen herself appears and commissions Tamino to rescue her daughter, promising him that Pamina will, in fact, be his eternally if he



Courtesy Duane Morris Photography

Fig. 1. The Three Ladies admire an unconscious Tamino, Portland [Oregon] Opera performance of *The Magic Flute*, 1996–1997. The Three Ladies' admiration of Tamino's beauty soon turns into heated argument over who will remain with the handsome youth while the others go to fetch their mistress, the Queen of the Night.

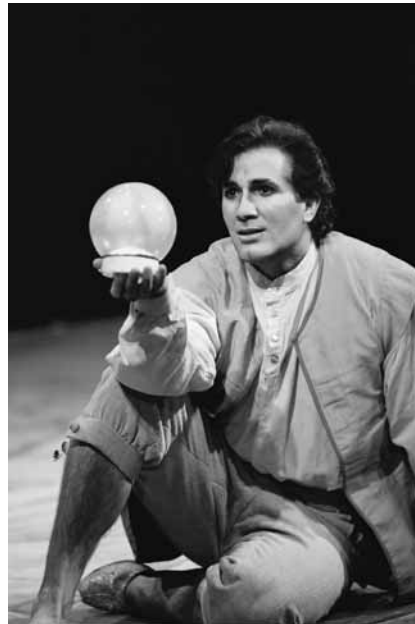
succeeds. The hapless Papageno will have to go along as his companion. The pair are to be guided to Sarastro's fortress by three rather angelic young boys (also described as being beautiful, sweet, and wise), who will hover around them on their journey—they are often portrayed as traveling in a kind of hot-air balloon—and the pair will be further protected by two magical musical instruments, a flute and a set of bells (1.6 and 8).¹⁶

So far, the Three Ladies and their queen have presented themselves to Tamino, to Papageno, and to the audience as paragons of virtue, whereas Sarastro, a despicable sorcerer and kidnapper, is the paragon of evil. Circumstantial evidence seems to support their claims: in addition to killing the evil snake and saving Tamino, the ladies perform other apparently moral acts such as placing the lock on Papageno's mouth when he attempts to take credit for killing the serpent. They editorialize that the world would be a better place if all people had a lock placed on their mouths whenever they told a lie (1.7).

It might be well to recall, however, that in many literary works—one thinks of Shakespeare—it is often the worst villains or disreputable characters who spout the most moralistic bromides, those one-liners one hears quoted in sermons: “Who steals my purse steals trash,” “To thine ownself be true.”¹⁷ In the midst of all this moralizing it is also easy to overlook the fact that while Tamino was unconscious, the Three Ladies dropped their ladylike decorum and in a scene laden with erotic desire nearly come to blows over which one of them is to remain alone with him!

These subtle clues notwithstanding, at this point in the opera the Queen and her ladies still appear to be the source of good: the ladies provide Tamino with the magic flute to help him on his way, and they provide the set of magic bells for Papageno, whom they must sweetly coerce into going along, because he has heard (from them) that Sarastro is “Like a beastly tiger! Surely Sarastro would have me mercilessly plucked and roasted and served to the dogs” (1.8).

Finally, it is the ladies who introduce Papageno and Tamino to the three young spirit guides, who will show the intrepid rescuers the way to Sarastro’s fortress (as it is called). Nothing suggests these cherubs are actually associated with, much less are under the control of the Queen and her ladies (in his film version of the opera the famous Swedish director Ingmar Bergman expressly disassociates the ladies from the lads by the device of a black veil that descends over them when the boys appear), but at this early point in the opera, few have begun to question such matters . . . *except* Tamino.



Courtesy Doug Hamer

Fig. 2. Tamino gazes at an enchanting image of Pamina, in a Lyric Opera of Kansas City performance of *The Magic Flute*. The opera’s libretto suggests that the Queen of the Night gives Tamino a picture of her daughter, Pamina. The performance pictured, however, uses a crystal ball instead.

Tamino Begins to Question Some Basic Premises

Early on, immediately after the visit of the Queen, something inside Tamino wonders if the entire experience was real, not something done with smoke and mirrors to fool him. He asks the gods to guide him through his epistemological test; he asks them not to allow him to be deceived: "Is this actually reality, that I saw? Or are my senses deceiving me? Oh, ye good gods! Don't let me down or I'll fail to pass your test. Protect my arm, steel my courage, and Tamino's heart will beat eternal thanks to you!" (1.7). This is an important prayer to bear in mind as the story continues.

Separated on their way, Papageno arrives at the sorcerer's fortress before Tamino and almost immediately encounters a frightening, evil being, Monostatos, a black-skinned Moor, who is at that very moment in the act of placing Pamina in chains and fetters because she had attempted to escape. Monostatos cruelly commands a band of slaves, in whose eyes he is a devil and who long for liberation from his diabolical tyranny, all of which only naturally serves to substantiate our view that Sarastro, his master, is also evil.

However, from these slaves we learn that Pamina temporarily stopped her tormentor in his tracks by calling out the name of Sarastro, which "shook the Moor; he stood quietly and still," allowing Pamina temporarily to escape in a boat. So perhaps Sarastro is more than the evil master of an evil minion after all, as we will see in more detail shortly (1.9–10).

The Moor is as frightened at Papageno's birdlike appearance as Papageno is of the Moor's black skin: When they meet they both cry out, in unison, "This is—the dev—il cer—tainly!" (1.12). They both flee, but Papageno returns immediately, having quickly applied sweet reason to the problem: there are black birds in this world, why should there not be black people?

He introduces himself to Pamina, tells her the prince is in love with her and is on his way to rescue her, but that they had not yet seen the Three Boys, as promised, so the prince had sent him on ahead as a scout. Though she briefly fears Papageno may be an evil spirit from Sarastro's retinue, the fact that he has the picture of her that her mother and the ladies had shown the prince, together with the fact that he seems to have a kind heart, convince her to trust him.

Having gained her sympathy and having assured her that she will soon find her true love, he laments that he, Papageno, has no Papagena. Pamina tells him, "Have patience, friend! The heavens will provide for you as well; they will send you a girlfriend before you even know it" (1.14).

Their ensuing duet continues on the theme of divine love, which is a gift of heaven and which infuses all of nature. Because in German the

grammatical gender of the noun *Liebe* (love) is feminine, the duet also suggests the personification of love, portraying love as a kind of omnipotent goddess. The song ends with a remarkable chiasm, the point of which is that through love, this ubiquitous and omnipotent force, a man and a woman can be ennobled, can in fact become the most noble entity in the universe, capable of reaching upwards toward and attaining godhood, an idea to which Latter-day Saints must necessarily resonate:

- Pamina. Men who are capable of feeling love,
also have good hearts.
- Papageno. Women's first duty, then,
is to empathize with these sweet impulses.
- Both. We want to enjoy love,
we live solely through love.
- Pamina. Love sweetens every misery,
all creatures make oblations to her.
- Papageno. She spices the days of our lives,
she is operative in the whole circle of nature.
- Both. Her exalted purpose clearly indicates
there is nothing more noble than a wife and a husband.
A man and a woman and woman and man reach upward
towards and attain godhood. (1.14)

Tamino Experiences Cognitive Dissonance and Is Cross-Examined

Meanwhile, Tamino himself has encountered the three angelic spirits and is finally led by them, each youth carrying a palm branch—a symbol of peace—to what Tamino expected to be Sarastro's fortress. However, his expectation that it is the seat of an evil sorcerer is not borne out by its architecture: the columns and the portals all seem to him to testify that reason and diligence and the arts reside here and that evil cannot be enthroned in such a place.

With such columns and portals it does not seem to be a fortress at all, but a beautiful temple set in a sacred *locus amoenus*, a grove of trees like those in Elysium¹⁸ or the Garden of Eden, the dwelling place of the gods: "Where am I now?" Tamino sings, "What's happening to me? Is this the seat of the gods here? The portals, the columns, all show that intelligence and diligence and the arts reside here. Where activity is enthroned and idleness yields, vice cannot easily gain control" (1.15).

The central temple bears the inscription *Temple of Wisdom*. It is linked by colonnades on either side to two other temples bearing the inscriptions

Temple of Reason and *Temple of Nature*. Totally fixed upon his mission to free the fair young damsel in distress, however, Tamino apparently represses for the moment his cognitive dissonance about the discrepancy between what he has been told about Sarastro and the aesthetic evidence before him. Summoning up all his courage, Tamino boldly walks up to one of the three portals and opens the door. "Get back!" a hidden chorus commands. The same happens at the second portal. This does not seem an hospitable place! Very likely it is the fortress of an evil sorcerer after all. Finally, however, at the third, central, portal, he encounters a priest (1.15).

A discussion ensues between the priest and Tamino about who is bad and who is good and how one can know what is truth and what is falsehood. The priest asks Tamino, "Where are you bound for, bold stranger? What do you seek here in this holy place?" Oddly enough, Tamino does not reply, "I seek Pamina," but makes a rather more cryptic statement: "That which is the property of love and virtue." "These words have noble meaning!" replies the priest, whose next statement reveals that he is very wise, perhaps even clairvoyant: "But how will you find these things? Love and virtue do not lead you, because death and revenge inflame you" (1.15).

"Only revenge for the villain," says Tamino. "I don't think you'll find him here," the priest replies. "Sarastro rules in this locale?" asks Tamino. "Yes, yes, Sarastro rules here!" "But surely not here in the Temple of Wisdom?" "He rules here in the Temple of Wisdom!"

