

# Masonic Symbolism in Mozart's Music and the Opera "The Magic Flute"

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What is opera? It is a type of art form in which singers and musicians perform a dramatic work combining text (which is called a libretto) and musical score, usually in a theatrical setting, with orchestral accompaniment. The etymology of the Italian word opera derives from the Latin, and translates to "work", both in the process itself, and as "a work produced", being used in this vein as early as 1304. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the Italian word was first used in 1639 in the sense "composition in which poetry, dance, and music are combined."

We are taught to study the Seven Liberal Arts And Sciences, which are Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. Poetry, being part of grammar, and music, are two of the seven liberal arts and sciences we first learn about as a Fellow Craft. As already noted, opera combines these two art forms.

The first opera that was regularly performed was Claudio Montiverdi's L'Orfeo, composed in 1607. What was opera to society in the 18th and 19th centuries? It was the NFL and tailgating at Redskins Park. It was going to a Rolling Stones concert (in the 70's). It was going to the movies in the summer to see Iron Man. It was a great social event attended by both royalty and the common man alike. Today it is seen as "high art" and misunderstood by most, often because many have never been exposed in any great detail

to opera and classical music. I've been told it is similar to being at a French restaurant and being given a wine list with 300+ selections. Where to begin? Lao-tai said "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step", and today we will take that step accompanied by our fellow mason, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Yes, there have been many great composers such as George and Ira Gershwin, Lennon and McCartney, Cole Porter, Bob Dylan, Gil Evans, Merle Haggard, and Ludwig van Beethoven, but it doesn't hurt that many (including myself) consider Mozart to be the greatest of all, regardless of genre. So, let's begin, and see if the following story sounds familiar.

Imagine being a young man as an initiate, trying to find wisdom and serenity. Before you begin your journey you hear three sounds as musical chords . . . you face your fears multiple times over, first being attacked in a dark forest by a large serpent, rescued by three young women and then beguiled by their mistress, the Queen of the Night, all temptations to your flesh and spirit.

On your journey you are met by three men and led to a grove, where on three sides stand Temples dedicated to Wisdom, Reason, and Nature. You are told to wait in patience, to be silent. You decide to try enter the Temples anyway, but are refused admittance to the first two, finally being admitted into the third temple ruled by a mysterious brotherhood lead by man you have been told is "evil", but then discover that the leader is actually very wise and the brotherhood does many good deeds. You enter upon hearing three knocks repeated three times to transition from the secular world of chaos and an uncoordinated rhythm to that of clarity of thought within the temple. All of this awakens a desire for knowledge.

You must then go through several difficult ordeals in order to be worthy of entering the Temple of Light, and are warned that you may fail, or even perish in your search for the Truth. You are left alone in the darkness for a while.

On this journey, you are again confronted by the Queen of the Night (The Magic Flute track #9).

After making it through each of the trials, you hear singing of the symbolical joys of the rising sun out of the east, whose rays will drive away the fears of the night.

In the end there indeed is a *flood of light that drives away the forces of the night*.

This is the story of The Magic Flute.

Mozart wrote this opera and conducted the sold-out premier of The Magic Flute in Vienna on September 30, 1791. At the same time, his opera "The Mercy of Titus" was playing to great fanfare and packed houses in Prague. Unfortunately, Mozart died only 66 days later at the age of 35.

He began composing at the age of five. In all, he composed over 600 works:

15 masses

Over 50 symphonies

12 violin concertos

25 piano concertos

26 string quartets

18 piano sonatas

2 ballets

21 operas

Four of his operas are masterworks- Don Giovanni, Cosi fan tutte, The Marriage of Figaro, and The Magic Flute.

[As a side note, each musical piece is assigned a number and has been catalogued running to 626 works. The K before this number denotes the place in the Kochel Catalog, the best chronological listing of all of Mozart's works, compiled by one Ludwig von Kochel. History accounts for several attempts to catalog Mozart's compositions, but it was not until the early 1860s that Kochel succeeded.]

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born Jan 27, 1756 to Leopold Mozart and Anna Maria, in Salzburg, in what is now Austria. He was the youngest of seven children, five of whom died in infancy. He married Constanze Weber August 4, 1782 and they had six children, of whom only two survived infancy.

But what about Mozart and Masonry? At the age of 28, he was initiated December 14, 1784 to the Viennese lodge named "Beneficence". He was passed to the second degree January 7, 1785 and raised as Master Mason "shortly thereafter". Unlike many at the time, he did not join the lodge to see and be seen, but joined simply because he wanted to be there and was passionate about Freemasonry.

It is important to know about the state of Masonry in Austria at the time of Mozart. In 1738, two decades before Mozart was born, Pope Clement XII issued a papal bull condemning Masonry. However, Emperor Francis of Austria, himself a Mason, did not recognize the papal edict and there was great tolerance for masonry throughout Austria during his reign, and that of his son, Joseph II, who was a contemporary of Mozart.

