

Augustana College

Augustana Digital Commons

2022 Festschrift: Mozart's Die Zauberflöte

Festschriften

Winter 12-13-2022

Mozart & Schikaneder: Production of Theatre in The 18th Century

Quinne Weinzierl

Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois, quinneweinzierl20@augustana.edu

Miranda Preuss

Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois, mirandapreuss20@augustana.edu

Haley Tromblee

Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois, haleytromblee19@augustana.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/muscfest2022>



Part of the [Music Education Commons](#), [Musicology Commons](#), [Performance Studies Commons](#), and the [Theatre History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Weinzierl, Quinne; Preuss, Miranda; and Tromblee, Haley. "Mozart & Schikaneder: Production of Theatre in The 18th Century" (2022). *2022 Festschrift: Mozart's Die Zauberflöte*.

<https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/muscfest2022/4>

This Student Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Festschriften at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2022 Festschrift: Mozart's Die Zauberflöte by an authorized administrator of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

Mozart & Schikaneder: Production of Theatre in The 18th Century

Quinne Weinzierl

Haley Tromblee

Miranda Preuss

Augustana College

MUSC-311: Styles and Literature I

December 14th , 2022

Abstract

Die Zauberflöte was composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, with the libretto written by Emanuel Schikaneder. In this essay, we aim to present our findings regarding Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* in relation to the theater culture found in the 18th century. Because of the lack of writing on the production of *Die Zauberflöte* we aimed our research towards Schikaneder and the general layout of the theater surrounding the time *Die Zauberflöte* premiered. Using cross referencing and sources from the 18th century, we have put together a general synopsis of how *Die Zauberflöte* was likely promoted and produced. All of this information comes together to give context to how this opera came to life.

Theater and opera production in Austria had a rich tradition in Vienna that was almost smothered by Emperor Joseph II. Upon Joseph II's reign, the national theater was founded due to his request in 1776, in an attempt to localize all opera and theater to the German-language genre. The Italian staff was fired, and promptly replaced with the Austrian players who occupied Karntnerthor Theater. Culturally and economically, this proved to be an utter failure. The general public found German plays a bore, and attendance rates lowered. Yet, even its most engrossing opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782), by Mozart, was not enough to beset the loss they garnered in changing the theater to be exclusively German. Because of the declining public attendance, Joseph II decided to address the problem by hiring an Italian buffoni company through his ambassador, Giacomo Durazze. Ironically, Durazze was the director of the Vienna theater during Joseph II's childhood. In consequence, but catering to the public's wants, German theater budgets were cut along with its players. This rendered German plays inferior.¹

Because of the lack of written word on *Die Zauberflöte*, the research found considering theater in 18th century Austria is used to give context to the climate of the arts when *Die Zauberflöte* would have premiered. Our inclusion of the history of theater in Austria and the techniques used to execute a successful play serves to theorize how *Die Zauberflöte* came to life. Subjects such as promotion and theater production surrounding the time of Mozart's play can be analyzed to further give context of the initial performance.

To start, the promotion of the arts lay in physical playbills during the 18th century. Theater productions had to advertise via paper, and therefore utilized the playbill to announce shows. The average playbill in 1741 measured 48 cm by 35.5 cm. Yet, there is a distinction to be made between a play bill vs a

¹ Heartz, Daniel, and Thomas Bauman. *Mozart's Operas*. Berkeley Calif.: University of California Press, 1995.

great bill. The former was smaller and easier to distribute, whereas the great bill was of a poster-like quality. At first, bills contained the name, place, and time of the show only. London promoters started the act of adding more information to the playbill later in the century. The last addition was elaborate borders, made possible by printers, which also employed more imaginative fonts to bring out the names of star performers.²

To continue, we must consider Mozart's life before and within relation to theater within Austria. Before *Die Zauberflöte* could be created, there were many events that took place. Throughout Mozart's life, he was not only famous for his performances, but his diversity of writing as well. Mozart was able to compose, successfully, in just about every genre of the 18th century, such as sacred, religious, simple, complex, instrumental, and vocal. *Die Zauberflöte*, one of the last operas he composed, contains a combination of all of his styles in a way that he had not done before; range and the symbolism of the color used.³ Mozart almost finished writing *Die Zauberflöte* when it was held back due to the necessary composition of the opera *La clemenza di Tito*, which was written for the coronation of Leopold II.⁴ Despite the setback of withholding the completion of *Die Zauberflöte*, when it was finished, Mozart was extremely pleased with the results. October 14, 1791 was the date of the last letter he ever wrote to his wife; he was raving with excitement at the success of the performance.⁵

While Mozart greatly contributed to the musical aspects of the opera, the theatrical aspects need attention as well. In the 18th century, theater production had a Baroque style, meaning that it contained

² Macnutt, Richard. "Playbill (Fr. prospectus, affiche à la main; Ger. Theaterzettel, Handzettel; It. locandina)." *Grove Music Online*. 2002; Accessed 5 Nov. 2022.