Tamino cries out, "So then everything is hypocrisy!" and turns to leave. These words most likely mean Tamino believes the architectural evidence that this is the seat of the gods is bogus, but his statement can also be read against the grain to mean that he is perhaps on the verge of discovering that everything the Queen and her minions have been telling him is in fact hypocrisy. In any case, when the priest asks him, "Do you want to leave already?" Tamino replies, "Yes, I want to leave, happy and free, never to see your temple." The priest then expressly reinforces the notion that Tamino has been purposely deceived: "Explain yourself to me more clearly, a deceit has led you astray." Tamino replies that if Sarastro rules here that is enough for him. The priest asks if he hates Sarastro. "I hate him eternally! Yes!"

"Well, then, give me your reasons," says the priest. "He is a monster, a tyrant," replies Tamino. "Is what you say proven?" "Proven by means of an unhappy woman," says Tamino. "So, a woman deceived you?" says the priest, before uttering the first of many misogynistic statements in *The Magic Flute* (about which more presently): "A woman does little, chatters a lot. You, young man, believe such a game of the tongue? Oh, if only Sarastro would lay before you his intentions, the reasons for his actions."

Tamino does not think he needs to know any more than he already knows: “His intentions are all too clear; Didn’t the thief mercilessly tear Pamina from her mother’s arms?” The priest does not deny that Sarastro has taken Pamina from her mother (“Yes, young man, what you say is true,”) but says he is prevented by an oath and by his duty from explaining at this point Sarastro’s reasons.

Tamino, who fears Pamina has already been killed as a sacrifice on the altar, asks, in despair, “So when will the veil be lifted?” a sign he is beginning to understand that he does not understand. “As soon as the hand of friendship leads you into the holy place for the purpose of creating eternal bands,” replies the priest before withdrawing.

Alone now, Tamino utters a significant apostrophe to eternal night, which begs to be associated with the Queen of the Night, asking when night will end and he can find enlightenment: “Oh, eternal night, when will you disappear? When will my eye find—and be found by—the light?” “Soon, young man,” replies a choir of invisible voices, “or never!”

Tamino asks them if Pamina still lives: “You invisible ones, tell me, is Pamina still alive?” “Pamina lives still,” they reply, the word order of the German sentence extending the suspense until the last possible moment.

Tamino expresses his thanks for this to the omnipotent gods by playing his flute. Evoking the myth of Orpheus, whose playing charmed all creatures, animals of all sorts now emerge to listen, and Tamino observes, “How powerful your magical sound is, because, sweet flute, even wild beasts find joy in your playing” (1.15).¹⁹

Then, from a distance, he hears Papageno’s pan flutes echoing his melody. Papageno and Pamina have also heard his playing and are rapidly moving toward his sound, when suddenly Monostatos catches up to them. Papageno remembers his magic bells, whose sounds enchant this wild beast as well: with all his slaves Monostatos goes away singing and dancing. In another duet, Papageno and Pamina editorialize about the need for harmony and friendship, obviously that which the bells symbolize, without which there is no happiness on earth: “If every good man could find such little bells, his enemies would then disappear without difficulty and he would live without them in the best harmony. Only the harmony of friendship alleviates troubles; without this sympathy there is no happiness on earth!” (1.17)

At this moment, a chorus is heard approaching, hailing the triumphal entry of Sarastro! Along with the princess, the trembling bird-man awaits his certain doom. “My child, what shall we say?” he asks Pamina. “The truth! The truth, even if the truth were a crime,” she answers courageously (1.17).

Sarastro's True Character Emerges

Pamina kneels before Sarastro to beg his forgiveness for attempting to flee. She explains that the evil Moor had demanded love, and it was his attempted rape which had made her want to flee, not any desire to flee from Sarastro. We recall that just as Monostatos was about to lay his hands on her, she called out the name of Sarastro, which so terrified the Moor that he allowed her to escape. The existence of slaves in the temple may be similarly explained: just as Monostatos had attempted to force his will on Pamina, perhaps he has unjustly enslaved others in Sarastro's name by misusing his authority within Sarastro's realm.²⁰

Certainly this is consistent with what happens next: Monostatos arrives on the scene, having captured Tamino. When Tamino and Pamina recognize each other and fall into each other's arms, Monostatos rudely separates them, kneels before Sarastro, tells him that Tamino was planning to kidnap Pamina, and asks that the culprit be punished. "You know me!" he says, "My watchfulness—" Sarastro finishes his sentence in sarcastic tones, the irony of which Monostatos misses, "Deserves to have laurel leaves strewn in its honor. Listen! Give this honorable man immediately—" Monostatos sycophantically interrupts to thank him for the pending gift: "Your grace alone makes me rich," but Sarastro had not finished his sentence: "Only seventy-seven blows of the bastinado on the soles of his feet." Sarastro is a kind judge: the word *only* implies that Monostatos deserved more. (In fact, Monostatos is not punished: Sarastro ultimately pardons him, we learn, because it is a high religious holiday.²¹) All the people applaud Sarastro's divine wisdom: "Long live Sarastro, the divine, wise man!" (1.18, 1.19).

He instructs the priests to lead Tamino and Papageno into the Temple of Trials so that they might become purified. The first act ends with a jubilant chorus foretelling the celestialization of earth and the apotheosis of mortals:

When virtue and justice
strew the path of the great ones with glory,
then earth will be a heavenly realm
and mortals will be equal to the gods. (1.19)

Sarastro Explains the Plan of Apotheosis

When the second act opens, "the theatre is a palm grove; all trees are silver-like, the leaves of gold. Eighteen seats made of leaves; on each seat stands a pyramid, and a large black horn rimmed in gold. In the middle the

largest pyramid, also the largest trees. Sarastro and other priests come in solemn procession, each with a palm branch in his hand” (2.1).

As we will see, these triadic-shaped pyramids are important symbols in *The Magic Flute*: not only the scenery (three temples!), all the characters and the action of the opera are driven by a deep structure based on the principle of the triad. *Musically* the triad is also omnipresent in the key signature E-flat, with its three flats, and the score’s numerous three-fold repetitions and triadic chords. (In conventional numerology, three is the number of heaven—of the Trinity, for example. Four is the number of the earth—of earth, air, fire, and water, or of east, west, north, and south, for example. The sum and product of three and four create the perfect numbers seven and twelve. With their four triangular sides then, pyramids are visual symbols of perfection, of the harmony between earth and heaven.) Presently we shall also discuss the Egyptian god-couple Isis and Osiris, who stand at the pinnacle of a pyramid-like array of characters and behaviors; that is, they form the smaller pyramid or pyramidion like that on the Great Seal of the United States, which serves both as apex and as a pattern or model for the whole.²²

For the moment, however, it would be useful to attend to Sarastro’s discussion of life and death, particularly the process of apotheosis, as he speaks with the other priests assembled in the temple about Tamino’s future and his role in the future of the brotherhood:

Sarastro. (*After a pause.*) Ye servants of the great gods Osiris and Isis, consecrated in the Temple of Wisdom!—With a pure soul I declare unto you that our gathering today is one of the most important of our times.—Tamino, a prince, twenty years of age, is keeping a vigil at the northern portal of our temple, and sighing, he longs with a virtuous heart for an object which we all must achieve with hard work and diligence.—In short, this young man desires to tear the veil of darkness from his eyes and gaze into the holy shrine of the greatest light.—To watch over this virtuous man, to offer him our hand in friendship, let these be among our most important duties today.

First Priest. (*Arises.*) He possesses virtue?

Sarastro. Virtue!

Second Priest. Also discretion?

Sarastro. Discretion!

Third Priest. Is he charitable?

Sarastro. Charitable!—if you consider him worthy, then follow my example. (*They blow into their horns three times.*) Touched by the unity of your hearts, Sarastro thanks you in the name of humanity.—Let prejudice pour out its reproach upon

those of us who have been consecrated!—Wisdom and reason break it asunder like cobwebs.—They shall never shake our pillars. Nevertheless, let evil prejudice disappear; it shall disappear as soon as Tamino himself possesses the greatness of our difficult craft.—Pamina, that gentle, virtuous maiden, has been reserved by the gods for this fair youth; this is the foundation stone, the reason I took her away from her proud mother.—That woman thinks she is great; she hopes to fool the people with illusion and superstition and destroy the solid edifice of our temple. But that she shall not do; Tamino, the fair youth himself, shall help us to fortify it and, as one who is consecrated, will be a reward to virtue but to vice will be a punishment. (*The three-fold chord in the horns is repeated by all.*)

Spokesman. (*Arises.*) O great Sarastro, we recognize and admire your speech, so full of wisdom; but will Tamino be able to withstand the difficult trials which await him?—Pardon me for being so bold as to reveal my doubts about it to you! I am afraid for the youth. What if his spirit, sunken in pain, leaves him and he is defeated by the difficult struggle?—He is a prince!—

Sarastro. More than that—he is a human being!

Spokesman. But what if he were to die in his early youth?

Sarastro. Then he is given unto Osiris and Isis and will feel the joy of the gods sooner than we do. (*The three-fold chord is repeated.*) Let Tamino be led with his travelling companion into the vestibule of the temple. (*To the speaker, who kneels before him.*) And thou, Friend, whom the gods have determined through us to be the defender of truth—carry out thy holy office, and teach both, by thy wisdom, what the obligations of humanity are, teach them to recognize the power of the gods. (*The speaker exits with one priest; all the priests gather together with their palm branches.*)

Sarastro and the chorus now intone a great prayer to Isis and Osiris:

Sarastro. O Isis and Osiris, bequeath
The spirit of wisdom unto the new couple!²³
Ye who steer the steps of the wanderer,
Strengthen them with patience in danger.

