

**Worthy of the Light:
Feminine Heroism in *Die Zauberflöte***

by

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Abstract

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“Worthy of the Light: Feminine Heroism in *Die Zauberflöte*” posits that the opera represents the apotheosis of a heroism depicted by Mozart in the female protagonists of his mature works (Konstanze and Blondchen in *Die Entführung, the Countess and Susanna in Figaro*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*), with the possible exception of *Così fan tutte* (and arguably, in *Fiordiligi*, even there). This heroism encompasses moral and physical courage within the context of Christian theology, Masonic ideals, and Enlightenment philosophy (exemplified by the English philosophers and the American Revolution, rather than the French enlightenment of Voltaire and Rousseau). My premise challenges the prevailing view that *Zauberflöte* is misogynistic in its depiction of women.

Mozart sought in *Die Zauberflöte* to portray a proactive, feminine heroism comprising emotional intuition, intelligence, integrity, and physical pluck. The heroine Pamina braves death, yet triumphs in life rather than in martyrdom. In her, Mozart depicts a woman who rescues herself and the man she loves while remaining honest and true to her principles (unlike some of his previous female characters, who employ deception to achieve noble ends). Konstanze is Pamina’s closest operatic predecessor and a proxy for Mozart’s bride Constanze Weber, whom he married following *Entführung*’s premiere in 1782. Constanze served as his business manager in his final years, making heroic efforts to ‘rescue’ him from financial difficulties (efforts judged by numerous critics to have been on the right track, had they not been cut short by Mozart’s

untimely death). The deepening of the Mozarts' love in the decade between *Entführung* and *Zauberflöte* is manifest in Pamina, whose music resembles Konstanze's and could have been sung by the real Constanze.

The Queen of the Night, Pamina's mother, has been perceived as a witch for two centuries, but evidence suggests that Mozart and his librettist, Schikaneder, intended to portray her quite favorably and changed their approach for political reasons – creating a jarring shift between Acts I and II. Yet Mozart, through vocal writing for the Queen that is also strikingly similar to Konstanze's, uses musical 'code' to portray her as worthy of our sympathy – and perhaps even a feminine hero.

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Introduction

Feminine Heroism in Mozart's World

Die Zauberflöte has long been regarded by many critics as a paternalistic, even chauvinistic tale that extols the bravery, courage, and honor of men, while demeaning women as alternately weak, evil, and hysterical. In *The Magic Flute Unveiled*, Jacques Chailley posits that in crafting the opera, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his librettist, Emmanuel Schikaneder, were reacting against a branch of female Masonry that they perceived as a threat to the sacred and historic principles of the Masonic brotherhood.¹

It is my belief, however, that *Die Zauberflöte* represents the apotheosis of a heroism depicted by Mozart in the primary female characters of almost all of his mature works, with the possible exception of *Così fan tutte* (and arguably, in the character of

¹ Jacques Chailley, *The Magic Flute Unveiled* (New York: Inner Traditions, 1991), 74-79.

Fiordiligi, even there). This heroism encompasses both moral and physical courage, though the latter usually exists in the form of resistance or plotting against physical or sexual violation (Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*; Blondchen in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), or even in the calm acceptance that violence and death may be inevitable (Konstanze in *Die Entführung*), rather than in action. Pamina, who actively seeks to brave the trials by fire and water at Tamino's side, is a new kind of heroine, even among Mozart's courageous women, and she foreshadows the heroines of later German opera. As Ivan Nagel says in his *Autonomy and Mercy: Reflections on Mozart's Operas*, by way of Pamina "a different, clandestine plot-line asserts itself: the woman in need of rescue becomes the rescuer."² Without Pamina, Beethoven might never have created Leonore in his *Fidelio*; even Wagner's Brünnhilde, though she traces her literary ancestry to Norse mythology, would probably not have existed as we know her in operatic form.

This work will consistently employ the term "feminine" rather than "feminist," for several reasons. First, the term "feminism" did not exist when Mozart and Schikaneder were writing *Die Zauberflöte*, and second, it is inextricably associated with twentieth-century political concepts, also alien to the time and place in which the opera was created. While such subjects as the natural rights of women and even universal suffrage were beginning to be discussed by Mary Wollstonecraft and others, there was no organized concept of "feminism" as we know it in Mozart's day. Moreover, "feminine" refers to intrinsic behaviors and characteristics of women themselves, whereas "feminist" generally denotes a system of beliefs externally *applied* to women. "Feminine" thus

² Ivan Nagel, *Autonomy and Mercy: Reflections on Mozart's Operas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 36.

seems better suited to describe acts and traits that are depicted as belonging specifically to women, a concept that modern feminism itself has come to embrace.

The preponderance of scholarship supports the prevailing view that, if not explicitly anti-female, *Die Zauberflöte* at best espouses a fond indulgence toward women that was regarded as almost universal during the eighteenth century (and would certainly, at first blush, appear to be the viewpoint expressed in *Così fan tutte*). Robert W. Gutman, in *Mozart: A Cultural Biography*, writes that *Die Zauberflöte* was perceived by the Hapsburg court censors as supporting a Papal brief on the horrific violence then taking place in France, which emphasized that mankind must constantly struggle against Original Sin brought upon us all by the fall of Eve (i.e., the Queen of the Night). Thus, the censors, who apparently did have some concerns about the opera's Masonic symbolism, decided to allow its presentation as consistent with the then-current teachings of the Church.³

A somewhat more pro-female interpretation is espoused by Maynard Solomon in *Mozart: A Life*. Solomon allows that Mozart endows Pamina, and some of her predecessors, with a certain nobility of character; but he interprets her behavior as stoic, or reactive, rather than proactive. He likens Tamino's behavior toward Pamina to that of Hamlet toward Ophelia, refers to Sarastro as the "totalitarian father," and praises Pamina's resilience in enduring their extreme if well-intentioned treatment, compounded by her mother's psychological manipulation and the threat of physical violence from Monostatos, to achieve love and happiness in the end.⁴

³ Robert W. Gutman, *Mozart: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000), 701.

⁴ Maynard Solomon, *Mozart: A Life* (New York: Harper, 1995), 513.

Similarly, Chailley, in *The Magic Flute Unveiled*, agrees that Mozart elevates Pamina to a higher level of enlightenment than that typically afforded women, but *only* as part of a couple.⁵ I do not disagree with Solomon's assessment of Sarastro (and to some degree, Tamino, though he is just as confused as Pamina by the myriad and often duplicitous influences around him), and I concur wholeheartedly with the importance of both Pamina *and* Tamino as complementary halves of a whole. More recently, Dan Brown, in his best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code*, includes *Die Zauberflöte* as one of a select group of Western artistic achievements that explicitly celebrate "the sacred feminine ... filled with Masonic symbolism and Grail secrets,"⁶ but he never expounds on the point. Nicholas Till, in his *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, Beauty and Virtue in Mozart's Operas*, acknowledges that *Die Zauberflöte* owes some debt to the Gnostic Gospels (which, according to Brown, introduced the idea of Mary Magdalene as an important disciple and possibly Jesus' wife). Till maintains that Mozart and his contemporaries freely acknowledged women to be the guardians of goodness and morality, but perceived men as possessing the superior capacity to reason; thus, Pamina is able to accompany Tamino through the trials of fire and water without being his intellectual equal.⁷ My own premise is that Mozart consciously intended in *Die Zauberflöte* to depict a specific, active feminine heroism at which he had previously hinted, but never portrayed so explicitly as he did in his final masterpiece.

The confluence of philosophical and scientific thought that occurred during Mozart's lifetime, and which we have come to call the Enlightenment, gave rise to the

⁵ Chailley, p. 295.

⁶ Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 261.

⁷ Nicholas Till, *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, Beauty and Virtue in Mozart's Operas* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 289.

greatest advancements in human rights ever achieved to date. It also fostered great artistic and musical achievements, among which the works of Mozart figure prominently. Although Mozart almost certainly never met Thomas Jefferson or Benjamin Franklin during their travels in Europe, all grew up in a time when Classical thought was experiencing a resurgence (Mozart was just thirteen years younger than Jefferson), and his education, like theirs, would likely have included Descartes, Galileo, Rousseau, Newton, and Leibnitz, as well as Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. Leopold Mozart had such an education, having read law at university, and it was important to him that his son be well-versed in a variety of subjects besides music (Leopold owned several microscopes and was familiar with the experiments of Benjamin Franklin – against Church teaching, he installed lightning rods in his home).⁸ Indeed, Otto Gierke writes:

“[T]he development of natural-law ideas ... attained its culmination at the end of the eighteenth century. . . . It [natural law] was a theory which culminated in the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789. It was a theory adorned by many illustrious names – Hooker and Suarez; Althusius, Grotius and Pufendorf; Milton and Sidney; Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau; Spinoza and Leibnitz; Thomasius and Wolff . . . Vico and Beccaria; Fichte and Kant. . . . But if we examine the extended impact of the concept, many more famous names should be included in the roll: Newton, Galileo, and Franklin; *Haydn, Mozart, and Vivaldi*; Jefferson, Adams, and Paine; Blackstone; Hume, Smith, Turgot, and Ricardo; Pope, Addison and Steele.”⁹ (Emphasis mine.)

