Preface

Paul E. Kerry, Guest Editor

The multidisciplinary appeal and what Goethe called the "generative force"[1] of Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute* (*Die Zauberflöte*, 1791) is abundantly evident in the diversity of perspectives represented in this special issue of *BYU Studies*: anthropology, art history, comparative literature, the classical tradition, Egyptology, English, German, history, management studies, law, music, religion, theater and media studies, and vocal performance.

Each of these articles offers fresh views from BYU faculty and other scholars on *The Magic Flute*. The many images from archives spanning Vienna, Munich, Weimar, Berlin, London and elsewhere are themselves a visual testament to the many interpretations that this opera has inspired, as well as the diverse sources that scholars turn to for insights into *Die Zauberflöte*. Of course, no single volume can exhaust the possible approaches to this opera. Adding to the broad corpus of literature about this classic, this issue of *BYU Studies* reflects the scholarly expertise and interests of its contributors. Following Hans-Wilhelm Kelling's chronology of Mozart's life and times, the articles group into four sections: introductory essays and then analyses of themes, characters, and receptions.

Introductory Essays

Gideon Burton's essay describes how the operatic tradition, and in particular Mozart, have helped to shape the cultural production and imagination of Latter-day Saints. As he argues, LDS history and doctrine creates culturally specific readings of this opera while at the same time the opera opens up new perspectives on crucial topics of LDS interests and identity. Kaye Hanson recalls her ambivalent attitudes towards opera growing up in a small Utah town as she considers the enthusiasm her grandchildren show

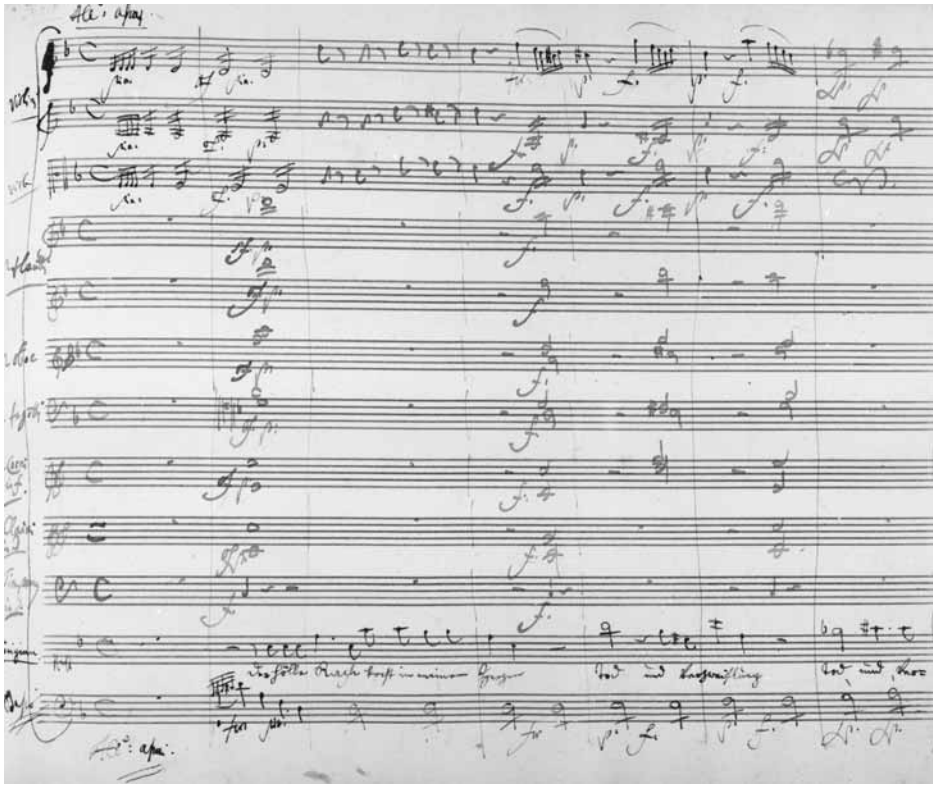
when she exposes them in family settings to *The Magic Flute*. Lawrence Vincent shares his thoughts on performing the role of Tamino with the world-renowned Wiener Staatsoper, the Vienna State Opera.