Chorus. Strengthen them with patience in danger.

Sarastro. Let them see the fruits of their trials.
And yet, should they go down to their graves,
Then reward their bold course of virtue,
Take them up into your dwelling place.

Chorus. Take them up into your dwelling place. (2.1)

The God-Couple Isis and Osiris Are Divine Models for Humans

One of the most important attributes of Isis and Osiris, and no doubt the reason why Mozart and Schikaneder chose them for this opera, is that they are a married god-couple who exemplify the highest kind of love and self-sacrifice and who have themselves overcome evil and death.²⁴

It will be recalled from the myth that Osiris's evil brother Seth,²⁵ the god of the red desert, death, drought, and destruction, kills Osiris out of jealousy because Osiris is the god of green vegetation, new life, and fertility. Seth hides the body, but when it is found, he cuts it up and buries pieces of the body all around the realm, to make it even harder for Osiris's adherents to worship him or for him ever to come back to life. Seth's evil plan fails, of course. Not only do Osiris's body parts bring fertility and new life to wider regions of the realm, wherever they are buried, he himself takes up his body again, so the net effect is much more new life, rather than less.

It is Isis who first finds Osiris's body. Later, after the body is dismembered, she goes around anew to find his body parts before praying to have the gods reassemble them. Thus Osiris is often portrayed as wrapped in mummy cloths (signifying that he was once dead) but with green skin (signifying that he is newly alive), and Isis often stands by him as they greet the worthy dead who pass all the tests and are themselves ready to be resurrected, drawn through the veil into the presence of the living gods (fig. 3).²⁶

In the syncretic pantheon, Osiris²⁷ resembles in important ways Orpheus, who was also cut into pieces by evil forces, but whose pieces brought harmony wherever they were placed; Dionysos, bringer of fertility, new life, and the grape; and, especially, Jesus Christ, the resurrected god whose adherents from all over the realm remember him by partaking of symbolic pieces of his broken body in the sacrament of the holy eucharist, where they also drink of the juice of the grape in memory of his blood. Like Osiris, Jesus' life-giving essence springs up wherever these pieces of his body are planted. Also like Osiris, Jesus' death brings about much greater new life, rather than less. The gathering of Christ's body presages the gathering of the body of the saints, his children, who have taken his essence upon them by eating and drinking in remembrance of him.

Papageno and Tamino Enter the Temple of Trials

Returning again to Papageno and Tamino, who have been led into the Temple of Trials, we observe the spokesman and the second priest ask them what they desire in the temple. Tamino answers, "Friendship and love," before affirming that he is willing to give his life to acquire these qualities



Fig. 3. The Weighing of the Souls, a scene from the Book of the Dead of Hunefer, from Thebes, Egypt, ca. 1275 bc. In Egyptian mythology, the souls of deceased individuals were weighed against a feather. Those whose sins were lighter than the feather were able to proceed to a paradise. Pictured on the right are Osiris (seated) and Isis (standing), waiting to meet the souls entering paradise.

and to win Pamina: “Are you ready to give your life in your struggle to attain them?” “Yes!”

Papageno is asked, “Do you also wish to struggle to attain a love of wisdom?” but he answers, “Struggling is not my thing. Actually I’m not interested in wisdom at all. I am a man of nature, who is content with sleep, food, and drink; and if it were possible for me sometime to snare myself a pretty mate—”

The priests inform him he will never have such a mate if he does not submit to their trials, subject himself to all their laws, and not be afraid, even of death. “I’ll stay single,” replies Papageno. The priests persist, “But what if you could win the hand of a virtuous, beautiful girl?” “I’ll stay single.”

Seeing that Papageno is totally self-centered, the priests appeal to his narcissism: “But what if Sarastro had reserved a girl for you who had exactly the same clothing and coloration as you do?” “Is she young?” Papageno inquires. “Young and beautiful.” “And her name is?” asks Papageno. “Papagena.” “What?—Pa—?” “Papagena,” the priests affirm.

“Papagena? I’d like to see her just out of curiosity.” “You can see her,” reply the priests, but Papageno is very suspicious: “But when I’ve seen her, then I have to die?” he asks. The priest makes an indefinite gesture and Papageno interprets it in the most negative way: “I’ll stay single.”

“You can see her,” continue the priests, “but until the prescribed time is over, you cannot speak one word to her. Will your mind possess

enough steadfastness to keep your tongue in check?” “Oh, yes!” Papageno replies, confidently.

“The gods also impose upon you a salutary silence,” the priests tell Tamino; “without this you would both be lost. You will be able to see Pamina, but at no point be able to speak to her; this is the beginning of the time of trials for both of you” (2.3).

The Opera Exhibits General Misogyny, or Does It Warn about Specific Women?

As Tamino and Papageno begin the test of their steadfastness and their ability to hold their tongues, the spokesman and the second priest give them more instructions in a duet that seems to contain a most misogynistic sentiment:

Protect yourselves against the wiles of women:
This is the first obligation of the covenant!
Many a wise man allowed himself to be deceived,
he erred and did not notice it.
In the end he saw that he was abandoned,
his loyalty rewarded with mockery!
In vain he wrung his hands;
death and despair were his reward. (2.3)

On one level this is a warning that the Queen and her ladies are lurking around the temple perimeter waiting to ensnare Tamino and Papageno. In the next scene the ladies do pop up out of the ground and attempt to get the initiates to break their vow of silence. If all such apparently misogynistic statements in the opera had reference only to the Queen of the Night or to her nefarious ladies-in-waiting, it would be a simpler matter to explain them.²⁸

It is true that many of the misogynistic statements *start out* as references to the Queen of the Night or the Three Ladies, but, as above, such statements quickly appear to become generalized to all womankind. After Pamina’s earlier attempt to flee from Monostatos, for example, she explained to Sarastro her conflicting loyalties to him and to her mother: “My child’s sense of duty calls to me, because my mother—” “Is in my power,” Sarastro rather brutally interrupts. “The name of mother sounds sweet to me,” Pamina persists, “she is that—” “And a proud woman,” Sarastro interrupts once more. “A man must lead the hearts of you women, because without him every woman tends to overstep the bounds of the circle of her effectiveness” (1.18).

Back in the temple, the Three Ladies attempt to induce Tamino to believe rumors: "Tamino, listen, you are lost! Remember the Queen! There's a lot of whispering going on, whispering in a lot of ears, about the falseness of these priests."

Without breaking his vow of silence, Tamino's answer (spoken only to himself) reveals that he has come a long way in his epistemology since his first encounter with the old priest: "A wise man applies tests and does not regard what the common mob says."

The ladies continue with the rumors: "It is said that whoever swears an oath to join their covenant band goes to hell, lock, stock, and barrel." Papageno is frightened by this and asks Tamino if it is true. Apparently Tamino is permitted to answer him in song, which he does as follows: "Nonsense, gossip echoed by women, but thought up by hypocrites." Papageno sings, "But the Queen also says it." "She is a woman, has the mind of a woman," replies Tamino. Soon the priests discover the ladies have made their way into the temple, and they shout, "The holy threshold is desecrated! Send these women down to hell!" (2.15).

Let us examine one final example of misogyny before attempting the feat of demonstrating that the opera is *not* misogynistic: When the Queen comes to Pamina with a dagger and orders her to assassinate Sarastro, the Queen recounts her husband's conversation with her during his last hour. We learn, among other things, that her husband had been the High Priest of the brotherhood before Sarastro and that the Queen coveted the tokens of his power. She complains that he said to her, "'Woman, my last hour has arrived—all the treasures I possessed personally are yours and your daughter's.' 'The all-consuming sun disk'—I hastily interrupted him. 'Is destined to belong to the consecrated ones,' he answered, 'Sarastro will administer it in as many a way as I have to this point. And now, not a further word; don't try to understand things which are unfathomable to the female mind. Your obligation is to turn yourself and your daughter over to the leadership of wise men'" (2.8).

The Audience Is Ultimately Disabused of Sexism

How can one justify or even explain such apparently blatant misogyny? Having progressed to this point in the opera, and having begun to understand that this is a rather sophisticated text rather than a simplistic and fatally flawed one, it is perhaps time to test a working hypothesis in a kind of thought experiment: if Mozart and his collaborators did indeed go to the trouble to create in *The Magic Flute* a school for epistemology, a

school for learning to see through commonly accepted, biased, or prejudicial “truth” in pursuit of enlightened real truth²⁹ (hence the inclusion of a “fractured plot,” the lecture by the priest to Tamino, and the like), is it plausible they would have intended their opera to confirm such stereotypes as misogyny? Or is it even possible they intended their opera to undermine such stereotypes? At the risk of appearing to impose contemporary issues onto a two-hundred-year-old document, we will first address this question of misogyny before turning to the related question of racial stereotypes.

To begin, let us recall the duet early in the opera between Papageno and Pamina, containing the lines “We wish to enjoy love; we live by love alone. . . . Love’s noble purpose shows clearly that there is nothing more noble than a wife and a husband.” The song ends in the significant chiasm “Mann und Weib und Weib und Mann / Reichen an die Gottheit an” (Husband and wife and wife and husband, reach up to [and attain] godhood) (1.14). This is the very opposite of misogyny!