<https://proxy.augustana.edu:2509/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000006424>.

³ Eisen, Cliff, and Stanley Sadie. "Mozart, (Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 3 Dec. 2022. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-6002278233>.

⁴ Spaethling, Robert, ed. 2000. *Mozart's Letters, Mozart's Life*. First ed. New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Pg. 437.

⁵ Spaethling, Robert, ed. 2000. *Mozart's Letters, Mozart's Life*. First ed. New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Pg. 443-444.

bold artistic expression and elaboration. Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* demonstrates prime examples of baroque style through its fantastical imagery and stage architecture. Stage settings prior to the 18th century were very symmetrical and simple. Starting in the 18th century, many new theatrical innovations were introduced, including the flat wing system. This system aided in hiding entrances of different characters for smoother transitions. Furthermore, many of the innovations originated in Italy from scene designers and architects such as the Bibiena Family and Giacomo Torelli⁶. These men created an angled perspective on stage. The set designs were very large to the point where, from the audience's point of view, the set went beyond the stage into the wings. In addition, these visual innovations were geometrical⁷. These designs, contrary to the 17th century style, were not symmetrical and even, but used different shapes and dimensions to create a mesmerizing, almost unreal design.

Another breakthrough invention for theatre was the chariot and pole system, which was created by Torelli. This system works by having the flats underneath the stage. On the floor of the stage there are slits the flats are able to be pulled up for quick and seamless scene changes. Schikaneder used this technique in *Die Zauberflöte* at Theater auf der Wieden. Additionally, his technological advancement in theater initiated a series of developments for efficiency and speed throughout Europe. Some methods that were influenced from this are the Falling Flap method. This is where the scene image would be painted on a canvas that had a hinged attachment of another scene. It would start off with one image and then someone backstage would unclasp the hing and the canvas would flap down and display a different scene. Another technique that was used was the rise and sink method, which was where there would be ropes

⁶ Untiedt, Glenda L. 2013. *SCENOGRAPHY IN CONTEXT: A comparative analysis of the influences on set designs for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera The Magic Flute (1791) with specific reference to selected set designers*. Dissertation. Pg. 32

⁷ Chiarenza, Stefano. 2016. "Architecture and Perspective in the Set Drawings of the Galli Bibiena." *Nexus Network Journal*, (July).

tied to flats from above and below the stage. With this, the crew would either raise the flats to reveal another scene or they would pull them down to do the same thing.

Production at this time was not for one person, but for an entire team. The original crew of *Die Zauberflöte* contained several workers, including scenic painter Herr Gayl and set designer Herr Neszthaler. Although no records of the original stage design are at hand today, Schikaneder did leave descriptions in the margins of the libretto, which help to imagine the original scene. Schikaneder described, for example, that the scenes in which the trials by fire and water should include two mountains that enter from either side of the stage. One mountain was to spit out fire, and one was to spit out water, both through their own respective grates in each mountain. Appropriate sound and lighting was also to be included. Schikaneder's descriptions of set design were often described as poetic, and his imagination nearly cinematic. From illustrations of original costumes, we can see that they were elaborately designed, especially in the case of Papageno, whose costume consisted of a full body suit adorned head to toe in carefully placed feathers of varying size, color, and pattern. The costume also contained a floor-length tail, as well as a headpiece with a plume of feathers on the front.⁸

For Tamino's costume, it includes boots, tights, a covering over the tights, a shirt with a frilled collar, and a train of fabric behind him. He is holding his flute, and playing to a group of "apes" which appears to be a group of people in black body suits.⁹

For context, Emmanuel Schikaneder worked alongside Mozart in his theater career. After his adolescence, Schikander attended grammar school. This, though, is a mere guess that is supported by Schikaneder's writings considering his first comic opera *Die Lyranten*. The acts themselves were a success,

⁸ Honolka, Kurt, ed. *Papageno, Emanuel Schikaneder, Man of the Theater in Mozart's Time*. Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1990. Pg. 91-101.