Many of the men in this illustrious roster (including, evidence suggests, Jefferson and Franklin) were also Freemasons. Mozart became a Mason in 1784, and Leopold Mozart (at Wolfgang’s urging) and Joseph Haydn were both initiated in 1785. The Masonic movement in Austria had faced severe opposition from the Empress Maria Theresa as well as the Roman Catholic Church, although the Church’s dictum that lodges

⁸ Gutman, 27.

be disbanded was simply ignored. Maria Theresa actually had her own husband's lodge raided, and some scholars have inferred that she was the model for the Queen of the Night.¹⁰ Mozart's own patron, Emperor Joseph II, was sympathetic to Masonry and made no effort to suppress the movement (Haydn's patron, Prince Esterházy, was a Mason himself). However, an element within the Masonic movement had begun to challenge the validity of monarchies as inconsistent with the fundamental pursuit of reason; there were in fact two prominent lodges in Vienna, with very divergent views on the subject. In light of the political climate in France, this trend was perceived as dangerous by more traditional Catholic and monarchist members and may have led Mozart and Schikaneder to present their vision of Masonic ideals as exalted and worthy of emulation, but non-threatening, with Sarastro possibly representing the late Emperor Joseph II. Scholars have noted that the number three, of considerable significance in Masonry (and also, of course, in Christianity), recurs throughout the opera, beginning with the opening chord (repeated three times in different positions), and represented by the Three Ladies, the Three Spirits, and even the opera's "home key" of E-flat, which has three flats in the key signature (Mozart had previously written specific pieces for Masonic brothers and events in this key).¹¹ These allusions may indeed have been the deliberate intention of Mozart and Schikaneder; but if so, the Masonic symbolism is not confined to the male characters, and it has been suggested that the Viennese people saw Pamina as the personification of Austria herself.¹² None of these factors supports the

⁹ Otto Gierke, *Natural Law and the Theory of Society*, Ernest Barker, trans. (Boston: Beacon, 1957), 223, excerpted in "The Philosophy of the Enlightenment", www.objectivistcenter.org/pubs/Article26.asp.

¹⁰ Alfred Einstein, *Mozart: His Character, His Work*, trans. Arthur Mendel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 465; Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*, expanded edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 323.

¹¹ Gutman, 45.

¹² Charles Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Mozart: A Critical Guide* (New York: DaCapo, 1978), 325.

idea that the opera is meant as a defense against a burgeoning women's movement within the Masonic community; rather, *Die Zauberflöte* would seem to embrace women (or at least a particular kind of woman) as fellow seekers and comrades along the path to truth, beauty, and reason that Freemasonry offered its members.

Against the philosophical backdrop of the Enlightenment, which did much to foster the growth of Masonry in Europe and the United States, Mozart created women characters whose moral, intellectual, and physical courage was virtually unprecedented in opera or literature – yet he created them as entirely feminine beings. While his librettists, Da Ponte, Stephanie, and Schikaneder, certainly deserve credit for having penned the words uttered by these women, it is Mozart's vocal writing that makes them the heroic creations they are.

Nicholas Till cautions that “we should not mistake Mozart's boundless empathy with the feminine characters in his operas with a feminist sensibility quite out of tune with its culture and age,” and indeed, as previously stated, this work does not employ the term “feminist” for precisely that reason. Till goes on to point out that “in *Die Entführung Blonde* [*sic*] displays steadfastness quite equal to Konstanze's in defending her virtue against Osmin, but even as she does she is giving Osmin lessons in the art of seduction” (as she explains to him how he *would* have to behave were he to have any chance of succeeding with her).¹³ He is quite right, in this instance: The inherent duplicity of “Durch Zärtlichkeit” (necessary though it is in Blondchen's situation) makes it an extremely difficult aria to perform convincingly, one reason that many a high soprano, this writer among them, has been so happy to “graduate” to singing Konstanze.

¹³ Till, 288.

Yet Mozart consistently lays out a clear series of virtues for his heroines, from Ilia in his first mature opera, *Idomeneo*, through Pamina in his last. Honesty and courage (both moral and physical) are paramount. True, his *soubrette* characters, notably Blondchen and Susanna, may engage in deception for the best of reasons – generally to protect their own or others’ physical safety – and Papagena (who has no independent motivation of her own, operating rather on Sarastro’s orders) first appears to Papageno in disguise. But his heroines are honest even to their own detriment. Pamina, when discovered in the act of attempting to escape with Papageno, kneels before Sarastro and confesses immediately, taking all the blame upon herself. Konstanze reacts similarly when the attempted “abduction” is foiled by Osmin, and she is fully prepared to die (which Blondchen most certainly is not).

Even the Queen of the Night is not dishonest: she is always perfectly open about her motives. To say that she “tricks” or “seduces” Tamino into his mission to rescue Pamina (despite frequent guidance from vocal coaches and directors, in my own experience of singing the role) is inaccurate: She is a widow. Her daughter has been kidnapped. She hates Sarastro for what he has done. She wants her daughter back. She needs help. If Tamino succeeds in rescuing Pamina, she will be his reward in marriage. This is all she says to Tamino, and it is all true. Her point of view on Sarastro’s motives may differ from that of the audience, but there is no lie in the facts as she presents them. As Kristi Brown-Montesano says in her collection of essays, *Understanding the Women of Mozart’s Operas*, “There is nothing false about the Queen’s wrenching description of Pamina’s cries for help Nor is there any hidden agenda: she wants her daughter

back *and* she is seething about Sarastro's colossal nerve."¹⁴ She also points out that "Mozart may have intended Sarastro and his Initiates to represent Good with a capital G, but this does not necessarily make it so; we may not agree with the creator's viewpoint, or be convinced by his argument."¹⁵ And the Queen (or Mozart through her) certainly makes a compelling case for her side of the story. She is, as Brown-Montesano says, "not a hypocrite, but [an] authentic reflection in Sarastro's world of smoke and mirrors."¹⁶

While Mozart may well resort to some conventional "anti-feminist dualism"¹⁷ in the portrayal of secondary women characters, he creates heroines who are fully capable of operating on a higher intellectual plane. These women would seem to be striving toward Mary Wollestonecraft's precept that "if women were to attain true autonomy and maturity, they must . . . be expected to exercise exactly the same moral virtues as men [as Pamina certainly does], and 'should be considered not only moral but rational creatures.'"¹⁸ Whether the late eighteenth century was quite ready for this type of woman is another matter; and that is, perhaps, the central question of *Die Zauberflöte*.

¹⁴ Kristi Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 92.

¹⁵ Brown-Montesano, p. 82.

¹⁶ Brown-Montesano, p. 88.

¹⁷ Till, p. 288.

¹⁸ Till, p. 289, quoting Mary Wollestonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, ed. Katha Pollitt (New York: Random House, 2001), 32. In this passage from Chapter III, Wollstonecraft acknowledges the typically greater physical strength of men, but maintains throughout the work that women should develop both strong bodies (Pamina is hardly a physical coward) and strong minds. She later goes on, in Chapter VII (180-181) to say that "as men acquire virtue and delicacy, by the exertion of reason, they will look for both in women Make [women] free and they will quickly become wise and virtuous." Tamino is certainly looking for a wise and virtuous woman, though Sarastro seems to have limited ideas about freedom. As Wollstonecraft's younger contemporary Jane Austen says more succinctly, "Men of sense . . . do not want silly wives" (*Emma*, 820). Note that for ease of reference, all Austen quotes herein are from the Modern Library anthology, *The Complete Novels of Jane Austen* (New York, n.d.), and page numbers appear in that sequence.

Much has been written about the specifically Masonic symbolism in *Die Zauberflöte* and its possible political connotations, whether revolutionary or monarchist, Catholic or Deist, feminist or anti-feminist. There is no question that *Zauberflöte* owes a great deal to the membership of both its composer and its librettist in the Masonic brotherhood. As Charles Osborne says, however, “[a]lthough *Die Zauberflöte* may be a Masonic opera, it is not only that. It is . . . a masterpiece of transcendent spirituality.”¹⁹ Indeed, other philosophical and religious currents were at least as important as Mozart’s Masonic principles in the development of his genius and his values. This work will focus on the role those influences played in shaping Mozart’s relationships with women, how those relationships affected the creation of his female characters, and the musical techniques he employed in bringing those characters, particularly the women of *Die Zauberflöte*, to life.