This theme that a man and a woman together reach up to or achieve godhood is picked up again later when Tamino has passed all the prior trials and is now poised for the final, grand test involving earth, air, fire, and water. Two guards in black armor, with flaming helmets, sing aloud to him in an impressive duet (their parts are exactly one octave apart, which lends a remarkable timbre to the song) the words carved on a pyramid at the portal of the great mountain into which he must go:

He who passes along this path full of difficulties
becomes pure by means of fire, water, air, and earth;
if he can overcome the terrors of death,
he soars from earth toward heaven.
Then, illuminated, he will be in a position
to dedicate himself entirely to the mysteries of Isis.

Tamino is ready to charge into yet another trial as a lone man, for, he says, “No death frightens me, prevents me from acting like a man.” But this duet emphasizes it is the mysteries of the female, the goddess *Isis*, into which Tamino is to be initiated. Consequently, he learns that Pamina is to go with him into that part of the temple where they will be bonded as priest and priestess, god and goddess, which relationship cannot be severed even by death: “Now no fate can separate us any more, even if death were to intervene!” Tamino and the two cherubim-like guardians of the path to eternal life (albeit with flaming helmets rather than flaming swords) now join to sing the significant words, “To go joyfully into the temple hand in hand. A woman who does not fear night and death is worthy and can be initiated.”

And now, very significantly, Pamina does not simply *follow* Tamino into the temple, she *leads* him, as she is led by the goddess Love and as they

are both protected by the magic flute, which has something of the essence of the tree of life about it, since she tells Tamino that her father cut it from the deepest roots of a thousand-year-old oak tree “in a magical hour . . . amidst lightning and thunder and raging storm.” Pamina says, “I myself will lead you; Love will lead me!”

When they complete their test of courage, Pamina and Tamino sing, “Ye gods, what a moment! Isis’s joy is vouchsafed unto us!” and the chorus, which, very significantly, includes women’s voices as well as men’s, exults, “Triumph! Triumph! Thou noble couple! Thou³⁰ hast vanquished danger! The initiation of Isis is now thine! Come, both of you, enter into the temple!” (2.28).

Finally, as the music becomes a joyful celebratory wedding dance, this choir of priests and priestesses(!)³¹ sings:

Hail to you, consecrated ones!
You penetrated through night.
Thanks be unto you, Osiris,
and thanks to you, Isis!
Strength was victorious
and crowns beauty and wisdom, as a reward,
with an eternal crown! (2.30)

Isis and Osiris have determined that Tamino and Pamina should be together forever and become gods like they are. Thus *The Magic Flute* invites us to think of Isis and Osiris as the ultimate model for our lives, not Sarastro, righteous man that he is, nor Pamina’s father, whose wife did not deserve to stand with him in the temple, and certainly not Monostatos, whose very name implies egotism: The prefix *mono-* means *alone* in Greek and Latin and *-statos* implies *standing*. Monostatos is the arch example of someone who stands alone, who egotistically watches out for himself and no one else. He first tries to get “love” by rape then, later, by allying himself politically to the Queen who promises to “give” him her daughter when they have destroyed the temple. (In retrospect, the Queen is very quick, from the beginning, to “give” her daughter to others and to threaten her, in a famous aria that we will discuss at more length presently, to “loose eternally all bonds of nature,” whereas the very purpose of the temple is to forge such bonds.)

So if conventional wisdom about the unworthiness of women to be inducted into the sacred order is reflected in some of the statements of the priests, the deeper structure of the opera suggests that Mozart perceived this misogynistic and celibate order—though righteous as far as it goes—should and would be replaced by a new married and equal gender-neutral leadership, personified in Tamino and Pamina, deified in Isis and Osiris.

Certainly that does not detract from the dignity and holiness of Sarastro, who apparently represents the last celibate high priest, destined to be replaced by the new, married high priest and priestess.

Under the inspiration of his muse, Mozart is apparently following the logic of real humanism to its conclusion: setting about to lift Masonry (and society at large) by its own rhetorical bootstraps, as it were; showing that Masonry had yet to live up to the ideals of its own philosophy; taking it out of its misogynistic phase into a new era; and using as a lever the logical extension of the enlightened worldview, espoused by Masons and others of their time, that systematically strove to avoid all prejudice and irrational traditions and whose chosen model was the loving god-pair Isis and Osiris. So just as Tamino and Pamina transcended the gross deceptions of the Queen, they also transcend the more subtle last, residual biases reflected in conventional chauvinistic truisms sometimes thoughtlessly uttered or adhered to by otherwise enlightened souls.

All the apparent confusion of this libretto, all its contradictory claims and behaviors flee as the darkness before the glorious structural clarity of this paradigm: The god-couple Isis-Osiris is to be the model for the new Adam-and-Eve couple Pamina-Tamino, who, if they prove their worthiness, will become like the gods.

Other Couples Are Placed in the Paradigm of Apotheosis

At the bottom extreme of the paradigm, wickedly mirroring the divine couple of Isis and Osiris is the diabolical “couple” Monostatos and the Queen of the Night who, as we shall see, pair up near the end of the opera in an evil *mariage de convenance*, albeit only temporarily, and for all the wrong reasons.

In between is yet another couple, Papageno-Papagena, who will be blessed by the merciful gods with a portion of the gods’ glory and happiness, but by the couple’s own choices will not be worthy of the full joy of the consecrated initiates in the Temple of Wisdom. Papageno apparently can love only someone who looks just like himself (and whose name is a feminine variant of his). So whereas the names Pamina and Tamino are beautifully harmonious, almost anagrams of each other, whilst being clearly different, as are the names Isis and Osiris, the name-pair Papageno-Papagena suggests the love of a narcissist for his own reflection in the mirror.

Papageno has some virtue, but he expressly will not attain to the glory of Isis-Osiris as will Pamina-Tamino. For him, the heavenly joys involve drinking wine, having enough to eat, and having a little wife who looks like

the birdman himself. Papageno repeatedly states that life holds no higher joy for him than that of a good glass of wine:

Speaker. O man! You would have deserved to wander forever in the dark crevices of the earth;—however, the kindly gods have released you from this punishment.—But in return you will never experience the heavenly joy of the consecrated ones.

Papageno. Well, so what, there are a lot of other people like me.—The greatest joy for me right now would be a good glass of wine.

Speaker. Otherwise you have no wish in this world?

Papageno. Not up till now.

Speaker. Your wish will be fulfilled.—*(Exit. Immediately a large beaker filled with red wine comes out of the earth.)*

Papageno. Hurray! There's my wine now!—*(Drinks.)* Glorious!—Heavenly!—Divine!—Hah! I am now so happy that I would fly to the sun if I had wings.—Hah!—I feel so strange in my heart!—I want—I wish—I wonder what? (2.23)

In the end it is not true, of course, that Papageno wishes only for the heavenly joys of a glass of wine: at this moment he remembers his desire for a wife, or at least a little girlfriend, but he is not yet worthy even of that and will require more trials, including a suicide attempt, before the gods grant him a wife.

Rape and Murder: The Evil Characters Reveal Their True Nature

But this excursus on misogyny and goddesses has gotten us somewhat ahead of our story: As Tamino and Papageno undergo their trials of silence within the temple, Monostatos discovers Pamina asleep in the moonlight in a garden and makes another attempt to rape her. After revealing that he had been excused from the seventy-seven blows of the bastinado on the soles of his feet because today is a holy day, he sings (in rapidly conspiratorial, hushed tones) an aria, the first part of which echoes the ideas in Pamina's and Papageno's earlier duet about the universality of love, but in which he then goes on to blame his misfortunes in love on his skin color.

Continuing in the language of perdition (having earlier claimed that he would be consumed by the fire burning within him: "The fire, which glows within me, will yet consume me") he sings of the torments of living forever without a wife, a sentiment which also backhandedly reinforces the opera's emphasis on the heavenly nature of eternal marriage:

Every being feels the joys of love,
bills and coos, flirts and cuddles and kisses;
and I am supposed to avoid love
because a black man is ugly!

Have not I been given a heart?
 Am I not made of flesh and blood?
 To live forever without a mate
 would truly be the flames of hell!
 And so, while I am yet alive, I wish
 to bill and coo, kiss, be tender!
 Dear, good old moon, forgive,
 a white girl charmed me.
 White is beautiful! I must kiss her;
 Moon, hide your face while I do!
 If it bothers you too much,
 then close your eyes! (2.7)

Monostatos's plans are foiled by the arrival of the Queen, but he hides close by to overhear the conversation between mother and daughter. Upon learning that her plot to have Tamino rescue Pamina has failed and that Tamino is in the process of becoming an initiate himself, the Queen demands that Pamina stab Sarastro and take from him the sevenfold sun disk, which he wears on his breast. We have already learned how Pamina's father, on his deathbed, bequeathed the disk to Sarastro and to the initiated brethren.

Pamina responds to this story by asking her mother why she could not love Tamino, even after he is initiated: "Dear mother, could not I love this young man just as tenderly after he is an initiate, as I now love him? My father himself was bound to these wise men. He spoke of them all the time with rapture, praised their goodness—their understanding—their virtue. Sarastro is no less virtuous."

The Queen flies into a rage at such treason: "Do my ears deceive me? You, my daughter, have the audacity to defend the disgraceful cause of these barbarians? To love a man like that, who, allied with my mortal enemy, would plot my overthrow at any moment? Do you see this cold steel? It was honed to stab Sarastro. You will kill him and turn over the sun disk to me."

