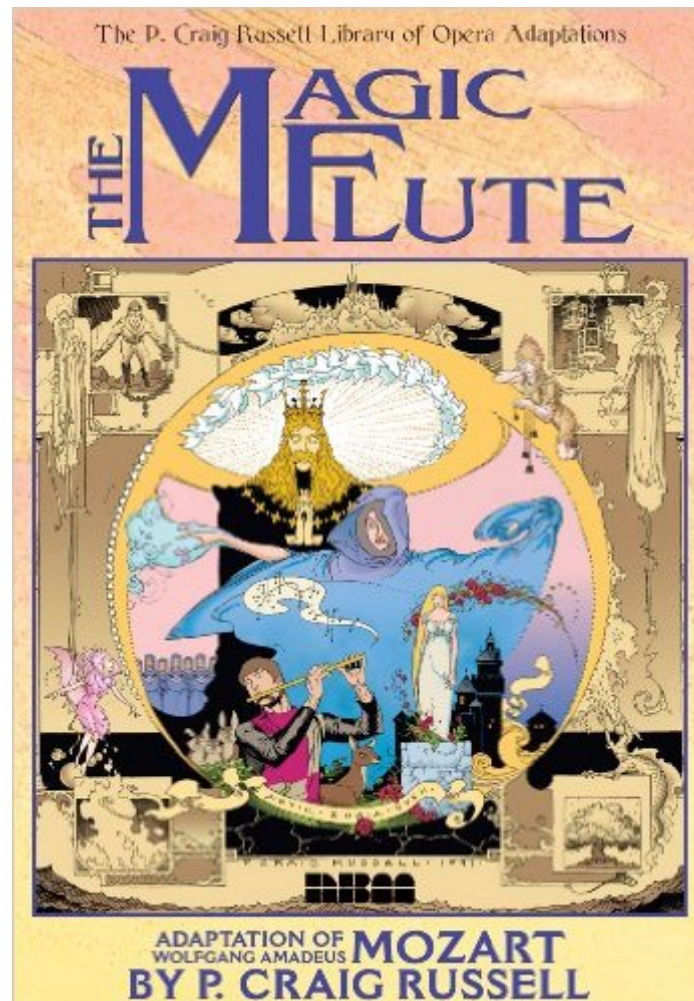


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P. Craig Russell Library Of Opera Adaptations, V. 1: The Magic Flute



Synopsis

Long out of print, the many adaptations that Russell has done of famous operas are finally collected again in 3 volumes, in the wake of his highly successful massive recent adaptation of Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung. This first volume presents his adaptation of one of Mozart's most famous works, a farcical tale mixed with fantasy. The story begins as the Queen of the Night sets Prince Tamino on a quest to rescue her daughter, Pamina from the evil Sarastro. On the way, he meets the bird-catcher Papageno, who is persuaded to help Tamino in his quest. Tamino's spiritual quest is counterpoised with Papageno's own earthly search for his one true love, Papagena. Both couples' strivings are juxtaposed with the eternal conflict between Sarastro and the Queen of the Night.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Magic Flute (Die Zauberflute in German) was Mozart's final opera. It was his favorite and undoubtedly his greatest achievement. When he was in his deathbed, it was said that Mozart requested to hear the score to the Magic Flute one last time. Mozart was a Freemason, although he had been raised as a Catholic and enjoyed sponsorship by the Archbishop of Salzburg for some time. His conversion into what was a religious and philosophical organization that praised the Enlightenment and mystic Egyptian/Zoroastrian beliefs, effected and influenced his musical composition. He had already written music for a Masonic Funeral and Freemasonry deeply influenced the Requiem in D Minor. This recording is out of print in cd form and was probably an LP

in the 70's. In 1972, Walter Sawallisch, the Bavarian State Orchestra and the talents of Peter Schreier (Tamino), Annelise Rothenberger (Pamina), Walter Berry (Papageno), Kurt Moll (Sarastro) and Edda Moser (The Queen of the Night) put together what is the definitive, the greatest, the most perfect, the one and only Magic Flute. If you've heard the rest, now try the best. Contrary to the negative comments of the other reviewers, the Black Dog Opera Library has done an excellent job of making this opera accessible, a book full of great illustrations and liner notes on the singers, Mozart and his era. Yes, the Magic Flute has been unjustly considered and theatrically treated as a children's opera, a fairy tale with no real substance, a great work sugar coated into something like Broadway musical or cartoon.

The Black Dog Opera Library Series had outdone themselves once again. In this 1972 recording of Mozart's last opera, we are treated to a fine performance by fine singers, a fully illustrated book with liner notes and commentary, as well as information useful in biographies on the composer and his time. Mozart was close to his death bed at the time he composed The Magic Flute. He made an opera that could be enjoyed at many levels. At one level, it is a comic, brilliant fairy tale for children, at another level, it is deeply symbolic and layered with Masonic ideals of universal brotherhood and love. Mozart and his librettist were both Freemasons, a religious "sect" that was under hot water in 18th century Vienna for its pagan origins and its advocacy of ideas of the Enlightenment. The story is about Tamino, a prince who is lost in a strange land (originally, a mystic Egypt), who is rescued from a serpent by three mysterious women and promised the hand of the daughter of the Queen of the Night if he saves her from the wizard Sarastro. Together with the help of the comic bird-catcher, Papageno, he sets out on his adventure. But halfway through the opera, he discovers that he has been deceived. The Queen of the Night is the true villain and Sarastro is really a holy man. After many trials, the forces of evil are defeated and the opera ends blissfully with a victory. Musically and dramatically, it is Mozart's greatest opera. From the striking Overture to the use of dark strings, trumpet and soaring flute passages, the individual arias which express intense emotions to the neverending theme that good triumphs over evil, the Magic Flute stands out as a great opera to begin with for newcomers and a favorite for old time opera fans.

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