



THE MAGIC FLUTE

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1791)



POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Classical music features
- The singspiel
- The development of opera.
- Mozart's operas
- Word painting

ACT I NO.4 (QUEEN OF THE NIGHT), 5 (QUINTET)

RHYTHM, METRE AND TEMPO:

- Queen of the Night:
- Recitative: free tempo, although not as free as secco recitative. Follows natural rhythm of speech.
- Aria in simple triple time with dotted rhythms.
- Semiquavers: reflect 'Trembling'
- Demisemiquavers: represent anger.
- Orchestral introduction: continuous repeated crotchet tonic bass pedal with syncopated repeated quavers in the violins.

HARMONY AND TONALITY:

- Queen of the Night: B \flat major and mostly diatonic. Marked by perfect cadences.
- Chromaticism
- Neapolitan 6th used to approach Gm perfect cadence
- Simple tonic and dominant seventh harmonies.
- Larghetto in relative minor: G minor.
- Diminished 7th: reflect anguish
- Aria ends with repeated, emphatic perfect cadences.
- Quintet: Modulation to dominant as padlock released.
- Classical feminine cadences (Ic-V) and perfect cadences frequent.
- Augmented 6ths

CONTEXT:

- Mozart: Helped establish the Classical style at the end of the 18th century. Was a contemporary and friend of Haydn, also knew Beethoven.
- Was one of the first to write in the vernacular (language of the people: German) instead of Italian as operas initially were, having been invented in Italy in the early 17th Century.
- Die Entführung aus dem Serail was one of the first Classical operas to be written in German although his later operas were mostly written in Italian.
- In Classical opera there was more variation of mood within arias than in the Baroque period. Duets and larger ensembles became an essential ingredient of the style.
- Singspiel ('play with singing'): Like a modern musical in relationship between music and spoken dialogue. The style features magical storyline with comedy. More accessible to middle classes, instead of just nobility.
- The Magic Flute: Written in Mozart's last year of life. Was an immediate success and performed all through Europe. The work is strongly connected with the Freemason movement, with number 3 significance reflected in music and plot line.
- The hero Tamino has to prove his worthiness to marry Pamina. Goes through series of tests with evil Queen of the Night trying to stop his quest. Eventually love conquers all. Comic subplot involves the bird catcher Papageno.

MELODY AND VOCAL STYLE:

- Queen of the Night aria: Virtuoso coloratura passages start off conjunct and then become triadic when top note is reached.
- Melismatic passage in aria 13 bars long.
- Recitative is syllabic.
- Larghetto: legato with conjunct melody.
- Word painting: High F emphasises her anger. The tessitura becomes wider ranging, especially in the 'trembling' passage.
- Descending chromatic passages with occasional grace notes.
- Allegro moderato states notes of tonic B \flat chord at the beginning.
- Ornamentation: turns, chromatic appoggiaturas.
- Rising sequence.

TEXTURE AND SONORITY:

- Queen of the Night: Mainly melody-dominated homophony.
- Some imitation
- Quintet: 2 part counterpoint, 3-part homophony, 5 part homophony, music becomes increasingly occasional counterpoint.
- Pizzicato texture for 'magical' cue change.
- Orchestra used as an accompanying texture, doubling the voices or displaying independent melodic material. Playful instrumental responses colour the ends of vocal lines.