And then, in one of the most famous and familiar arias in the operatic repertory, this hate-filled demon, evoking the gods of revenge and hell's very flames, swears she will renounce her daughter forever, destroying eternally all the natural ties of parenthood, if Pamina does not kill Sarastro. Beautiful in its unique way, the music is fittingly frenzied and furious, her voice raging and raving, rising to a shrill scream:

The revenge of hell seethes in my heart,
 death and despair flame all around me!
 If Sarastro does not feel his death pains from your hand,
 then you will not be my daughter forevermore.

Let all the bonds of nature be repudiated eternally, be
abandoned eternally, demolished forever,
if Sarastro does not take on the pallor of death at your hand!

Hear, O ye gods of revenge! Hear the oath of a mother! (2.8)

Black Heart, Not a Black Skin: Racism Is Deconstructed

Fittingly, the Queen immediately sinks away into the subterranean regions. When she is gone, Monostatos comes forward, takes the dagger from Pamina and asks why she is trembling, because of his black skin or because of the murder plot. Revealing then that he knows all, he threatens Pamina if she does not agree to love him. Her life, and the life of her mother, are in his hand, he says.

First he threatens to tell Sarastro about her mother's plan, saying that Sarastro would surely drown the Queen (in something sounding very much like a baptismal font) in the temple: "A single word from me to Sarastro and your mother will be drowned in these underground vaults, in the water they say is used to purify the initiates."

When Pamina refuses, Monostatos "plays the race card." Full of anger, he says, "Why? Because I bear the color of a black spectre? Oh, it's not, eh? Aha! Then die!" (2.10). (His "Oh, it's not, eh?" implies she has shaken her head as if to say, "Of course it is not your skin color.") Though she tells him on bended knee she has given her heart to Tamino and begs him for mercy, Monostatos raises the dagger: "Love or death!" "Never!" Pamina says resolutely.

Monostatos draws back his arm to stab her and says, "Then go to hell!" but at that moment Sarastro appears and shoves him backwards. Having been caught in the act of attempting to murder Pamina, Monostatos blurts out a quick lie: "Sir, my behavior does not deserve punishment, I am innocent! They had conspired to murder you, therefore I wanted to avenge you."

Sarastro responds, "I know more than enough, I know that your soul is just as black as your face. Also I would punish you for this black enterprise, if an evil woman, who does happen to have a very good daughter, had not provided the dagger for it. Thank the evil actions of this woman that you are allowed to depart unpunished. Go!" (2.11).

These references to the color of Monostatos's skin require a sensitive analysis. As in the case of the misogynistic references in *The Magic Flute*, the opera appears at first to reinforce racial stereotypes; however, all the while it subtly begins to undercut them. It will be recalled, for example, that when Papageno first encounters Monostatos, xenophobic stereotypes of the black as bogeyman contribute to the birdman's original bias about

Sarastro as evil sorcerer. Immediately after his initial shock at encountering a black man, however, even Papageno, certainly no genius, understood that it is perfectly normal for there to be various colors of humans, just as there are various colors of birds.

In effect, Mozart and Schikaneder appealed to what they were sure was a similar bias in many members of the audience in order to entrap them in their original epistemological deception about who is good and who is bad. Once so entrapped, however, members of the audience would then be subtly invited with Papageno, as the priest had invited Tamino, to reexamine the premises of their beliefs and prejudices.

In the course of the opera, for example, it becomes clear for all to see that Sarastro has in nowise discriminated against Monostatos on account of his race; on the contrary, he has probably given him more authority and more freedom of action than he deserves. In the end, Sarastro expressly tells him that it is his black heart and his black deeds—absolutely not, however, his black skin—that make him evil.

Failing to gain the daughter, Monostatos now turns to the mother, who had called herself The Starflaming Queen, a title reflecting her nocturnal nature (the term *flaming* is also appropriate, considering her predilection for the flames of hell), but her dark essence is captured even better by her other title, The Queen of the Night, a being whose blackness is also not a function of her skin color, but of her essential inner nature. Thus Monostatos and the Queen profoundly resemble each other and will be seen ultimately paired up in an unholy symbolic alliance against the Good. But just as the Queen's evil nature is not a function of her gender, as we have seen, neither is Monostatos's evil nature a function of his race.

Mozart Challenges Eighteenth-Century Racism

That Mozart and Schikaneder were capable in 1791 of attempting to undermine racial prejudice in Western Europeans may seem as difficult to accept as the premise that they were capable of undermining misogyny. Yet a brief excursus into the life of an acquaintance of Mozart, a certain Angelo Soliman, may shed some light on the matter. Soliman, whose real name was Mmadi Make, was born sometime around 1726 in Africa. At seven, he was stolen by an enemy tribe and sold to Europeans who took him to Italy, where he was raised and educated by a Marquess. Eventually he was noticed and admired by an Austrian general, Johann Georg Christian Fürst Lobkowitz, who then accepted him as a gift from the Marquess.

A profoundly intelligent and well-educated man—he is said to have spoken perfect German, Italian, and French as well as some English, Czech, and Latin—Angelo Soliman was well known to all the most significant

scientists and artists in Vienna. For twenty years or so he accompanied the general on his campaigns until, at the death of Lobkowitz, he was inherited by Joseph Wenzel Fürst Liechtenstein, whom Soliman accompanied to Frankfurt during Liechtenstein's work there as a kind of lobbyist for the election of Joseph II as Holy Roman Emperor.

Soliman always dressed like an aristocrat and is said to have made quite an impression in his white, gold-trimmed frock coat that contrasted starkly with his dark skin.³² While in Frankfurt he earned the enormous sum of twenty thousand Gulden at gambling, which enabled him, upon his return to Vienna, to secretly marry the widow of a Dutch general (in St. Stephen's Cathedral!), buy a house in the suburbs, and lead a half-way normal life, though Liechtenstein was angry when a chance remark by the Emperor revealed this marriage to him, for he considered Soliman his personal chattel.

Mozart, who enjoyed the company of unconventional people of all sorts, knew Soliman as a member of the Freemasonic lodge Zur wahren Eintracht (True Harmony), which Soliman joined in 1783. According to the minutes of the lodge, Mozart and Soliman attended a number of meetings together in the temple. Mozart had met him earlier, about the time Mozart began his opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (The Abduction from the Seraglio), which premiered in 1782. There is reason to believe that Mozart's interest in the idea of freeing captives in a foreign land, the subject of that opera, may have been catalyzed by the case of Soliman.

In *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* when Selim Bassa, the Turkish Sultan, allows his European captives to go free, even though he loves Konstanze and even though the father of their leader, Belmonte, was his bitter enemy, it is the Muslim who sets the Christian precedent for Sarastro's gentle judgments nearly ten years later:

Belmonte. Cool your vengeance on me, avenge the injustice my father did to you! I expect the worst and do not blame you.

Selim. It must be a characteristic of your clan, then, to commit injustices because you assume that is just the natural thing to do? You are mistaken. I detested your father far too much for me ever to be able to walk in his footsteps. Take your freedom, take Konstanze, sail to your fatherland, tell your father that you were in my power, that I let you go free in order to be able to tell him that it is a far greater joy to avenge by good deeds an injustice suffered, than to expiate one vice by committing others.

Belmonte. Sir! . . . You astonish me . . .

Selim. (*Regards him contemptuously.*) I believe it. So with that, depart, and if you are at the very least more humane than

your father, then my actions will be rewarded. (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, 3.9)

That European Christians required such lessons in the Golden Rule and in racial justice emerges from the end of our account of Angelo Soliman: Soliman lived until after the repressive Emperor Franz II had succeeded both his uncle, the enlightened Joseph II, and his father, Leopold II. In an unbelievably ghoulish act, at Soliman's death Kaiser Franz II ordered that his body be confiscated and, despite protests by the family and by the Archbishop of Vienna, given to a taxidermist and sculptor named Franz Thaler to be skinned, mounted, and added to the Imperial Collection of exotic stuffed animals, displayed in a tableau along with several aquatic birds and a water hog. Mercifully, when Vienna was bombarded in 1848, the collection was destroyed in a fire.³³

Even knowing as little as we do about his relationship to Angelo Soliman, it is difficult to believe that Mozart, a friend and lodge brother of such a man, would have knowingly cast aspersions on, or have allowed Schikaneder or anyone else to cast aspersions on, another human being because of his skin color.³⁴ Far more likely, it seems to me, is that Mozart and Schikaneder intended *The Magic Flute* expressly to call into question the rationality of racism and sexism.

Pamina and Papageno Are Tested Further

Returning to the plot of the opera once again: after the departure of Monostatos, who reveals he is determined to seek out the mother since he cannot have the daughter, Pamina begs Sarastro not to punish her mother, who continues to lurk in the subterranean halls of the temple, plotting revenge. He explains in a beautiful aria, set to calm music exactly opposite that of the strident Queen, how within these holy walls revenge is not known and how love, not force, leads people to do their duty. The further text of his aria explains why he tolerated Monostatos in his realm and why he does not intend to take any revenge on him or on the Queen of the Night:

In these holy halls
revenge is not known.
And if a person has fallen,
love leads him back to his duty.
Then he walks hand in hand with a friend
joyously and happily into the better land.
Within these holy walls,
where one human being loves another,

no traitor can lurk,
because enemies are forgiven.
Whoever does not take pleasure from these doctrines,
does not deserve to be a human being. (2.12)

Meanwhile, back in the vaults of the temple, Papageno and Tamino continue their trials of silence. Papageno laments that he cannot even get a glass of water here, much less anything stronger. At this an ugly old hag emerges with some water for him. Out of sheer boredom he strikes up a conversation with her: "Tell me, how old are you?" "Eighteen years and two minutes," she replies. Papageno must think she has meant to say *eighty* years (as in English, in spoken German *achtzehn* and *achtzig* are quite alike), and it amuses him that such an old woman has inadvertently said *eighteen* when she obviously meant *eighty*.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, what a young angel you are! Do you have a boyfriend, too?" Papageno asks, mockingly. "Course!" she replies. "Is he also as young as you?" Papageno continues. "Not quite, he is older by ten years." Papageno finds this extremely funny: the thought of a ninety-year-old boyfriend sends him into hysterics: "That must be quite a love affair! What is your lover's name?" "Papageno."