Themes

Alan Keele finds in the opera an aesthetic search for meaning, and he locates striking parallels to LDS doctrines such as eternal marriage and the apotheosizing potential of divine love. John Fowles asserts that *The Magic Flute* can be read as an allegory of life's journey, a common theme found in eighteenth-century German thought, and he examines this pattern in light of Latter-day Saint teachings about the plan of salvation. Paul Kerry's study takes a historical approach and analyzes how the opera was informed by and contributed to eighteenth-century Masonic and Enlightenment discourses. It was during the eighteenth century that popular and scholarly interest in "the Orient" began to soar and *The Magic Flute* was a part of this cultural trend. Kerry Muhlestein places *The Magic Flute* in the context of European fascination with Egypt during this time. John Gee comments on the Egyptian ritual motifs in the opera and traces their probable mediated origins to classical sources that drew on ancient Egyptian ones.

Characters

The Magic Flute is memorable not least owing to the range of characters that Mozart and his librettist Schikaneder created and that have become familiar names to opera goers. Michael Evenden senses in the figure of the high priest Sarastro the trap that religious leaders can fall into when they succumb to pride, but as a dramaturg he also sees the liberating possibilities of humility and repentance available to Sarastro and, by extension, to all. David Crandall situates the opera's construction of Monostatos within the typical European stereotypes prevalent in the popular culture of the day, but also detects an ethical lesson embedded in the characterization of the Moor. Victoria Webb reads against the grain to call into question the prevalent view that the Queen of the Night is deceptive and power-hungry by considering her relationship to Pamina and seeing the Queen as a hurt, discouraged, and betrayed mother who cannot understand her daughter's choices. And in a richly illustrated article, Harrison Powley considers the magical instruments in the opera—the magic flute and magic bells—and examines the kinds of instruments that Mozart and Schikaneder might have chosen to represent them, reminding readers that these instruments were not afterthoughts, but integral to the expression of the opera's meanings.



W. A. Mozart manuscript (Mus.ms.autogr. W. A. Mozart 620). This is an original manuscript of one of *The Magic Flute*'s best known and spectacular arias, no. 14, the Queen of the Night's "Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen" (The wrath of hell seethes in my heart). © Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin–Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv.

Reception

One of Mozart's contemporaries, and perhaps the only composer to vie with him in popular esteem, Ludwig van Beethoven, praised *The Magic Flute*, and many well-known individuals in fields from science to literature have continued to laud it. In some instances, the opera has influenced the creative work of great intellects. Indeed, no less a figure than Johann Wolfgang von Goethe sought to write a sequel to it. Robert McFarland's article analyzes how Goethe's unfinished sequel to *The Magic Flute* contributed to the modern articulation of model gender and family identities. The acclaimed Jewish artist Marc Chagall said, "For me there is nothing that approaches those two perfections, *The Magic Flute*, and the *Bible*," and this sentiment serves as the introduction to Philipp Malzl's study of Chagall's

artistic interpretation of *The Magic Flute* in a neglected but evocative poster. Next, Dean Duncan reminds readers that operas are designed to be performed and reinterpreted for future generations, and he uses Ingmar Bergman's film version of *The Magic Flute* (*Trollflöjten*, 1974) as a case study of just such a rejuvenation of the opera. No exploration of *The Magic Flute* would be complete without a word on the opera as a vocal performance. Aaron Dalton explains why Deutsche Grammophon's 1964 Karl Böhm production of *The Magic Flute* remains a perennial favorite.

The final recitative in *The Magic Flute* contains the famous words of Sarastro: "The rays of the sun dispel the night" (Die Strahlen der Sonne vertreiben die Nacht) (2.30). A conceit of scholars is that they see themselves as directing light on dark places. Yet the very processes of criticism that help reveal meaning can prevent us having an authentic experience with the work of art itself. These articles may enhance one's experience of the opera but do not pretend to replace it.

As George Steiner suggests, "Everything we recognize as being of compelling stature in literature, art, music is of a religious inspiration or reference," and "Music and the metaphysical, in the root sense of that term, music and religious feeling, have been virtually inseparable."[2] A work of art worthy of that name will always say to us, "Change your life."[3] Thus, *The Magic Flute* helps us to see ourselves and our circumstances in a new light—as with all great art, the study of this opera is a "summons. . . . The shorthand image is that of an Annunciation, of a 'terrible beauty' or gravity breaking into the small house of our cautionary being. If we have heard rightly the wing-beat and provocation of that visit, the house is no longer habitable in quite the same way as it was before. A mastering intrusion has shifted the light."[4]

As guest editor, I thank each of the many contributors, peer reviewers, and members of the *BYU Studies* editorial team who have made this special issue possible.

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1. *Mozartiana. Two Centuries of Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes about Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, collected and illustrated by Joseph Solman (London: Macmillan, 1991), 86.
2. George Steiner, *Real Presences* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 216.
3. Steiner, *Real Presences*, 142.
4. Steiner, *Real Presences*, 143.