¹⁹ Osborne, 326.

Chapter I

Religious, Philosophical, and Political Influences

The concept of feminine heroism is hardly a recent phenomenon in Western culture. It recurs throughout European history, most often in a religious context: St. Cecilia, Joan of Arc, and Lady Jane Grey are among the beloved historical figures who died willingly rather than betray their most deeply held beliefs; and there have been many others in this illustrious company. But what of a proactive, feminine heroism that may brave death, yet triumphs in life rather than in martyrdom? This type of bravery has been less widely celebrated, though examples abound of women who have succeeded against adversity, drawing no less on emotional intuition than physical courage.

Mozart was raised a Roman Catholic, and remained devoutly so until his death. He came of age in an era when religious belief was widely challenged by science, and political upheaval often targeted the spiritual as well as the temporal aristocracy of

Europe. Robert Gutman says that, although the members of Mozart's lodge rejected Papal authority, they embraced Masonry as "in every way Christian, indeed, Catholic, viewing its teachings [as] centered upon devotion to acts of beneficence, the word forming the very name of Mozart's lodge (*Wohltätigkeit*). The Masonic funeral oration celebrating Mozart's death observed that he had 'learned the great art of living in virtue so that he might die as a Mason and a Christian.' He had remained a religious man, a Catholic (if of the Enlightened variety), though one very much at odds with the Church."¹

That Mozart's faith was avowedly dear to him is made clear on numerous occasions in his personal letters, and again and again in his magnificent religious compositions. Mozart's belief in God appears to have been very much entwined with his ideas of earthly happiness, each being necessary to the other. (Gutman observes that "he looked upon happiness, especially his right to the joy of fulfilling his talent, as something to be pursued and communicated."²) His Grand Mass in C Minor was written at the time of his marriage, with the solos intended to be sung by his bride; it is evident from his letters to Leopold that he was both physically and spiritually drawn to Constanze, and saw no conflict therein; the spiritual and the physical were not separate elements, but parts of a cohesive whole:

I found that I had never prayed so fervently and never confessed and took communion so earnestly as when I was by her side, and she felt the same way; in one word, we are made for each other – and God who orders all things and therefore arranged our union will not forsake us.³

These words were written to Leopold from Vienna on August 17, 1782, two weeks after Wolfgang's marriage. When he says "made for each other," he imbues the

¹ Gutman, 30.

² Gutman, 31.

phrase with far more depth than it is sometimes given; one infers that he intends to convey a sense of spiritual destiny. In a letter written several months preceding his marriage, he says to Leopold, “I believe an unmarried person lives only half a life.”⁴ This theme is played out exquisitely in *Die Zauberflöte*, and to varying degrees in the operas that preceded it, particularly *Die Entführung* and *Figaro*.

If Mozart’s love and respect for women were bound up inextricably with his religious faith, from what sources in the Bible might he have drawn inspiration for his characters? The Old Testament abounds with strong, interesting women, from Sarah to Ruth to Esther. But Mozart was a Christian; the Gospels form the core of Christian faith, and their representation of women is confined to a few major figures: Mary, the Virgin Mother; Mary and Martha, the sisters of Jesus’ good friend Lazarus; and Mary Magdalene, His close friend and the most well-known of His female followers. Among them, it is Mary Magdalene who provides the most interesting possibilities as a Mozart heroine.

While stopping far short of supporting the theory promulgated by Brown in his *Da Vinci Code*, and by other works including certain letters of Martin Luther, that Jesus was, in fact, married to Mary Magdalene and that the early Roman Church sought aggressively to suppress the truth about that marriage, one crucial account of Mary has survived intact throughout the history of Christianity:

Now when [Jesus] was risen early the first [day] of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene ... [And] she went and told them that

she had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

³ Robert Spaethling, *Mozart’s Letters, Mozart’s Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 326; letter of August 17, 1782.

⁴ Spaethling, 297; letter of December 15, 1781.

After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told [it] unto the residue: neither believed they them.

Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. (Mark 16: 9-14, King James Version.)⁵

All of the Gospel writers, except John (who refers to himself repeatedly as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”), corroborate Mark’s account that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection, and that she went to tell the news to Peter and the others, none of whom believed her. Even John’s Gospel acknowledges that Jesus made Himself known first to Mary, differing only in that it omits any mention of doubt on the disciples’ part. One need hardly debate the full extent or nature of the love that may have existed between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, or bring in ideas about goddess worship from early religions, to see that the Gospels themselves are completely consistent in stating that Jesus made His first appearance after the Resurrection to a young woman – she who was brave enough to go to the tomb when the eleven remaining male disciples would not, out of fear (however understandable) that their own lives might be forfeit to the Romans or the Pharisees. Mary goes to the tomb because it is more important to her to anoint Jesus’ body with the ritual oils and spices than to protect her own safety. While the Virgin Mary says at the Annunciation, “Let it be *done unto me* according to Thy word,” Mary Magdalene says (to paraphrase), “Let me *do* according to Thy word.” Thus, she is the

⁵ All Biblical quotes herein are from the King James Version (afterwards referenced as the KJV). The Catholic Bible of Mozart’s time was still in Latin; the KJV was the English standard and its cadences resonate more closely with Mozart’s own prose than would a modern translation. Mozart also lived in England for more than a year; he spoke English and professed great loyalty to Britain, as is discussed further in this chapter.

first *proactive* Christian heroine; and given Mozart's strong religious upbringing, perhaps her model may have helped to inspire his concept of feminine heroism.

In Mozart's own time, many European women were able to study religion and form their own opinions and beliefs (privately, at least). Following the invention of the printing press, the rise of the Protestant Reformation, and subsequent increases in opportunities for women (first those of the upper and later the middle classes) to read the Bible and other works in their own languages, women across Europe began to develop a greater awareness of the world and their place in it, both inside and outside the home. Increased exposure to religious and philosophical concepts would naturally lead one to begin formulating a personal moral and ethical code, whether more or less closely aligned with the teachings of one's particular church.

This change seems to have been most evident in England, where learning for females of rank was strongly emphasized, especially after the break from Rome in 1534. Mozart spent considerable time touring in Britain as a child and was later to profess a great sense of loyalty to England, which seems to have found its way into at least some of his operatic heroines. He must have been somewhat familiar with British history; moreover, the Masonic movement originated in Scotland, and Mozart, as a Mason, would have been indoctrinated in those British philosophical concepts dating from the Magna Carta upon which the order was founded (representation in government, the right to due process, etc.). Several of England's queens in the two centuries preceding Mozart's birth stand out as examples of the "new learning" that was later to become the Enlightenment, and they bear no small resemblance to the women of Mozart's operas.

Both Catherine of Aragon, whom Henry VIII divorced in his schism with the Church of Rome, and Anne Boleyn, who succeeded her as Queen, were devoted students of religion and languages. Anne Boleyn was also said to have been a composer.⁶ Catherine Parr, the last of Henry's six wives, actually published two books of religious meditations under her own name. The latter Catherine was a devout Protestant convert in a country that was still, in essence, Roman Catholic, although no longer obedient to the Pope. Henry VIII remained a practicing Catholic until his death in 1547, and some of his advisors began to plant ideas in his mind that the Queen was plotting to overthrow the established Church. One of her ladies-in-waiting, Anne Askew, was tortured for heresy. Catherine learned of the conspiracy against her, and, on the night before she was to have been arrested, managed to convince the King that she was only interested in learning; as his wife, she was of course obedient to his wishes in religion as in all matters. In so doing, she avoided the fate of her predecessors and lived on after Henry's death to marry Thomas Seymour, to whom she had been engaged before the King commanded she become his consort. Although she died in childbirth just a year after her marriage to Seymour, Catherine still managed to direct her own destiny – without committing any crime or sacrificing her life – in a manner that few women had done before her.

Catherine's stepdaughter, and her informal pupil, was Elizabeth I of England, who ascended the British throne in 1559 at the age of 26. Following her stepmother's example, Elizabeth attended Mass and outwardly observed the rituals of Catholicism during the reign of her sister, the Roman Catholic Mary I, while secretly practicing her Protestant faith. In contrast, her cousin, Lady Jane Grey (who had also been very close to

⁶ Attributed to Anne Boleyn is "Oh Death rock me asleepe," from *Songs by Women Composers*: CD with Neva Pilgrim, soprano; Edward Smith, harpsichord; Steven Heyman, piano. Leonarda Catalog #LE338.