"Papageno!" At this revelation Papageno is thunderstruck. Could someone else in the world have his name? "Well, then, where is he, this Papageno?" he inquires. "There he sits, my angel," the old hag replies, pointing at Papageno. "I am supposedly your lover?" he asks. "Yes, my angel!" she replies. He asks her name, but she is prevented from telling him by a strong clap of thunder, at which the old lady limps rapidly away.

The Three Boys arrive in their flying apparatus. They reveal that they have been sent by Sarastro to restore to Tamino and Papageno the magic flute and the magic bells, which were temporarily taken from them, and they leave behind a table beautifully set with food and wine. When we meet again for the third time, they say, joy will be the reward for your courage! Papageno tucks in to the food and wine as Tamino plays on his flute, which Pamina hears and follows to find the two men.

Pamina Considers Suicide

Normally, Papageno would have been unable to keep silent about anything, and he would have surely revealed to Pamina that Tamino is not allowed to speak to her, but as luck and the skill of the librettists would have it, his mouth is crammed so full of food at this moment that even he cannot speak. Consequently, poor Pamina, who receives no response from Papageno or Tamino, becomes convinced that Tamino no longer loves her.

Her unbelievably sad aria ends with a resolve to seek peace in death:

Alas, I feel it, the joy of love
is eternally lost!
You happy hours will never
return to my heart again!
See, Tamino, these tears
flow, my betrothed, just for you.
If you do not feel the longings of love,
then peace will be found in death! (2.18)

When she departs, Tamino and Papageno are summoned forth to join the priests. Papageno, engrossed in his meal, says that not even the six lions that draw Sarastro's chariot could pull him away from it, at which the lions do appear, only to be charmed by Tamino's flute-playing. Frightened, Papageno allows Tamino to drag him away. Eighteen priests arranged in a pyramid with six on a side, each carrying a lighted pyramid in his hand like a lantern, sing in three-part harmony the following prophetic chorale:

O Isis and Osiris, what joy!
The brightness of the sun chases away the gloomy night.
Soon the noble youth will feel new life:
Soon he will be totally devoted to our ministry.
His spirit is bold, his heart is pure,
Soon he will be worthy of us. (2.20)

Sarastro orders that Tamino be led in with a sack over his head. He instructs Tamino that he has two final, dangerous trials to accomplish and asks that the gods continue to accompany him as they have so far. Then Pamina is brought in, also with a sack on her head. The sack is removed and she is told that Tamino is there to say farewell to her for a final time. And though one can read this to mean—correctly—that Tamino will never have to take his leave from her again after this, she has concluded earlier that Tamino does not love her, and this biased view makes her interpret the statement to mean that she will never see him again.

Pamina is in the process of learning what Tamino learned earlier, and what this epistemological opera is all about, at its most profound level, namely that one must always question the validity and the source of one's assumptions. In the subsequent trio between her, Tamino, and Sarastro, her prior convictions also apparently make it impossible for her to attend to or be convinced by Sarastro's and Tamino's repeated reassurances:

Pamina. Shall I not see you again, precious one?
Sarastro. You will see each other again, joyfully!
Pamina. Deadly dangers await you!

Tamino. Surely the gods will protect me!
Pamina. Deadly dangers await you!
Sarastro. Surely the gods will protect him!
Pamina. You will not escape death,
this my intuition whispers to me.
Sarastro. May the will of the gods be done,
their slightest intimation will be like a law unto him!
Tamino. May the will of the gods be done,
their slightest intimation will be like a law unto me!
Pamina. O, if you loved, as I love you,
then you would not be so calm.
Sarastro. Believe me, he feels the same emotions,
and will be your loyal mate forever!
Tamino. Believe me, I feel the same emotions,
and will be your loyal mate forever!
Sarastro. The hour strikes, now you must part!
Tamino and Pamina. How bitter are the sorrows of parting!
Sarastro. Tamino has to leave again.
Tamino. Pamina, I really have to leave.
Pamina. Does Tamino really have to leave?
Sarastro. He has to leave now!
Tamino. I have to leave now.
Pamina. You have to leave then!
Tamino. Pamina, farewell!
Pamina. Tamino, farewell!
Sarastro. Now hurry away.
Your word is calling you.
The hour strikes, we will see one another again!
Tamino and Pamina. Alas, golden calm, return again!
Farewell! Farewell!
Sarastro. We will see one another again! (2.21)

When Tamino is led out blindfolded, Papageno has been left alone in a chamber. Attempting to escape, he is turned back at both doors to the room, the one he entered and the one through which Tamino has been led. "Get back!" a voice calls out, as the voices had done earlier when Tamino attempted to enter the temple. Unlike Tamino, however, Papageno does not find a third door. Instead, the spokesman enters and tells him, as we have seen, that the kindly gods have released him from punishment, but in return he will never experience the heavenly joy of the initiates. It is at this point that Papageno says that for him a good glass of wine is the highest,

most divine joy. Upon drinking his wine, however, Papageno feels strange stirrings in his heart. Perhaps there is one more thing he desires after all. He plays his magic bells and sings:

A girlfriend or mate
is what Papageno wishes for himself!
O, such a gentle little dove
would be sheer bliss and eternal salvation³⁵ for me!
Then eating and drinking would really appeal to me,
then I could measure up to princes,
enjoy life as a wise man
and be as though I were in Elysium.

A girlfriend or mate
is what Papageno wishes for himself!
O, such a gentle little dove
would be sheer bliss and eternal salvation for me!
Alas, can't I please just one of all
those charming girls?
May one of them help me out of my difficulties,
or I'll surely grieve myself to death.

A girlfriend or mate
is what Papageno wishes for himself!
O, such a gentle little dove
would be sheer bliss and eternal salvation for me!
If no girl gives me love,
then the flame must consume me!
But if a female mouth kisses me,
then immediately I'll be healthy again! (2.23)

This, of course, is the cue for the old woman to enter for the second time: "Here I am now, my angel!" "Just my luck!" replies Papageno. She promises to love him tenderly if he will promise to be true to her eternally. When he hesitates to offer her his hand as a token of their covenant, saying that such a thing requires careful thought, she bursts out, "Papageno, I counsel you, do not hesitate. Give me your hand, or you will be incarcerated here forever. Water and bread will be your daily fare. You will have to live without a friend, without a girlfriend, and renounce the world eternally."

Papageno thinks about it: "Drink water? Renounce the world? No, in that case I would rather take an old woman than no woman at all. Now then, here you have my hand with my promise that I will always be true to you, (*to himself*) as long as I do not see a prettier woman." When he gives her his hand and formally swears this oath to her, she metamorphoses into a young woman, dressed just like he is: "Pa—Pa—Papagenal!" he stammers (2.24).

When he attempts to embrace her, however, the spokesman takes her rapidly by the hand: "Away with you, young woman, he is not yet worthy of you." He tells Papageno to get back, which Papageno refuses to do: "Before I'll get back, may the earth swallow me up," which the earth now obligingly does (2.25).

The three angelic boys make their third appearance, as promised, with a song whose last two lines about the celestialization of earth and the apotheosis of mortals exactly repeat those sung by the chorus at the end of act 1:

Soon the sun will shine resplendently
in its golden orbit, to herald the morning.
Soon superstition will disappear,
soon the wise man will be victorious.
O gentle peace,³⁶ descend to us,
return into the hearts of humans again;
Then earth will be a heavenly realm
and mortals will be equal to the gods. (2.26)

But immediately one of the boys notices that Pamina is tormented by doubts and thinks she may even be insane. They resolve to comfort the poor girl, for "truly, her fate deeply affects us!" (2.24) (I argue in another essay about a later Viennese opera³⁷ which involves the intervention by unborn children that it may be possible for this statement to be literally true: these angelic beings may well represent the unborn spirits of Pamina's—and Papageno's—children. If so, her fate—and his—would indeed affect them most deeply!) To be on the safe side, they decide to further observe her suspicious behavior.

When they do, they see that she has decided to commit suicide by stabbing herself with the dagger brought to her earlier by her mother, whose curse, Pamina says, continues to plague her. They attempt to warn her verbally, but she persists, so they physically restrain her and tell her that if her young man could see this he would certainly die of grief, for he loves her alone. Although they are not at liberty to reveal to her why he could not speak to her, they do offer to take her to him so that she can see for herself that he has dedicated his heart to her and is even willing to face death on her account. As they prepare to leave, they join with her in a quartet:

Two hearts that burn in love,
human powerlessness can never part.
The labors of enemies are in vain;
The gods themselves protect them. (2.27)

Pamina arrives, as we have seen previously, just as Tamino is about to embark on his last trial, though unbeknownst to him he was destined to share

it with her. It will be recalled how she tells Tamino about the holy provenance of the magic flute, bids him play upon it, and leads him into the Temple of Trials even as she is led by Love.