And the music? By the way, how many musicians are here tonight?

From Albert Mackey – Music is a mystery to the Freemason and a mystery as to its connection to mathematics but as anyone, who practices this art, the connection is apparent. Our ancient brother Pythagoras was perhaps the first to notice the mathematical correlation between music and numbers.

The first piece written after Mozart's initiation was the Quartet in A Major (K 464). Jacques Henry writes "It renders the overall impression left by his initiation: the rigor, order, and beauty required by the construction of the temple – the Temple in man". He goes on to say "the static, almost cold, musical structure is to this quartet what the Doric order is to architecture." Being in A major, it has three sharps (attention to handout) and it is felt that the key Signatures of A Major and E flat Major are Masonic since there are three sharps or flats present, representing the three degrees in Masonry.

Use of the number three is prevalent in Masonry as well as in Mozart's music that is overtly Masonic or influenced by Masonry. We will talk today about key signatures, space with call and response, from the rough to smooth ashlar, and the steps to the Worshipful Master and how we can see these symbols in the music of Mozart.

Three has been the number of divinity, seen in Christianity, but also in Buddhism, Hinduism, and is seen as well in the three columns of the Tree of Life in Kabbalah. In Masonry, there are the three degrees, the three dots, knocks, greater and lesser lights, three steps to the Worshipful and more.

How did Mozart place the number three in his music? As already mentioned, he would sometimes use a key signature with three sharps or flats, represented by the key of A Major and E flat Major, respectively. Some have argued that the key of D major (2 sharps) must be Masonic because D corresponds to the Greek letter Delta, a triangle, and the triangle is Masonic. Also C major since in French the scales are do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do; and G would correspond to sol, which in Italian means the sun. Others have written that keys with one sharp or flat is for the Entered Apprentice, -with two for the Fellow Craft, and with three, the Master Mason. One can see that this leads to the absurd, and simply using accidentals (sharps or flats) as evidence of the Masonic nature of a piece of music is fraught with incredulity.

Perfect chords are built on intervals of thirds, having notes that are three different pitches; and the chord being a grouping of at least three notes. Triads (three notes) are common in Classical music, however in jazz, the chords can include many more notes than simply three. The chord can be played as an arpeggio where the notes are played in succession, or as a non-arpeggiated chord where they are played at the same time. (use melodia). Mozart would use these triads as symbols of harmony and serenity. Our friend Pythagoras did much research into types of tuning, relying on the Perfect 5th as his foundation for chords, but this has been rarely after the 15th century.

Ternary rhythms (composed of three parts) are yet another way of representing the number three, here represented by a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The three parts are the quarter note, the dot following, and the eighth note. It is a limping rhythm, possibly similar to a man wearing a slipper on only one foot and then walking while hoodwinked.

When we approach the East, there are three steps to reach the Worshipful Master. This is easily recognized in music as ascending notes in triplets. The imagery is easily imagined and was used in his Concerto for Piano in D minor No. 20 (K 466), again just several weeks after his initiation. This is the first time that Mozart used the symbol of steps in his music using cellos and double basses and is easy to hear in the first movement's first three bars (Play K 466 triplet at 16 sec, 20 sec, and 24 sec – off at 40 seconds – repeat).

The checkered mosaic flooring was symbolized by Mozart by a "call and response" in his music. This type of response is also demonstrated between the Worshipful Master and his Wardens. This technique was often used and is easy to recognize in Symphony No. 39 in E flat Major, with strings and wind instruments answering each other corroborating the concept of space in the-lodge and in his music. (given the brevity of time, I'll leave it up to you to explore).

Finally, his music found itself moving from uncertainty to clarity, from rough to smooth, from dissonance to perfection. This is most obvious in his Quartet in C major (K 465). In the opening of this piece there are many "wrong" notes over the first 22 bars, but then the same theme is repeated in perfection. To fully understand this piece, it is important to realize that it was written shortly after his initiation (along with the aforementioned Quartet in A Major and the Concerto for Piano in D Minor). After hearing these pieces,

Joseph Haydn, himself a mason, declared that Mozart was the greatest composer that the world had ever known.

What about the Magic Flute? For this, we need to go back to Johann Josef Emmanuel Schikaneder who was born in Straubing, Germany on September 1, 1751. He was five years older than Mozart and was the director of his own acting troupe touring around Germany. His company settled in Salzburg in 1780 and at that time Wolfgang Mozart was living there as well and they became great friends. In 1787 Schikaneder had joined the Regensburg Masonic Lodge and then convinced Mozart to collaborate on a "singspiel" in German, essentially what today we would consider a musical. Unfortunately, Schikaneder was suspended from his lodge in Regensburg due to moral transgressions, specifically with actresses and acknowledged that his "sins were older than the very Brotherhood itself".