Queen Catherine), was passionately outspoken in her Reformed religious convictions and executed at only sixteen years of age when she refused to become a Catholic and remove herself as a potential figurehead for a Protestant rebellion. Was one cousin a saint, and the other an opportunist? On first examination, it is Jane who emerges as the more heroic, and her almost angelic integrity has stood beyond reproach for more than four hundred years — but Elizabeth was the lineal heir to the British throne, and knew that her survival was of the utmost importance not only to herself, but to the entire nation. Her sister was childless, and past the age when she was likely to conceive; had Elizabeth been executed for religious treason, the throne would have passed into the hands of her Catholic cousin, Mary Stuart, the young Queen of Scotland (and Henry VIII's niece) who was married to the Dauphin of France — or, worse yet, to Mary Tudor's husband, Philip of Spain. Either succession would have resulted inevitably in war, with the possibility of England's being subsumed by a foreign power. For a young woman in her twenties, orphaned at an early age, able to trust almost no one around her, the burden must have been unimaginable. Perhaps there existed in Elizabeth's consciousness some shadowy memory of her own mother, Anne Boleyn, who went to the scaffold in 1536 rather than allow three-year-old Elizabeth to be declared illegitimate in Henry VIII's desperate quest for a male heir. Although Elizabeth herself was deeply in love with Lord Robert Dudley, she never married, believing that a king consort would diminish the powers of her inherited throne and that, as the rightful heir to the Tudor monarchy, she needed to retain personal control of policy. The ascendance of England as a world power, beginning with her reign, surely bears out her decisions.

In the century preceding Mozart's birth, two other queens ascended the throne of England as lineal heirs — Mary Stuart (the great-great granddaughter of Elizabeth's grandfather, Henry VII, and his queen, Elizabeth of York), who governed jointly with her husband, William of Orange; and later, Mary's sister Anne. Both were generally regarded as benevolent monarchs, and England's worldwide stature continued to increase during their tenures on the throne.

To what extent Mozart may have been versed in the lives of England's queens is not clear. However, he did concertize extensively in London as a boy, and retained a great appreciation for the fairness with which he was treated there. Leopold's "vision of England as a land of freedom where the ordinary man was accorded respect and could earn a decent living through hard work and a virtuous life; where the King himself did not consider it demeaning to doff his hat to the Mozart family as they strolled in St. James's Park ... was an ideal his son retained all his life."⁷ It is known that Wolfgang referred to himself as a "dyed-in-the-wool Englishman," reacting with joy to news of Lord Richard Howe's victory over the French at Gibraltar and Sir Edward Hughes' victory at Trincomalee — "Yes, I've heard about England's victories ... with great delight."⁸ Not coincidentally, Mozart's letter was written in October of 1782, two months after his marriage and three months after the premiere of *Die Entführung*, in which the courageous serving girl, Blondchen, states explicitly that she is a free Englishwoman and that Englishwomen do not tolerate subjugation (see Example 1). That declaration is most significant, since the European male characters are Spanish, and it would seem to indicate clearly that Mozart wished to recognize England publicly as the

⁷ Till, p. 13.

⁸ Spaethling, 332; letter of October 19, 1782.

Example 1.1. Duet, Act II, Scene I, from *Die Entführung aus Dem Serail*, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart/J.G. Stephanie, K. 384 (Urtext edition from *Neue Mozart Ausgabe*, Bärenreiter, Kassel, Germany, 2007), mm. 56-64.

vanguard of civil liberty in Europe. (Konstanze's nationality is never stated in the vocal score; some translations indicate that she is Spanish, and others English; but, whatever the playwright Bretzner's original intent, the latter choice makes more sense from a plot standpoint – why else is Belmonte traveling by ship with a proper young lady to whom he is not yet married, unless he met her in England and is bringing her home to be married at his father's estate in Spain? – and is historically far more consistent with the character of her music. Moreover, Mozart and Stephanie made sufficient alterations to *Die Entführung* versus Bretzner's play, *Belmonte und Konstanze*, that Bretzner publicly disassociated his work from the opera – and Konstanze's nationality certainly could have been one of those changes.)⁹ Moreover, the role of Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, another brave maidservant who saves herself from the Count's plan to exercise his *droit du seigneur* on the night of her wedding, was written for the English singer Nancy Storace, a reigning *prima donna* of Vienna's Italian Opera Company in the 1780s. Miss Storace was beloved among colleagues for her sense of fair play and once lent her fellow singer Thomas Kelly a goodly sum to pay a gambling debt. In his autobiography, Kelly recalled her saying, ““You may one day ... go to England, and should the transaction of your playing for more money than you possessed become known among Englishmen, it might give you a character which I know you do not deserve; it must be settled directly.’ She instantly produced the money and made me go and discharge the obligation.” Such a sense of compassion and fair play was certainly consistent with Mozart's own ethics.¹⁰

⁹ Thomas Bauman, *W.A. Mozart, Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 107.

¹⁰ Jane Glover, *Mozart's Women* (New York: Harper, 2005), 246-47.

The Continent was predominantly Catholic, and in most European countries a woman could not ascend a throne except as consort (Spain and Hungary being the only exceptions). Thus, achievement was more likely to be displayed in artistic and literary endeavors rather than overt political power, although there were exceptions. In Italy, many women flourished in the Humanist movement that began in the sixteenth century, despite the efforts of the Counter-Reformation to suppress scientific and literary works that diverged from the established teachings of the Church. Writers such as Camilla Faà Gonzaga and composers including Caterina Assandra, Francesca Caccini, and most notably, Barbara Strozzi, saw their talents recognized and admired in a society dominated by men, and in which, theretofore, the women of powerful families like the Borgias and Medicis had often been able to wield power only through subversive and even violent means. Mozart spent almost two years in Italy during his teens, and had the opportunity there to experience its tradition of feminine artistic achievement firsthand: he wrote three operas for Milan between the ages of fourteen and sixteen – *Mitridate, re di Ponto* (K. 87, 1770), *Asciario in Alba* (K. 111, 1771), and *Lucio Silla* (K. 135, 1772) – and was privileged to write for two of the greatest sopranos of the eighteenth century, Anna de Amicis and Antonia Bernasconi. In the land that had given birth to opera there was no stigma attached to women performing professionally in public (as there was in England, however enlightened Britain's politics may have been relative to those of its Continental neighbors), and singers were highly respected. The Mozarts had heard de Amicis sing some years before, in Mainz; when Mozart composed *Lucio Silla* for her in 1772 she was around forty, still at the height of her powers but mature enough to take him under her wing and act as a mentor with no romantic entanglement. He learned a great deal about

writing for the voice from his work with her; and, when he did fall in love with the young coloratura soprano Aloysia Weber some six years later, it was de Amicis' music from *Lucio Silla* that he gave her to learn – no mean compliment to both ladies.¹¹ At home in Austria, of course, Mozart grew up seeing the example of a female ruler in the Empress Maria Theresa. Parallels, generally unflattering, have been drawn between Maria Theresa and the Queen of the Night; yet there are similarities that cast both in an interesting, if not even favorable, light. Like Pamina, Maria Theresa had no brothers, and thus she was the filial heir to her father, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VII. Charles attempted to secure her succession to the throne by means of an agreement with foreign rulers known as the Pragmatic Succession, but when this proved tenuous, a suitable husband was found in the form of Francis Stephen, the Duke of Lorraine.

Francis Stephen was required to renounce his own hereditary titles in order to become Emperor Francis I, so there could be no conflict of interest; he was in fact a consort, though he bore the title Emperor. This situation is not at all dissimilar to the predicament in which the Queen and Pamina find themselves at the beginning of *Zauberflöte*: the King of the Night has died and his only heir is a girl; her throne will be more secure if a suitable husband can be found. As with Francis Stephen, it is really Tamino, despite his own noble birth, who marries above his station in the opera.

Maria Theresa was very much the Empress in fact as well as name – she was actively involved in governmental affairs, and even dealt with state business while recovering from the deliveries of her fifteen children. In another interesting parallel to the plot of *Zauberflöte*, she was forced to surrender an Austrian territory, Silesia, to

¹¹ Glover, 103.

