

Winter 2024. Music 9550: *The Magic Flute*: themes, texts, and commentary

Winter 2024

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Some music from our past has had to have been unearthed and rediscovered. *The Magic Flute*, in contrast, has held the stage since its premiere more than two-hundred and thirty years ago: it belongs to a continuity. Not that a consensus holds on its meaning or quality. People are still trying to figure out what the libretto means (or whether it is coherent enough to mean anything at all), and even where admiration for the opera's craft prevails, the question of what to make of its symbolic, ritualistic world continues to beguile or divide (as the rich history of productions demonstrates).

As it is the opera's aesthetic properties that help to make such ideas interesting, part of our work will be analytical. At the same time, those qualities are necessarily shaped by culture and history. The opera appeared toward the end of a period where theater was promoted as a source of moral improvement and social cohesion (after more than a millennium of anti-clerical animus toward the stage); it belonged to a Catholic Austria where traces (and sometimes more than traces) of a Counter-Reformation ethic lingered. The opera put the German stage on a new level; it was used in defense of various political causes; later still, it was promoted for its insight into basic human psychology (via Jung, for example).

We will not have time to follow all of these developments, although individual projects are welcome to pursue these or other leads. Among the required projects will be a brief paper and presentation on a review of or commentary on the opera (in a non-English language of your choice). The other requirements, along with weekly reading and discussion, will be a term paper and a presentation based on that.

Schedule

12 Jan. **Introduction.** (Please do the reading and listening in advance of class.)

Reading: Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style*, "Comic Opera," 288–328; Richard Kramer, "Seeking Enlightenment in Mozart's *Magic Flute*," in *The Cambridge Companion to "The Magic Flute*," 187–99. (Hereafter *CCMF*.)

Listening: *The Magic Flute*: Priests' March; "O Isis und Osiris"; trio, "Soll ich dich, Teurer! nicht mehr seh'n?"

19 Jan. **The Counter-Reformation legacy of the Austrian stage; Viennese theater in Mozart's day**

Reading: James van Horn Melton, *Absolutism and the Eighteenth-Century Origins of Compulsory Schooling in Prussia and Austria*, chap. 3, "From Image to Word," 60–90; R. J. W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy* (New York, 1979), chap. 3, "The Anatomy of Catholic Learning," 311–45; Estelle Joubert, "German Opera in Mozart's Vienna," in *CCMF*, 9–29.

Listening: "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön"; "O zittre nicht, mein lieber Sohn."

26 Jan. **The libretto**

Reading: the entire libretto; Michael Freyhan, “Mozart’s Text Setting in the *Magic Flute*,” *Acta Musicologica* 83/2 (2011): 245–59; Thomas Bauman, “Partial Derivatives: Sources, Types, and Tropes in *The Magic Flute*,” in *CCMF*, 221–32; Austin Glatthorn, “*The Magic Flute* in 1791,” in *CCMF*, 61–82.

2 Feb. ***The Magic Flute* and the moral stage**

Reading: Charles Porée, “An Oration on Theater” (1733); Friedrich Schiller, “Theater Considered as a Moral Institution” (1784); Martin Nedbal, “*The Magic Flute*’s Libretto and German Enlightenment Theater Reform,” in *CCMF*, 30–43.

Listening: *The Magic Flute*, first-act sextet; first-act finale

9 Feb. **Presentations on translation projects**

16 Feb. ***The Magic Flute* as allegory**

Reading: A. D. Nuttall, *Two Concepts of Allegory*, chap. 1, “*The Tempest* and Its Romantic Critics,” 1–14, chap. 2, “Two Concepts of Allegory,” 15–48; Jane K. Brown, *The Persistence of Allegory*, chap. 7: “The Greek Revival,” 183–201; Reinhard Strohm, “Eighteenth-Century Music as a Socio-Political Metaphor?,” in *The Century of Bach and Handel*, 279–96.

Listening: Second-act finale.

23 Feb. **Reading week**

1 March. ***The Magic Flute* as magic opera**

Reading: David J. Buch, *Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests*, Introduction, chap. 6; M. F. M. Van Den Berk, *The “Magic Flute”*: “*Die Zauberflöte*.” *An Alchemical Allegory*, 19–39; Matthew Head, “Birdsong and Hieroglyphs: Exoticism and Enlightened Orientalism in *The Magic Flute*,” in *CCMF*, 200–20.

8 March. **On myth**

Jane Brown, “‘The Monstrous Rights of the Present’: Goethe and the Humanity of *Die Zauberflöte*,” *Opera Quarterly* 28 1/2 (Winter-Spring 2012): 5–19; Fritz Graf, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, “Introduction,” 1–8; chap. 1, “The Rise of the Scientific Study of Myth,” 9–34; Nicholas Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment*, chap. 18, 270–319.

15 March. **Gluck and *The Magic Flute*.**

Reading: Patricia Howard, “From *Orfeo* to *Orphée*, in *Gluck: “Orfeo,”* 67–83; Gardiner, “Hands Off *Orfeo!*,” in *Gluck*, 112–18; Markus Rathey, “Mozart, Kirnberger and the Idea of Musical Purity,” *Eighteenth-Century Music* 13/2 (2016): 235–52.

Listening: *Orphée*, act 3.

22 March. **Presentations.**

29 March. Good Friday

5 April. **Presentations**

Requirements

1. Presentation, translation, and commentary (ca. 1,000 wds) on a review of the opera	15%
2. Participation	10%
3. Working thesis and annotated bibliography for term paper	5%
3. Report on term paper	10%
4. Term paper	60%

The term paper will have the following components: 1) a working thesis and annotated bibliography, due 28 Feb. at 5pm; 2) an in-class oral presentation based on your research; 3) the completed paper, due the last day of the semester.

Materials

A libretto of the opera. Although you will want a printed version, at this webpage (<http://www.freyhan.co.uk/2.html>) you will find the first printed edition of the libretto, a literal English translation, as well as a list of textual discrepancies between the first edition and Mozart's autograph

A score (orchestral mandatory, piano/vocal optional). There are affordable scores for purchase at places like Amazon.com. The most authoritative best piano/vocal score is the Bärenreiter edition, although it is pretty expensive. The Neue Mozart-Ausgabe is available for free online.

A recording of the opera.

Statement on Academic Offences. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic offence, as found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Health and Wellness. Students who are in emotional or mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Accommodation for Medical Illness. The Graduate Program in Music recognizes that a student's ability to fulfill academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by illness or injury. To ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's course grade shall be granted only in cases where there is documentation indicating that the student could not reasonably be expected to meet the academic responsibilities. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the office of the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies), not to the course instructor.

Accessible Education Western. Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate

documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

No electronic devices are permitted. Using AI to write your papers constitutes plagiarism.