Even so, Mozart agreed to write the score for Schikaneder's libretto. What was it about? Jacques Chailly writes in his book on The Magic Flute, "The first act begins as a fairy tale, continues as a commedia buffa, and ends in philosophic tirades. The second act is even less comprehensible [than the first]: we watch the chief protagonists being subjected to unexplained trials of astonishing arbitrariness and then suddenly learn that they have earned the right to places of honor [beside the gods] Isis and Osiris."

Essentially, The Magic Flute is four distinct operas: A love story, growth from adolescence to manhood, a feminist tract about the struggles between matriarchal and patriarchal views, and also about the masonic rites of initiation. Dr. Greenberg states it is "a journey from darkness, fear, and superstition (that is, from ignorance) to light, courage, and wisdom (that is enlightenment)".

In Act 1, the hero, Prince Tamino, who wears Japanese clothing to represent being from the "east" is saved by three women who have silver spears, and under the moon he is chased by a serpent, all representing female temptation in a female oriented state of being. Of note, Tamino did not have any arrows in his quiver, so despite being a prince, he still was not armed with knowledge and was therefore unenlightened. Suddenly the Queen of the Night appears and convinces the prince to rescue her daughter, Pamina, from the "evil" Sarastro. On his journey, Tamino is given a Magic Flute. Although unknown to him at the time, this flute was formed from the roots of an ancient Oak, during a thunderstorm with terrible flashes of lightning: thus having all of the four classical elements – air to blow the flute, earth where the flute was taken from, water from the rain, and fire represented by the lightning. Alchemists would state that this gives it balance and perfection.

During this time in Tamino's journey, the daughter Pamina was attempted to be held in chains, representing her own limitations. Tamino finds himself in a grove and is to be "steadfast, patient, and silent" and then attempts to enter the three temples of Reason, Nature and Wisdom, finally gaining admittance to the Temple of Wisdom. Within that temple, he finally learns the truth about the brotherhood, about Sarastro (their grand master) and the lies he thought were truth from his life before. He is asked "What do you want, stranger?" and answers "Oh, endless night, when will you end". "When will my eyes see the light?" He and Pamina find themselves with the priesthood of the sun. The priests have a solemn procession sounded by three blasts on the horns. Tamino waits in the northern part of the temple waiting to enter into light and enlightenment. He is led into a courtyard while blindfolded, then left alone in darkness similar to the Chamber of Reflections. When next asked by the priests about why he was there, he was specifically asked if he was "prepared". Tamino subsequently passes a trial by Air and a trial by Earth, and then also of fire and water. In the end, the Queen of the Night is vanquished, and the stage is transformed into a glowing Temple of the Sun.

What is sublime? It is to inspire awe; of outstanding spiritual, intellectual, or moral worth. Something elevated. In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton wrote sublime was to ride on the wings of the Cherub. Mozart's music, therefore, is truly sublime.

Play several bars from the Clarinet Concerto in A (#9 off at 60 seconds).

*Mozart is the greatest composer of all. Beethoven created his music, but the music of Mozart is of such purity and beauty that one feels he merely found it – that it has always existed as part of the inner beauty of the universe waiting to be revealed.* – Albert Einstein

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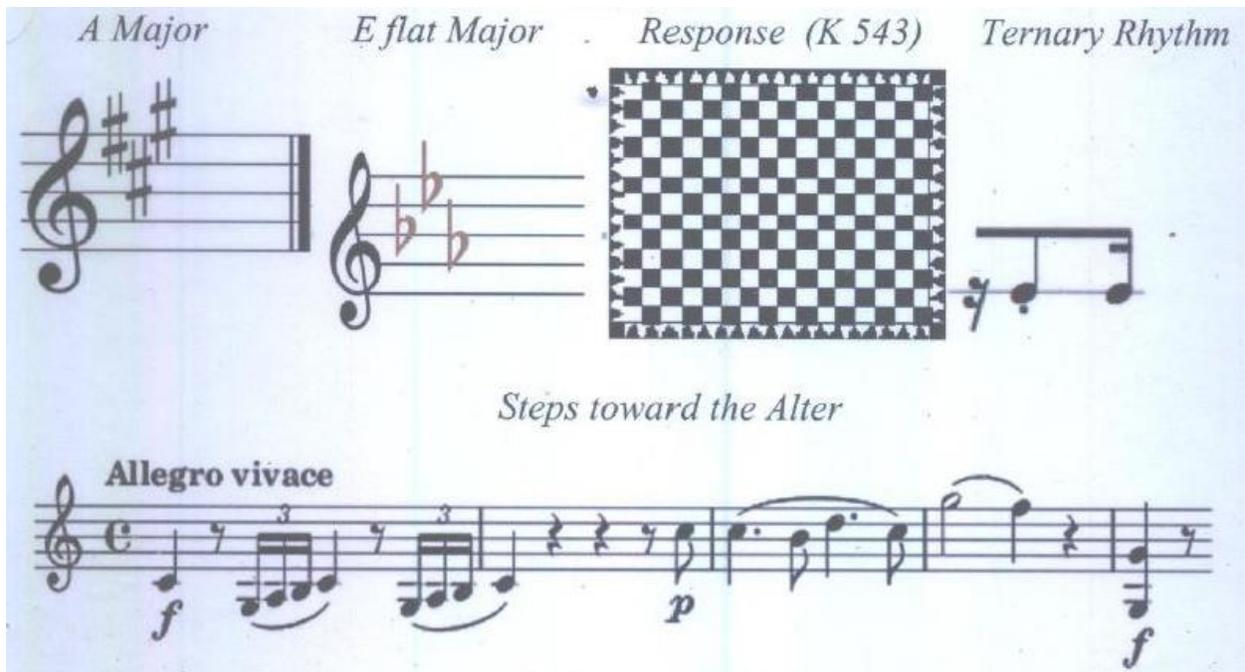