Frederick the Great of Prussia around the time of her accession to the throne of Austria in 1740, and she referred to Frederick in correspondence as “the evil animal” and “the Monster” (just as the Queen refers to Sarastro as “ein Bösewicht” in her first appearance to Tamino). Antonia Fraser writes that Frederick “responded in kind by having a sermon preached pointedly on the text of St. Paul: ‘Let the woman learn in silence,’”¹² which sounds very much like what the High Priest says to Tamino when the latter makes his way into the temple and attempts to defend the Queen as a grieving widow and mother (“Ein Weib hat also dich berückt? Ein Weib tut wenig, plaudert viel; du, Jüngling, glaubet dem Zaugenspiel?” – i.e., “women talk much and say little”).¹³ Whether Mozart was aware of this specific exchange is an intriguing point to consider; certainly he must have been well acquainted with the general history surrounding Maria Theresa’s accession to the throne.

On the negative side of the ledger, Maria Theresa continued after the death of her husband to wield enormous power over her son, the Emperor Joseph II (although the throne was, if one follows at the line of succession properly, still hers by right), and was ruthlessly pragmatic about marrying off her many children (including the second youngest, Maria Antonia, who was to become Marie Antoinette) in whatever manner she deemed most politically advantageous. She was, as has been well recorded, strongly against the Masons. Yet she was also more egalitarian than many of her predecessors, opening up the Court to wider strata of society, based on merit and professional success rather than title alone, and enjoying a relaxed and informal home life with her large family that has been documented by contemporaries in both written and painted media.

¹² Antonia Fraser, *Marie Antoinette: The Journey* (New York: Anchor, 2001), 9-10.

Moreover, she did a great deal to support musicians and admitted them into court life on relatively friendly terms; Gluck was a particular beneficiary of her patronage.

In France, one might have expected that the young Queen Consort Marie Antoinette would have endeavored to assist her compatriot (she was only three months older than Mozart); but during his fateful summer there in 1778, she was pregnant for the first time, after enduring several years of public speculation and embarrassment surrounding her husband's inability or unwillingness to consummate their marriage, and not likely to exert herself a great deal during such a critical time. Moreover, she was herself a foreigner with little real power who had as yet failed to produce an heir, often referred to as *l'autrichienne* (the Austrian woman) – an association that may not have done Mozart any good, despite the nominal political alliance between France and Austria, and one that contributed to her own tragic end, although her valiant efforts to save her family during the Revolution were worthy of any Mozart heroine (though too late to have influenced him, since he predeceased her by two years). The elder statesman of Austrian opera, Gluck, was extremely popular in Paris during the 1770s and '80s and dedicated his *Orphée* in 1774 to the young Queen who had once been his pupil; she was a strong supporter of his music, but he did not have to depend on her patronage to succeed.¹⁴

In contrast, great cultural influence had been held by Louis XV's mistress, the Marquise de Pompadour, who did not particularly favor Mozart during his childhood sojourn in Paris (when she did not deign to kiss him after a performance the little boy famously exclaimed, "Who is this that will not kiss me? The Empress kissed me").

¹³ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart/Emanuel Schikaneder, NMA, *Die Zauberflöte*, K. 620 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2007), Act I, Scene 15, mm.120-123.

¹⁴ Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* was composed in 1762 and first performed at the Burgtheater in Vienna on October 5 of that year. The French version, twelve years later, premiered at the Paris Opéra August 2, 1774.

Madame de Pompadour numbered both Voltaire and Diderot among her friends and carried considerable sway in both political and cultural circles. Whether she might have been inclined to help Mozart when he returned to Paris as a young man will remain forever unknown, as she passed away in 1764 at the age of forty-two; before her death, however, she did a great deal to establish the institution of the *salon* in France. These gatherings were generally presided over by highborn women and served as a paramount forum for the advancement of art, literature, and critical thought. To be well received in the best *salons* generally meant the *entrée* to professional success for musicians, writers and artists, although Mozart himself fared badly in navigating such gatherings as a means of advancing his career. He could not quite manage all of the social angles involved, and in one notable incident greatly offended his hostess, the Duchesse de Chabot, whom he – or Leopold, at any rate – had hoped would prove to be a conduit to the House of Bourbon. On that occasion, he arrived expecting to play a concert, only to find that mere background music was wanted; he let it be known that his dignity was affronted, and the Duchesse, in her turn, did not invite him back.¹⁵ Small wonder that Mozart’s opinion of the French was not a favorable one; and it seems to have been returned very much in kind. Nonetheless, women did hold a place of prominence in French artistic and literary circles before the Revolution. (As Antonia Fraser notes, *liberté, égalité, fraternité* did not extend to women under the Jacobin regime, which viewed them as “inferior and dangerous.” Robespierre believed “a woman’s safest place was in the home” and strongly favored Rousseau’s position that “a woman’s glory should reside in the esteem of her husband.”)¹⁶

¹⁵ Gutman, 415-416.

¹⁶ Fraser, 427-28.

By the time of Mozart's adulthood, women in both France and England were publishing novels under their own names – notably Françoise de Graffigny, Marie Jeanne Riccoboni, Ann Radcliffe, Mary Wollestonecraft, Fanny Burney, and, shortly thereafter, Jane Austen. (*Sense and Sensibility* was written just eight years after *Così*, and the two sets of sisters – Elinor and Marianne Dashwood in the former and Fiordiligi and Dorabella in the latter – share strikingly similar traits.)¹⁷ At all socioeconomic levels and from all the countries across Western Europe, women were leaving their homelands, sometimes without husbands or family, to seek new lives amid the dangers and opportunities of the New World. And yet, Mozart's heroines do seem to owe a greater debt to England than to any other country, even his own homeland. Certainly it is worth noting that the form of government largely favored by Masons in Europe was a parliamentary monarchy – of which there was only one extant, that being Great Britain.

Whether Mozart subscribed to all the ideas that are traditionally lumped under the moniker of “the Enlightenment” is doubtful. Those ideas were, after all, acted upon very differently from country to country – a divergence never more evident than in the respective natures of the American and French Revolutions. Thomas Sowell describes the two different approaches as the ‘constrained’ and ‘unconstrained’ visions, the former epitomized in *The Federalist Papers* and the works of Adam Smith, and the latter by

¹⁷ This is not an Austenian conceit of my own: it has been proposed by Brigid Brophy in her *Mozart the Dramatist* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1964), 121-122, and Jane Glover (284), among others. Jane Austen could not possibly have seen *Così* before she wrote her first major novel, but the prevailing philosophical debate of the time was such that both she and Mozart/Da Ponte were led to portray sets of sisters who exemplified the seemingly opposing traits of sense and sensibility: Elinor Dashwood and Fiordiligi are more rational, contained, and less easily swayed by potential seducers or breaches of etiquette; Marianne Dashwood and Dorabella could almost be the same person in their excesses of emotional display (often outright rudeness in Marianne's case) and weakness in resisting men who are so clearly wrong for them (John Willoughby almost seduces Marianne, but does not, owing as much to some scrap of principle on his part as any real forbearance on hers; Guglielmo, to his own regret, succeeds with Dorabella).

Rousseau and Voltaire, among others. The former approach regards man's nature as inherently flawed and best governed by a system of laws, moral standards and social traditions that have been tested and evolved through the centuries (marriage, property rights, free enterprise), while the latter views man's nature and capacity as endlessly changeable and social customs as expendable, acknowledges reason as paramount (hence the "Age of Reason"), and believes the fate of many is best left in the hands of a few intellectuals who determine the course of social policies to correct the world's ills.¹⁸

Mozart despised Voltaire, an opinion no doubt influenced by his own religious faith; his letter to his father from Paris on Voltaire's death in July 1778 would be hard to misinterpret: ". . . that godless arch-culprit Voltaire has kicked the bucket – like a dog, so to speak – like a beast! So that's his reward!"¹⁹ Mozart was understandably upset at the time about his own mother's death, but that would hardly seem the only reason for such an unequivocal condemnation of Voltaire. ("Kicked the bucket like a dog" may be taken to mean that Voltaire died without the last rites or blessing of the Church, although friends did spirit his body away before he could be interred in the limepit generally intended for unbelievers.)

Indeed, it is clear that Mozart's ideal of Reason, as expressed within *Die Zauberflöte* and other works (notably *Figaro*), has little in common with the tenets of Voltaire, Diderot *et al.* Mozart's Reason generally contains a strong dose of Christian morality and what one might term "emotional intelligence" (often regarded, though not

¹⁸ Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles*, revised edition (New York: Perseus, 2007), 30-44.