⁹ Honolka, Kurt, ed. *Papageno, Emanuel Schikaneder, Man of the Theater in Mozart's Time*. Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1990. Pg. 112.

but with each re-enactment composers often reset the music and therefore Schikaneder's music was lost. In 1777, Schikaneder and his wife joined a Nuremberg company run by Joseph Moser. They then played *Die Lyranten* in Augsburg, where it is possible that Schikaneder and Mozart could have met. In a usual bout of unfaithfulness by Schikaneder, his wife chose to form an association with Johann Friedal, creating a new troupe of actors. Upon Friedal's death, Schikaneder's wife reconciled with him and placed the company into his hands. After this, it is theorized that the earliest that Schikaneder and Mozart worked together was 1790.¹⁰

The details of Schikaneder's life and his transition into theater prompts the creation of a new work; *Die Zauberflöte*. The libretto was written by Schikaneder, the petitioner of the production. In writing this libretto, he took inspiration from two previous stories, one an Egyptian tale entitled *Sethos*, and the other entitled *Lulu, oder Die Zauberflöte*, a fairytale collection entitled *Dschinnistan*. *Die Zauberflöte* was written around spring or summer, with its premiere being in late September. This opera was in the process of being written along with the premiere of Mozart's other work, *La clemenza di Tito*. The casting of the original production of *Die Zauberflöte* largely was made up of people that Mozart knew previously. For example, Schikaneder played the original Papageno. Mozart's original Queen of the Night was played by his sister-in-law Josefa Hofer. The original Pamina was also played by Anna Gottlieb, and at the age of 17 she played the original role of Pamina, yet previously for Mozart she played the role of his first Barbarina in *Le nozze di Figaro* at just age 12. In addition, Benedikt Schack played the role of Tamino and Franz Gerl played the role of Sarastro. Schack and Gerl were both composers for Schikaneder's company.¹¹

¹⁰ Dent, Edward J. "Emanuel Schikaneder." *Music & Letters* 37, no. 1 (1956): 14–21. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/729995>.

¹¹ Hunter, Mary. *Mozart's Operas: A Companion*. Great Britain: Yale University Press, 2018. Pg. 100-102.

Schikaneder was more than just the patron of the opera and a cast member, however; he and Mozart were personal friends. For example, Mozart played a joke on Schikaneder at one point during a performance by sneaking onto the side of the stage and playing the glockenspiel part incorrectly. Schikaneder then told him to be quiet which got a laugh out of the audience and taught them that Papageno was not actually playing it, just miming the instrument.¹²

Die Zauberflöte premiered in Vienna, and it was a great success. After Vienna, due to its success *Die Zauberflöte* started to spread throughout Germany. Reviews from this opera can show us how well the show was received. Some reviews are surprising considering the high esteem this production holds now. For the original production, a majority of its success was attributed to the elaborate sets and costumes, despite the reviewers claiming that the opera itself was not so pleasing. For example, a description of an early review states that “A report in a Berlin newspaper in December ... describes the enormous cost and splendour of the sets and machines, but says the opera ‘did not please’ because ‘the content and the dialogue (*Sprache*) of the work were just too terrible.’”. Even the Viennese diarist at the time, Count Zinzendorf, thought similarly. In several reviews, the characters of *Die Zauberflöte* were often highly regarded. Reviewers connected to the characters on a personal level, and often revered them for representing the character of Germany well, through representations of goodness.¹³

In conclusion, theater of the 18th century has evolved over time not only with stage production machinery, sets, and costuming, but with the history of the social-cultural and political aspects of the time. Additionally, the impact that Mozart and Schikaneder had on opera had a major impact as well, resulting in *Die Zauberflöte*'s success to this day.

¹² Hunter, Mary. *Mozart's Operas: A Companion*. Great Britain: Yale University Press, 2018. Pg. 100-102.”

¹³ Hunter, Mary. *Mozart's Operas: A Companion*. Great Britain: Yale University Press, 2018. Pg. 102-103.

Works Cited

- Chiarenza, Stefano. 2016. "Architecture and Perspective in the Set Drawings of the Galli Bibiena." *Nexus Network Journal*, (July).
- Dent, Edward J. "Emanuel Schikaneder." *Music & Letters* 37, no. 1 (1956): 14–21.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/729995>.
- Eisen, Cliff, and Stanley Sadie. "Mozart, (Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 3 Dec. 2022.
<https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-6002278233>.
- Hertz, Daniel, and Thomas Bauman. *Mozart's Operas*. Berkeley Calif.: University of California Press, 1995.
- Honolka, Kurt, and Reinhard G. Pauly. *Papageno, Emanuel Schikaneder, Man of the Theater in Mozart's Time*. Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1990.
- Hunter, Mary. *Mozart's Operas: A Companion*. Great Britain: Yale University Press, 2018.
- Macnutt, Richard. "Playbill (Fr. prospectus, affiche à la main; Ger. Theaterzettel, Handzettel; It. locandina)." *Grove Music Online*. 2002; Accessed 5 Nov. 2022.
<https://proxy.augustana.edu:2509/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000006424>.
- Spaethling, Robert, ed. 2000. *Mozart's Letters, Mozart's Life*. First ed. New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Pg. 437.
- Untiedt, Glenda L. 2013. *SCENOGRAPHY IN CONTEXT: A comparative analysis of the influences on set designs for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera The Magic Flute (1791) with specific reference to selected set designers*. Dissertation. Pg. 32