Papageno Also Flirts with Suicide before Finding Love at Last

However, while Tamino and Pamina have been reunited to endure the last of their trials together, those by fire and water, another, more unfortunate character is also planning to commit suicide. Papageno has been unable to find his Papagena anywhere and, having forgotten the power of his magic bells, believes there is no way out but to hang himself from a tree. True to the comic bathos inherent in his character, he calls out to all the pretty girls in the world, saying he will reconsider his suicide if one of them will take pity on him. If they refuse, his suicide will be their fault, he reasons. After counting to three, with no response from any girls (including those in the audience, to whom this born ham always appeals³⁸), he proceeds with his plan, only to be interrupted at the last second by the three spirits, who condemn suicide and remind him he has forgotten his magic bells.

While he plays the bells, invoking their magic to bring his mate to him, the boys return to their flying machine and escort Papagena forth, then tell Papageno to turn around and look at her. A duet between the two avian characters ensues, the beginning of which evokes the mating ritual of certain birds³⁹ as these two astonished creatures begin by repeating the syllable *Pa*— seven times. Eventually they evoke heaven's blessing upon their union, including the gift of many children, though their essentially narcissistic nature dictates their desire for children who will be many small copies of themselves, right down to their names and their respective gender:

Papageno. Pa—Pa—Pa—Pa—Pa—Pa—Papagena!

Papagena. Pa—Pa—Pa—Pa—Pa—Pa—Papageno!

Papageno. Are you now given to me totally?

Papagena. Now I am given to you totally!

Papageno. Well then, in that case be my little mate!

Papagena. Well then, in that case be my heart's little dove!

Both. What a joy it will be,
 When the gods are mindful of us,
 and reward our love with children,
 such dear little tiny children!

Papageno. First a little Papageno!

Papagena. Then a little Papagena!

Papageno. Then another little Papageno!

Papagena. Then another little Papagena!
Both. Papagena! Papageno! Papagena!
It is the most sublime of all feelings,
when parents are blessed with
many, many, many, many
Pa—Pa—Pa—Pa—genos,
Pa—Pa—Pa—Pa—genas. (2.29)

Though Papageno displays many human frailties throughout *The Magic Flute* (which combine with the especially sympathetic music lavished on him by Mozart to make him one of the most beloved characters in the opera!), in the end love induces him to take the first step away from narcissism and hedonism to pray with Papagena that heaven bless them with many dear little tiny children. Even if the children look like so many little Papagenos and Papagenas, Papageno is nonetheless declaring himself ready to move outside himself to love and care for other beings. Miraculously, the gods have used his narcissism to help him overcome his narcissism.

The Couples Find Gender Equality in Divine Marriage

In at least one other way, we see that Papageno has moved away from egocentrism. His relationship with Papagena, as expressed in their duet, seems to be totally based on gender equality: there is no hint in the duet that Papageno will lord it over Papagena, who seems every bit his equal in every sense of the word. Perhaps this is in belated recognition of the fact that just as Tamino was led through his trials by Pamina, herself led by the goddess of Love and accompanied by the magic power of music, Papageno has also been led in very creative ways throughout all his trials by Papagena, herself led by the goddess of Love, and rescued at the last moment through the magic power of music.

So in the last analysis, in neither couple is the man superior to the woman, a fact brought into focus by the examination of a verse intended for the Three Boys that Mozart apparently chose not to set to music and include in the opera. According to a textbook of the opera from Berlin dating from 1795, the Three Boys would have been required to sing to Papagena, as they escorted her out of the flying machine to meet Papageno:

Come here, you sweet, dear little woman!
You are to devote your little heart to your husband!
He will love you, sweet little woman,
be your father, friend, and brother!
Be this man's property!⁴⁰

In addition to its other less-glaring weaknesses such as inane repetition, had it been included, this unattributed verse would have blatantly subordinated the woman to the man, making him her father and declaring her to be his chattel! In this verse, had it been set to music and included in the opera, one would have had a definitive refutation of our theory that this opera works to undermine chauvinism: the notion that one member of the human family—based on race or gender—could ever be considered inferior, even chattel, to another!

Evil Is Vanquished in a Glorious New Dawn

In any event, there is still one scene left in the opera, to which we will now attend: In the first part of the scene, Monostatos, the Queen, and her ladies-in-waiting climb up out of their infernal pit bearing black torches in their hands (even their “illumination” is black, it would seem), intending to ambush and massacre all the priests in the temple. Monostatos reminds the Queen of her promise to give him her daughter, a promise typical of the Queen and Monostatos, for it entirely ignores the issue of Pamina’s free will. They are somewhat apprehensive about the sound of thunder and waterfalls emanating from the temple, but, undaunted, their song changes into a mantra of idolatrous obeisance to their evil Queen-goddess:

Monostatos. Just be quiet, quiet, quiet, quiet!
Soon we will penetrate into the temple.

Queen and the Three Ladies. Just be quiet, quiet, quiet, quiet!
Soon we will penetrate into the temple.

Monostatos. But, O Queen, keep your word! Fulfill—
Your child must be my wife.

Queen. I will keep my word; it is my will:
My child shall be your wife.

The Three Ladies. Her child must be his wife.
(Muffled thunder, the sound of water are heard.)

Monostatos. Be quiet, I hear a horrible roaring
like thunder and a waterfall.

Queen and the Three Ladies. Yes, this roaring is dreadful
like the reverberation of distant thunder!

Monostatos. Now they are in the halls of the temple.

All. That is where we will attack them—
and eradicate these sanctimonious frauds from the earth
with fire and with mighty sword.

The Three Ladies and Monostatos. Unto you, great Queen of the
Night, may the victims of our revenge be offered as a sacrifice.

There is no need for a battle. At once an enormous sound is heard, a crashing chord, thunder, lightning, and windstorm all together. Instantly the stage is transformed into a great sun, whose rays banish all evil (plate 8 and back cover). Sarastro stands in an elevated position; Tamino and Pamina are wearing priestly attire, with all the priests arrayed on both sides of them. The Three Boys hold flowers in their hands.

Monostatos, Queen, and the Three Ladies. Our power is shattered,
annihilated,
we are all thrust down into eternal night. (*They sink away out
of sight.*)

Sarastro. The rays of the sun banish the night,
destroying the ill-gotten power of hypocrites.

Chorus of Priests. Hail to you, consecrated ones!
You penetrated through night.
Thanks be unto you, Osiris,
and thanks to you, Isis!
Strength was victorious
and crowns beauty and wisdom, as a reward,
with an eternal crown! (2.30)

One Great Whole: We See the Role of Art in Theology

As the music changes from a chorale of thanks to a joyful kind of celebratory wedding dance, the curtain falls on this, Mozart's most remarkable paean of praise to husbands, wives, and children,⁴¹ to free will, faith, and forgiveness, to courage, to life, to universal equality, to eternal marriage, and to the apotheosizing potential of divine love.

In our reading of *The Magic Flute*, we have seen how apotheosis, that one great theological, philosophical, anthropological idea, amplified and multiplied by the medium of great art into a thousand beautiful facets—like one bright ray of light through a prism—can create heretofore unknown resonances in the human soul and can point to heretofore unknown implications for human behavior. In my experience with great works of art, such ideas are invariably depicted in the most profoundly moving aesthetic manner, as though held by their artist creators to be among the most precious insights vouchsafed them by the muses.

This fact suggests, to my mind at least, a mutually beneficial relationship that should exist between Latter-day Saints and the fine arts, in fact between Latter-day Saints and learning generally. As we contemplate our own struggles to realize the potential of our own remarkable theology, it is important to remember how much the arts, including *The Magic Flute*, have to offer, even to those who have a fulness of truth. These disciplines

have the power to substantiate and make us more profoundly appreciate both the myriad implications and the universal appeal of the tenets of our own sometimes neglected or even derided theology.

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Much of this article appears with excerpts from the original German libretto under the title “*Die Zauberflöte*: Mozart’s Magical Celebration of Apotheosis, the Man/Woman Monad, and the Temple as Blueprint for Celestial Life” in my book *In Search of the Supernal: Pre-Existence, Eternal Marriage, and Apotheosis in German Literary, Operatic, and Cinematic Texts* (Münster: agenda Verlag, 2003), 79–136.

1. See Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1950), 6:302–17.

2. *The Godmakers* is the title of an anti-Mormon book by Ed Decker and Dave Hunt (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1984) and two films based thereon.

3. Ernst W. Benz, “Der Mensch als *imago dei*,” printed as “*Imago dei*: Man in the Image of God,” in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judeo-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman W. Madsen (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1978), 208.

Those interested in exploring Benz’s paper further should know that only about two-thirds of my translation of Benz’s lecture appeared in this monograph. For the missing third, one must consult the original German text in Ernst Benz, *Urbild und Abbild: Der Mensch und die mythische Welt* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1974), 475–508, or ask me for a copy of the full English translation (Alan_Keele@byu.edu). For more on Latter-day Saint doctrine on man in the image of God, see Donald Q. Cannon and Larry E. Dahl, *The Prophet Joseph Smith’s King Follett Discourse: A Six Column Comparison of Original Notes and Amalgamations with Introduction and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: BYU Printing Service, 1983); Stan Larson, “The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text,” *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 193–208; and Van Hale, “The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse,” *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 209–23.

4. Benz, “Man in the Image of God,” 209.

5. The following, from a contemporary review, is typical:

This ridiculous, absurd and insipid concoction, before which the powers of reason grind to a halt and critical thinking is forced to blush, would be forgotten and despised had it not been set to music by the great Mozart; however, by virtue of the grand talents of this genius, which he exhibited in their full strength, the entire work was a success; people ignored the rubbish . . . laughed off the caricatures, and reveled in the magic of the music. (Herr Knüppel, “Vertraute Briefe zur Charakteristik von Wien,” cited in *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sämtliche Opernlibretti*, ed. Rudolph

Angermüller [Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990], 920). All translations from German are mine.