¹⁹ Spaethling, 161, letter of July 3, 1778.

exclusively so, as a “feminine” attribute).²⁰ Jane Glover describes Fiordiligi’s capitulation in *Così*, after having tried valiantly in the face of every opposing “reasonable” force to resist falling in love with her “Albanian” suitor: “Both Da Ponte and Mozart have recognized and exploited the unbearable poignancy of Fiordiligi’s solitary confrontation with a seemingly cruel world, devoid of moral or spiritual guidance. The Enlightenment, it seems, has failed her.” Yet it is not the idealized Enlightenment of *Die Zauberflöte*, nor the constrained vision of Smith and Madison with its well-constructed framework of principles, but the unconstrained enlightenment of the French Revolution to which Glover refers here. Citing the exaltation of Reason in *Così*’s final sextet (“Happy is he who takes the right side of everything and through all tribulations lets Reason guide him”), she concludes, “There is no doubt at all, from Mozart’s manic setting of his words, that he too has lost all faith in this Enlightenment philosophy.”²¹ Perhaps, conversely, Mozart held fast to what he saw as true Enlightenment and increasingly distanced himself from what he perceived as a perversion of that truth.

In an interesting paradox, Archbishop Colloredo, the much-reviled employer of both Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart, was a great admirer of Voltaire, a fact that may well have influenced the younger Mozart’s feelings on the subject. Colloredo, in a display most unusual for a churchman, actually kept a portrait of Voltaire on his wall (covered discreetly when those it might offend came to visit).²² The Archbishop, who was something of a Francophile, even allowed performances of Beaumarchais’ play *Le*

²⁰ Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, Appendix III: “Gender and Empathy” (New York: Bantam, 1998), 323.

²¹ Glover, 282.

²² Till, 9.

mariage de Figaro (later, of course, to become Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*) in Salzburg when it was banned in Vienna.

Much as they disliked each other, both Colloredo and Wolfgang respected Emperor Joseph II, who subscribed to many tenets of Enlightenment thought and made an earnest effort to be an "enlightened" ruler. Joseph did not attain power in his own right until 1780: before that time he was co-ruler with his mother, Maria Theresa.

Despite his mother's opposition to the order, Joseph himself was rumored to be a Mason, and he made great efforts at reform during his time on the throne, notably the abolition of serfdom. Yet, he was in 1787 the subject of a pamphlet, *Why Is the Emperor Joseph Not Loved by His People?* Sadly, before he died in 1790, he had become disillusioned with the Enlightenment in reaction to the horrific treatment of his sister Marie Antoinette: and, while his brother and successor Leopold (who had reputedly reached the eighteenth degree of Masonry) possessed many attributes of a truly Enlightened ruler, the French Revolution had polarized Europe and ruined many opportunities for reform and advancement that might otherwise have been achieved.²³

Nonetheless, Mozart found both personal and professional happiness in Joseph's Vienna. Though he was never able to manipulate court politics as Salieri and others did to achieve a more stable sinecure, his music was much admired by Joseph and he enjoyed the patronage of a number of Enlightened Viennese. Prominent among these patrons were several women: Countess Thun, Baroness Waldstätten, and Countess Rumbeck (who was about the same age as Wolfgang). These ladies hailed from families which had attained their status by achievement rather than inheritance, and they considered Mozart

²³ Jeremy Beadle, "The World of Mozart: The Enlightenment," at www.classicalnet.co.uk (originally accessed in 2002; this site is no longer extant as of 2007 although it is frequently referenced online).

an equal and a friend, whereas the more established aristocracy often tended to regard musicians as servants. Baroness Waldstätten kindly kept Constanze Weber at her house during a period when parental disapproval and wedding delays had caused an estrangement, not only between Constanze and her mother, but subsequently between Constanze and Wolfgang. (The cause of this estrangement is explained in the only surviving letter from Wolfgang to Constanze before their marriage, wherein Wolfgang admonishes Constanze for having allowed her calves to be measured by some young fop at a party given by the Baroness – despite the fact that her hostess had set the example by doing so – explaining that the Baroness was quite a bit older and could get away with that sort of thing, whereas he expected more discretion from his *fiancée*. They made up, as we all know, though whether Constanze gave Wolfgang the apology he demanded remains a mystery.)²⁴

Following the great success of *Die Entführung* in Vienna (where it was to remain popular throughout his lifetime), and with the backing of a number of prominent Viennese patrons, Mozart decided to attempt something yet more ambitious and quite politically daring: an Italian opera set to a libretto by the foremost librettist working in Vienna at the time, Lorenzo da Ponte, based on the highly controversial *Le mariage de Figaro* (often cited as having played a major role in igniting the French Revolution). Mozart, Colloredo, and Emperor Joseph form an interesting triumvirate with respect to *Figaro*: much as Mozart despised Colloredo, the Archbishop (as noted previously) had permitted the play to be performed in Salzburg when the Emperor had banned it in Vienna; yet Joseph himself allowed performances of Mozart's opera.

²⁴ Spaethling, 310, letter of April 29, 1782.

Like Verdi's *Rigoletto* (based on Victor Hugo's scathing *Le roi s'amuse*), written more than sixty years later, *Figaro* was protected to some degree from censorship by being set in a different locale and, in *Figaro*'s case, a different language than that of its composer. The aristocracy might have been unnerved by some of the opera's implications, but the story could be seen as taking place somewhere else, in another country, with problems not necessarily shared by Austria. In changing the language from French to Italian, Mozart and Da Ponte removed the story still further from its original source and thus minimized any allusions to events taking place in France, which could quite reasonably have offended the emperor when his sister's throne, and later her very life, were in danger.

It is significant that Mozart and Da Ponte chose to set Beaumarchais' *Le mariage de Figaro* instead of *Le barbier de Séville* (*La mère coupable* would not be completed until 1792). Of the three plays that comprise the trilogy, the moral compass of *Figaro* (the second installment of the trilogy) is by far the highest, and it is the women in the story who are responsible for steering by that compass. Certainly *Figaro* offers a much more endearing portrait of Rosina (Countess Almaviva) than either of the other two installments: the first portrays her as a spoiled, flirtatious sneak, and the third finds her having given birth to Cherubino's child. For most of us it is far more pleasant to think of *Figaro* as a self-contained story with a happy and morally triumphant ending in which the *droit du seigneur* is vanquished, the Count and Countess reconcile permanently, and Figaro and Susanna live happily ever after (perhaps even helping to make a match between Cherubino and Barbarina at some future date). That Mozart chose to treat it as such says a great deal about his view of life and what it ought to be, and he uses the

women in the story to communicate that view: it is Susanna, with help from the Countess, who brings about the opera's happy resolution.

Indeed, Mozart and Da Ponte's version of *Figaro* is far kinder to the Count than it might have been; the Count is portrayed as unfaithful and to some degree ludicrous, but composer, librettist, and Countess all forgive him in the end. Everyone in the story wants to see him brought to his knees, but in a manner consistent with truly Enlightened thought – that is, by raising him to a higher level of moral Reason, not by taking away his title and cutting off his head. The opera's ending would seem to exemplify the constrained vision of Enlightenment, as the Count is brought to respect the institution of marriage (his own and Figaro's) and allows others the right to their own pursuit of happiness rather than trying to make autocratic or intellectualized choices for them. Had Mozart's Figaro and Susanna been driving the coach to Varennes, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette might well have escaped.

During his years in Vienna, Mozart was said to have read *Automatches: The Capacity and Extent of Human Understanding*, by John Kirkby. This English text, found among his books, extolled such Enlightenment virtues as justice, education, a spiritual Church, and the paramount importance of forgiveness and reconciliation.²⁵ It must have influenced, or mirrored, his own feelings. "I maintain that kindness cures everything," he wrote in a letter to Constanze during the summer of 1791.²⁶ This philosophy certainly may be seen in the endings of *Die Entführung*, *Così*, and *Figaro* (if not *Don Giovanni*),

²⁵ Till, 128; Beadle, as previously cited.

²⁶ Till, 205; Spaethling, 416, letter of July 6, 1791. Spaethling does not include the entire letter and for some reason chose to omit this famous quote.

and even in *La clemenza di Tito* (which was written for Leopold's Prague coronation in 1791), but it poses some interesting questions about the conclusion of *Die Zauberflöte*.

Jeremy Beadle says, "Second chances are the hallmark of comedy: Don Giovanni's great crime is, ultimately, that he refuses the forgiveness which is repeatedly offered him. Reconciliation is also vital in *The Magic Flute*: apart from the Masonic symbolism there is an inherent message that Mankind's best path is to avoid the absolutism of Sarastro and find a more 'reasoned' and moderate path through life."²⁷

Fair enough – but, if so, how does one explain an ending in which the Queen, like Don Giovanni before her, is swallowed up by the stage? At no point in the opera is she ever offered forgiveness. Sarastro makes a couple of offhand remarks about clemency to reassure Pamina, but that's not what happens in the finale – which makes a liar of him. "Forgiveness and mercy," Nicholas Till maintains, "are not necessarily synonymous. And mercy can also be offered without forgiveness, since forgiveness implies a form of cancellation of the original sin or crime rather than simply the punishment due to it."²⁸ Thus, Sarastro could pardon the Queen without forgiving her (or, as some might say, forgive but not forget). He does neither – placing him squarely at odds with Mozart's own beliefs.