Figure 1

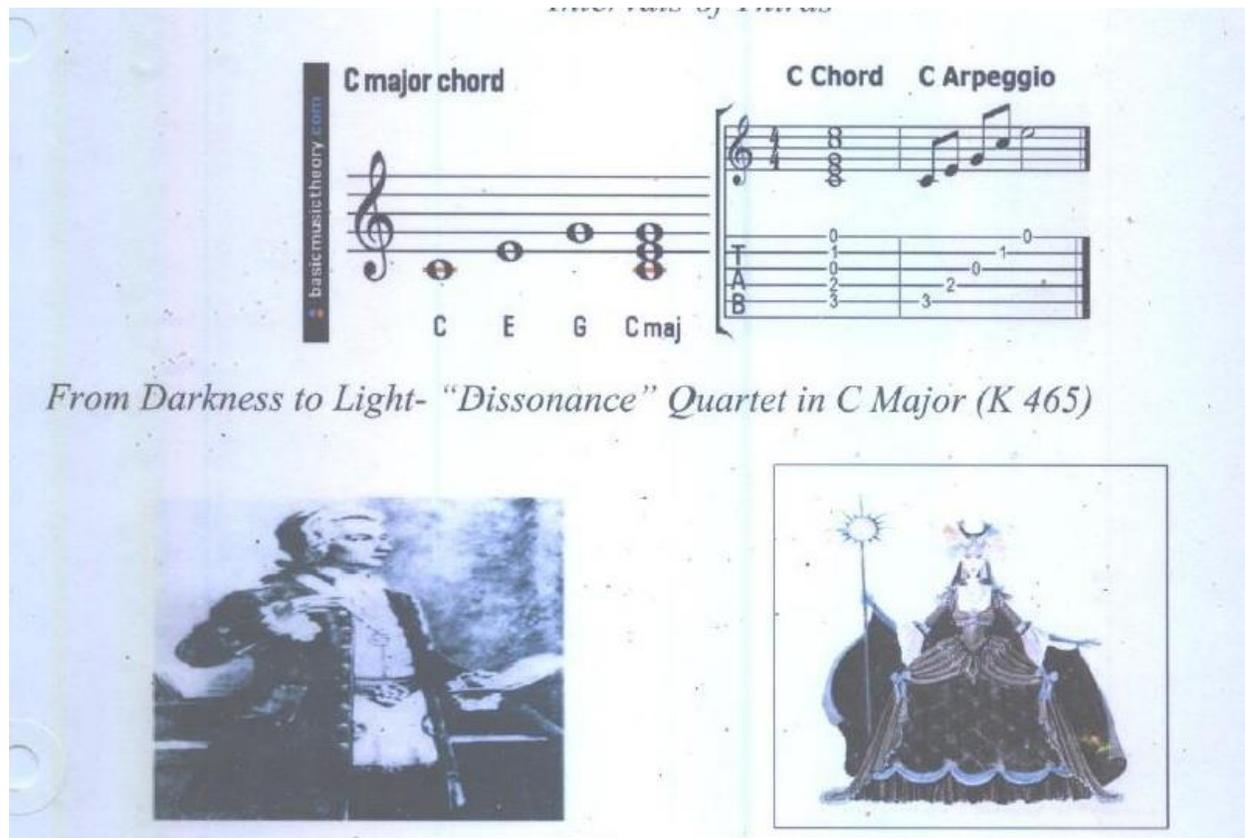


Figure 2