6. Actually *Johann Joseph Schikaneder*. Compare Volkmar Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Wien* (Munich: Piper, 1986), 505.

7. See Aaron Dalton's article in this issue of *BYU Studies*, "Diese Aufnahme ist bezaubernd schön: Deutsche Grammophon's 1964 *Magic Flute*," 251–69.

8. Compare Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Wien*, 260–62.

9. Compare Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Wien*, 284–85. See also Paul Kerry, "Initiates of Isis Now, Come, Enter into the Temple!": Masonic and Enlightenment Thought in *The Magic Flute*," in this issue of *BYU Studies*, 104–30.

10. See Robert B. McFarland's article in this issue of *BYU Studies*, "Mann und Weib and Baby Makes Two: Gender and Family in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Sequel to *The Magic Flute*," 206–17.

11. Compare Stefan Kunze, *Mozarts Opern* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996), 628–29:

There remains a word to be said about the authorship of the *Magic-Flute* text. Since Otto Jahn's fundamental Mozart biography, Karl Ludwig Giesecke is regularly mentioned as an author, or at least a coauthor, doubtless with the unspoken but honorable motive of upgrading or upvaluing, in a round-about way, the *Magic-Flute* text. . . . But the theory is based only on one (questionable) witness: namely the testimony of Giesecke himself during a conversation in a tavern in Vienna in 1818. That is all—and it's not enough. But even asking the question this way is wrong and irrelevant. As wrong as it is to limit the question of authorship just to the text, it's just as wrong to view a piece like *The Magic Flute* as the literary property of *one* author. It's not a question of which author, whether one or several, rather it's a question of whether the piece was *authored*, in the strict sense. That which comprises the author: individuality of thought, of poetic structure, all of that is secondary in the Schikaneder libretto. Perhaps Giesecke and others did make their contributions to the way the scenes are conceived. But if there was a coauthor of *The Magic Flute*, then it was one about whose contribution we know absolutely nothing: namely Mozart.

12. As Philipp B. Malzl shows in his contribution to this issue of *BYU Studies*, "Marc Chagall's *Magic Flute* Poster: An Allegory of Eden," 218–28, Chagall was fascinated as well by the mythical implications of the opera, implications that are a function of the text even more than of the musical score.

13. Compare Wilhelm Zentner's introduction to the libretto in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1962), 5–6.

14. Zentner, introduction to libretto, 5–6.

15. Some versions purporting to be earlier had a lion chasing Tamino, rather than a serpent, but this alternative is not only less interesting mythically, it is also potentially confusing because later Sarastro emerges in a chariot drawn by lions. Whether Mozart and Schikaneder originally wrote the part for a lion, eventually it became more or less standardized as a serpent (though my favorite performance, that by John Eliot Gardiner, uses a lion, presumably because the Pilobolus Dancers, who function both as the scenery and the set, can more easily imitate a lion than a snake!).

For further discussion of Tamino as an Adam figure and mythical creatures in *The Magic Flute*, see Malzl, “Marc Chagall’s *Magic Flute* Poster,” 218–28.

16. See Harrison Powley, “*Die Zauberflöte*: What’s in a Title?” in this issue of *BYU Studies*, 189–204.

17. William Shakespeare, *Othello*, 3.3; William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.3.

18. Elysium is the Greek idea of paradise where the blessed go to eternal rest and joy. See John B. Fowles, “From Arcadia to Elysium in *The Magic Flute* and Weimar Classicism: The Plan of Salvation and Eighteenth-Century Views of Moral Progression,” in this issue of *BYU Studies*, 84–103.

19. For more on Orpheus, see Powley, “*Die Zauberflöte*,” 192.

20. Michael Evenden’s contribution to this issue of *BYU Studies*, “Sarastro’s Repentance: One Dramaturg’s Advice on *The Magic Flute*,” 162–69, raises the fascinating possibility (and confirms a long-standing suspicion of mine) that Sarastro should be seen as an imperfect, albeit penitent leader, perhaps having slaves after all (like other good men of the Enlightenment such as Thomas Jefferson!), perhaps even having improperly coveted Pamina at one point, but instrumental in guiding matters so that in the end a perfect godlike couple, Pamina and Tamino, lead the brother- and sisterhood into a brighter future.

21. Compare act 2, scene 7, where Monostatos says to himself, “So I have this day to thank for the fact that I can still tread on the earth with unbroken skin.” See also act 2, scene 11, Sarastro to Monostatos: “Be grateful that the evil actions of this woman allow you to leave unpunished.”

22. One need go no further than a U.S. dollar bill to see the pyramidion on the Great Seal of the United States. It contains the all-seeing eye of god, slightly separated from a pyramidal edifice composed of thirteen tiers of stone representing the thirteen original colonies, formed in god’s image, or in the image of the pyramidion, and striving to rise above the gap still separating the eternal from the mortal. Jefferson, Washington, Mozart, and Schikaneder shared not only the same Enlightenment and Freemasonic views but the same pyramidal, Egyptian iconography to describe them. See Kerry Muhlestein, “European Views of Egyptian Magic and Mystery: A Cultural Context for *The Magic Flute*,” in this issue of *BYU Studies*, 137–48.

23. Clearly, the new couple mentioned is not Tamino and Papageno, the two men being led into the Temple of Trials, but Tamino and Pamina, whom the gods have reserved for each other.

24. That Osiris and Isis are also brother and sister detracts not at all from their holiness, for in the realm of heaven all beings are brothers and sisters and incest exists not at all. Much the same kind of divine marriage union obtains between Siegmund and his twin sister Sieglinde in Wagner’s *Ring of the Nibelungen*. And though there are many other god-couples in the pantheon such as Zeus and Hera, Wotan and Fricka, Haephestos and Aphrodite, one is hard pressed to think of any of them besides Isis and Osiris who remain true to each other and do not fight all the time!

25. Known to the Greeks and others as Typhon, this evil deity is portrayed as a kind of King Kong in Gustav Klimt’s famous *Beethoven Frieze* of 1902, located in the Secession House in Vienna (home to an alternative modern school of art that “seceded” from the nearby art academy).

26. Compare Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 442–47. See *Ramses II: The Pharaoh and His Time, Exhibition Catalogue* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1985), plate p. 44.

27. See in this issue of *BYU Studies* John Gee's "Notes on the Egyptian Motifs in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*," 149–60.

28. See Victoria Webb, "The Queen of the Night: A Daughter's Plea," in this issue of *BYU Studies*, 180–88.

29. See Kerry, "Masonic and Enlightenment Thought in *The Magic Flute*," 104–30.

30. In the German, there is an interesting use of the *singular* forms of address *du, dein* (thou, thine): are Tamino and Pamina now literally to be considered one flesh, a device made possible in German grammar because the word *couple* is singular. The text returns to the plural in the next sentence with the imperative plural forms *come, enter, both of you*.

31. At one other equally significant point in the opera, namely at the very end of the first act, the prophetic chorus about the celestialization of the earth and the apotheosis of humankind also includes women (1.19), a musical clue that in the heavenly realm, and in the perfected earthly realm modelled on it, no discrimination on the basis of gender exists.

32. Compare Soliman's picture in Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Wien*, plate 10.

33. For all the information about Soliman, I am indebted to Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Wien*, 96–99.

34. See David P. Crandall's article in this issue of *BYU Studies*: "Monostatos, the Moor," 170–79.

35. Here the German is *Seligkeit*, an enormously important word. Not translatable with one English equivalent, the word carries several meanings ranging from the theological notion of everlasting life and salvation to the emotional state thought to be enjoyed by beings who attain to eternal life: supreme bliss, sheer joy, and divine happiness. In the context of Papageno's aria it is clear that *Seligkeit* bears both meanings, for he sings not only of his earthly happiness, but of his expected status as prince and wise man in Elysium if he is successful; the image also considers the flame (presumably not only of his love, but of hell) that will consume him if he fails to find a wife.

36. This language is similar to that in the last two lines of Pamina's and Tamino's farewell song: "Alas, golden calm, peace, or stillness, return again!" (2.21). It is also remarkably similar to the sentiment expressed in Goethe's most famous poem, "Über allen Gipfeln / Ist Ruh": (Above all mountain peaks there is calm), where calm, peace, or stillness, a heavenly attribute, also descends to mortals.

37. This is *Die Frau ohne Schatten* by Hugo von Hofmannsthal with music by Richard Strauss. My essay is in my book *In Search of the Supernal: Pre-Existence, Eternal Marriage, and Apotheosis in German Literary, Operatic, and Cinematic Texts* (Münster: agenda Verlag, 2003).

38. For one young audience member's response to this scene, see Lawrence P. Vincent, "A Performer's Reflections on Die Zauberflöte," in this issue of *BYU Studies*, 39.

39. The German word for parrot is *Papagei*, of which Papageno/-a would seem to be an echo. The suffixes *-geno* and *-gena* suggest engendering. Some might connect the repetition of the syllable Pa- seven times (as well as the sevenfold sun disk) with the number for the creation, represented by the seven periods.

40. Zentner, introduction to libretto, 67n6.

41. See Kaye Terry Hanson's article in this issue of *BYU Studies*, "A Magic Summer with *The Magic Flute*," 30–35.