One is left to wonder, then, whether the opera's *dénouement* is truly the one Mozart would have chosen. Certainly, it ties up the story in a manner that is neatly grasped by most of the audience, yet seems completely inconsistent with the principles

²⁷ Beadle, as previously cited.

²⁸ Till, 168.

that Mozart so clearly espoused in other operas, notably *Figaro* and *Entführung*. He may well have had another conclusion in mind – and one that would have placed the women of *Die Zauberflöte* solidly on an equal footing with their male counterparts. We shall see.

Chapter II

The Women in Mozart's Life

Apart from the political, religious, and philosophical influences of Mozart's day, there must have been personal models for the heroines of his operas. We have ample evidence that he felt deeply for the women closest to him: his sister, Marianne (Nannerl), herself a gifted musician and his partner in childhood performances before the crowned heads of Europe; his mother, who accompanied her son to Paris to take care of him while he sought a French patron – despite the fact that she spoke little French – and who fell ill and died shortly after the premiere of his “Paris” symphony; Aloysia Weber Lange, for whom his youthful love was not returned, but to whom he gave some of the most beautiful and virtuosic vocal music ever penned; his sister-in-law, Josefa Weber Hofer, who created the role of the Queen of the Night; and his wife, Constanze, the second

youngest of the four Weber sisters, in whose honor he wrote the Grand Mass in C Minor and for whom he christened one of the noblest of all his female characters.

Of the six women principals in *Die Zauberflöte* – the princess Pamina; her mother, the Queen of the Night; the Queen's Three Ladies; and the bird-girl Papagena – Pamina and the Queen are the most fully developed and most likely to have taken some of their qualities from the real women in Mozart's circle or the wider contemporary society. Thus, any examination of role models must focus primarily on those women in Mozart's personal life who bear the most resemblance to, or influence upon, these two characters.

The mixture of tenderness, passion, and respect for women that recurs throughout Mozart's operas would seem to have had its first roots in his relationship with his mother. As seen in family letters and other accounts, Maria Anna was a loving parent, demonstrative and outwardly affectionate where Leopold was the stern, autocratic disciplinarian; but she was also well-traveled, could conduct herself gracefully in the presence of royalty (she and the Empress Maria Theresa once had a *tête-à-tête* about the difficulties of shepherding their children through a smallpox epidemic), and, perhaps most important, was an excellent manager of her peripatetic family.

When Leopold traveled with Wolfgang in Italy seeking patronage over a period of nearly two years (1771–72, punctuated by just one visit home), it was Maria Anna who oversaw the family finances, household, and staff. Years earlier, during the summer of 1764 in London, she had been forced to take charge while Leopold was gravely ill, and no sooner had he recovered fully than both her children succumbed to typhoid. Even

Leopold praised her organizational skill and strength of character during this difficult time.¹

Leopold's respect for Maria Anna is most evident in the decision taken to have her accompany Wolfgang to Mannheim and then to Paris in 1778. No one as proud and ambitious as Leopold Mozart would ever have allowed his wife to function in this capacity (albeit forced to stay at home himself, under the threat of losing his job with the Archbishop), had he not been confident that she would acquit herself creditably in the position that we would today describe as a personal manager or an agent. And it is highly doubtful that Wolfgang would have consented to the arrangement had he considered his mother to be an embarrassment or a detriment to the progress of his career.

Both parents were concerned, with good reason, about Wolfgang's close relationship with the family of Fridolin Weber, whom Wolfgang had met on his first visit to Mannheim during the winter of 1777, having gone there to seek work at the court of Elector Karl Theodor. Herr Weber was a music copyist and violinist with some musical and political connections, little in the way of material wealth, and four teenaged daughters, all of them quite musical – in particular, the second oldest, Aloysia. Neither Leopold nor Maria Anna wanted Wolfgang to “throw himself away” on the brink of his adult musical career; Maria Anna saw very clearly the potential pitfalls of her son's friendship with an impecunious family of pretty, marriageable girls and made every effort to get him away from the Webers as quickly as possible, though he found ways to forestall their journey to Paris on several occasions (once complaining that the morals of their proposed traveling companions were unsuitable). Although Maria Anna wrote

¹ Glover, 24.

Leopold anxiously of her concerns about Aloysia in hasty postscripts to Wolfgang's letters (which she must have posted for him, so he would not see them), there is nothing in these to indicate the kind of domineering mother who might have inspired the negative image associated with Queen of the Night; and, while Wolfgang may have tried to "get around" his mother in typically youthful fashion, he does not seem to have resented her presence. It is true that she was often left alone in Paris while he was out attempting to make contacts and obtain commissions, but that was a necessary aspect of their business, not a willful intent to neglect her. When she succumbed to illness and died in July of 1778, he was heartbroken.

Wolfgang's initial correspondence following his mother's death may seem to indicate a lack of emotion, but such an interpretation is unfair. For the first time, and in the blink of an eye, he was forced into a fully adult role, with neither parent to supervise or support him, in a somewhat inhospitable foreign country. Although he did have the assistance of two friends, Baron Grimm and Madame d'Epinay, he had to see to Maria Anna's burial and break the news to Leopold. He accomplished the latter task in stages: first warning his father that his mother was quite ill, optimistically including details of compositional works in progress, as he normally would have done in writing to his father, to alleviate the graver news and help to cushion the blow when it did come. Meanwhile, Wolfgang wrote the truth to a friend, Abbé Bollinger, so that he might be prepared to support Leopold and Nannerl in their grief when the real news did arrive. In his subsequent letter to Leopold of July 9, Wolfgang wrote, "When I thought about my own pain and sadness . . . I could not bring myself to overwhelm you with this distressing news. You can imagine what I went through – what courage and fortitude I needed to

endure it all with composure . . . I felt such terrible pain, cried and cried.”² Despite Leopold’s characteristic attempts to make his son feel guilty and to blame him for Maria Anna’s illness and death, nothing in Wolfgang’s correspondence indicates that he felt anything other than the deepest love for his mother or terrible grief at her passing. If, at a time of life when he was occupied with falling in love and establishing his career, he may have taken her somewhat for granted, his love for her does not seem to have diminished; indeed, he himself was of such an affectionate and generous nature, outwardly at least very different from his father’s, that it is difficult not to credit at least some aspects of his character – his ability to make friends easily, to trust, to love and to let himself be loved – to Maria Anna’s love for him.

Much of this attachment seems to have been replicated in Wolfgang’s relationship with his “carissima sorella”³ Nannerl, naturally a very close one given the intense performance and travel demands of their childhood, and their almost constant proximity to one another with no other playmates to diminish their mutual interdependence. They were playful and affectionate with each other, devising elaborate codes and games, and shared a special, imaginary world that they christened “The Kingdom of Back” (so called because, when traveling with their parents as they so frequently did, the two children sat in the back of the carriage); yet Wolfgang also clearly held his sister’s musicianship in the highest esteem.⁴ In one letter to his father, written while he was composing *Idomeneo*, he expresses excitement at the prospect of having Nannerl play for the musical

² Spaethling, 164, letter of July 9, 1778.

³ This was Wolfgang’s frequent salutation to his sister, particularly while journeying in Italy during 1770–71; see Spaethling and Anderson for specific letters.

⁴ Solomon, 399; Glover, 20.

elite of Munich, though he does admonish, “Tell my sister . . . to practice hard – people here are already looking forward to hearing her.”⁵

Sadly, Nannerl’s marriage to an older widower at the (then) rather mature age of thirty, Leopold’s disapproval of Wolfgang’s marriage to Constanze, and Nannerl’s relative isolation at her husband’s country home in the mountains outside Salzburg resulted in both emotional and physical distance between the siblings that was never to be bridged (they did not see each other for the last eight years of Wolfgang’s life). Yet, in a touching *dénouement* to the story, Constanze and Nannerl lived together in their old age, with Constanze, the younger by six years, serving as primary caregiver to her husband’s sister – and, perhaps, rightly so. For Nannerl was the first in a long and beloved line of women musicians, without whose extraordinary talent and execution Mozart’s genius could not have been fully realized.

Wolfgang had the extraordinary opportunity of growing up in the late eighteenth century among a nascent category of women who made a relatively substantial income based on their talent, education, and intellect. These included writers, opera singers, and actresses. One must accord a special place in this group to opera singers, who were and are required to possess, in addition to innate vocal beauty, a degree of proficiency in several languages, an understanding of the literature and history that form an opera’s plot, and the ability to learn and execute difficult music quickly, accurately, and to dramatic effect. Some opera singers are, without doubt, less convincing actresses than one might wish; but, conversely, few theatrical actresses possess the full musical and linguistic skill sets of their operatic counterparts. In Mozart’s time no less than our own – though the

⁵ Spaethling, 215, letter of November 15, 1780.

great Mrs. Siddons stands out as the towering actress of the late eighteenth century – a pretty face and figure, and perhaps the right romantic or political connections, could have been sufficient to get a young lady onstage in at least some minor capacity, if musical talent were left out of the equation. While hardly discounting the absence of these factors in operatic casting (then or now), an opera singer *must* have more in order to do even a creditable job. Wolfgang enjoyed the privilege of working alongside the most talented women singers in Europe, for whom he composed from his early teens and who treated him with the greatest professional respect.

It was entirely natural, then, that Mozart should have fallen in love with a young soprano who seemed to possess all of the qualities enumerated above. When Wolfgang met Aloysia Weber, she was only seventeen (he was twenty-one) but had already begun to establish herself as a singer of some renown in Mannheim musical circles. Aloysia was also, by all accounts, the prettiest of the Weber sisters. Yet Wolfgang was smitten as much by her talent as by her beauty (if not more so), and hardly less by her virtuosity at the keyboard than her stunning vocal technique. Aloysia was known for becoming quite impatient with singers who could not accompany themselves; and all the Weber girls, including Mozart's eventual wife Constanze, played quite well. Wolfgang wrote to his father:

“In the evening we were received at court, that was on Saturday; Mademoiselle Weber sang three arias; I don't want to go into details about her singing; just this one word: excellent!” After attending three midweek musical *soirées* at the Weber home, he continued, “Mlle. Weber sang altogether 13 times and played the clavier twice; her

playing is not bad at all. What amazes me most is her ability to read music; just imagine, she played my difficult sonatas at sight, slowly but without dropping a note.”⁶

Subsequently, Mozart wrote an aria for his tenor friend, Anton Raff, but decided that it did not suit the tenor and recast it for Aloysia. It was “No so d’onde viene” (K. 294, 1778), the first of eight arias he was to write for her. Again, he wrote to his father with great admiration of her musicianship: “I said . . . , learn the aria by yourself, sing it according to your own feelings, then let me hear it. . . . After two days I went to her, and she recited the aria for me, accompanying herself. I had to admit that she sang it exactly as I wished and as I would have taught her.”⁷ Infatuated though he may have been, Mozart was not merely enchanted by Aloysia’s beauty or touched by the distressed financial circumstances of her family; she had enormous talent, and he respected it.

Always one to tailor his compositions to the particular talents of his singers, he wrote numerous arias and roles to show off Aloysia’s ability both to “float” high, sustained passages and to execute brilliant coloratura; notable among these are the exquisite “Vorrei, spiegarvi, o Dio” (K. 418, 1783) and the role of Madame Herz in his comic puff piece *Der Schauspieldirektor* (K. 486, 1785). The latter contains several high Fs, which are quite as spectacular, though less famous than those in the Queen of the Night arias later written for Aloysia’s elder sister, Josefa.⁸ (Of note, both these works were written for Aloysia after Mozart was already married to Constanze – another sign of his respect for her talent.) He said to his father that her greatest gift was her *cantabile* – a

⁶ Spaethling, 125, letter of February 4, 1778.

⁷ Spaethling, 135, letter of February 28, 1778.

⁸ ‘High F’ throughout this work denotes F⁶, three Fs above middle C (C³). Notes in the soprano range above the treble staff, beginning with G⁵, traditionally are called ‘high C,’ ‘high F,’ etc. ‘*In alt*,’ on the following page, denotes the next octave above the staff.

significant compliment as she was a high coloratura soprano, possessing a type of voice that is generally most celebrated for its ability to sing fast.

Having already stated when he recast “Non so d’onde viene” for Aloysia that “I love it when an aria is so accurately measured for a singer that it fits like a well-tailored dress,”⁹ Mozart sent very specific instructions to his father regarding a still more demanding aria he had written for Aloysia, “Popoli di Tessaglia” (K. 316, 1778): “In the trunk you will find the aria I wrote for Mlle. Weber; you can’t imagine how great it sounds when it is performed with orchestra . . . and of course, it has to be sung by a singer such as the Weber girl. I beg you, don’t give the aria to anyone – it would be the greatest unfairness you could do, for it was written solely for her and fits her like a garment that was tailored for her.”¹⁰ It is unlikely that anyone Leopold knew could have sung the aria anyway, since it contains two high Gs *in alt* – even allowing for the lower standard of pitch that was utilized in 1778 – but Wolfgang displays his sense of honor here, quite apart from his love for Aloysia: the aria was meant to showcase her particular gifts, and was not to be shared with anyone else. The young Mozart most certainly wanted his music performed and publicized, but his respect for the individual singer’s talent overrode even that objective.

Both Aloysia and Josefa Weber were led by necessity, as well as their extensive vocal gifts, to pursue operatic careers following their father’s untimely death at the age of forty-six. (That same exigency may well have led Aloysia to wed the actor and painter Josef Lange during Mozart’s absence in Paris. She had no real certainty that Wolfgang would return, and even if he did, whether he would be able to earn a living; whereas

⁹ Spaethling, 135.

¹⁰ Spaethling, 198, letter of December 3, 1778.

Lange, in his late twenties, had established himself quite well as a portrait painter.) Heartbroken as he was on discovering that the Webers had removed to Vienna, and worse yet, that Aloysia had married someone else, Mozart clearly saw nothing whatever wrong in women working outside the home. In one letter to Nannerl, he championed the idea that a qualified woman should be well rewarded financially for her expertise: “My sister . . . would get on much better in Vienna than in Salzburg. . . . There are many distinguished families here who hesitate to engage a male teacher, but would give handsome terms to a woman.”¹¹

And yet, perhaps, these modern feelings did not quite extend to the woman who shared his adult life. After nursing his wounds from Aloysia for a few months at home in Salzburg, Mozart found the combined tyranny of his father and Archbishop Colloredo unbearable and went to seek his fortune in Vienna (where he was notoriously, and literally, “kicked out” of Colloredo’s service by having himself and his luggage thrown into the street). The Webers remained friendly to him, despite Aloysia’s defection, and it was only a matter of time before his heart found its way to Constanze, second youngest of the sisters. It seems likely, given his grief at the loss of his mother and his rejection by Aloysia, that he was drawn to Constanze’s somewhat gentler nature and the feelings of domestic steadiness that she inspired rather than her musical talents *per se* – though he was to find them quite useful in a practical sense during the years to come, as she often played and sang his music to help him decide whether it “worked,” and then copied it out for him when it did.¹²

¹¹ Glover, 113.

¹² Glover, 115-116.

Mozart's introduction of Constanze to his father as the object of his love, written in December 1781, makes her sound almost like Cinderella: "She is the martyr of the family, and probably because of it the most kindhearted, the most skilled, in one word, the best of them all. She takes care of everything in the household – but still she can't do anything right in the opinion of the others." To this he adds an oft-quoted description that has led some critics to believe he undervalued both her beauty and her intelligence, and was 'settling' in his choice of wife: "She is not ugly, but also not really beautiful – her whole beauty consists of two little black eyes and a graceful figure. She has no great wit, but enough common sense to fulfill her duties as a wife and mother."¹³ That Constanze had not only abundant common sense, but the makings of a brilliant financial manager, is a subject that will be explored further. Meanwhile, Wolfgang in this letter was undoubtedly trying to convince his father that she was a good, steady girl who would make a loyal and supportive wife, rather than cataloguing a list of her talents that might make her appear to be using him to advance a possible singing career of her own, as both his parents had feared to be the case with her sister Aloysia. He goes on to add that she has a desire to dress well but not to be particularly glamorous, and that she does her own hair – reinforcing the image he clearly needed to present to his father. Over the ensuing months and years, Wolfgang's letters provide ample evidence that he was (and remained) madly in love with Constanze, and her musical talent was a great asset to him in his own career.

Constanze possessed a high, light lyric soprano voice, apparently without quite the extreme upper range of her elder sisters (one must judge from the tessitura of the C

¹³ Spaethling, 296, letter of December 15, 1781.

Minor Mass, which extends only to a high C in “Et incarnatus est”; but then, religious works rarely contain the extremes of vocal range that are utilized regularly in opera for theatrical effect). However, she did not sing publicly during Wolfgang’s lifetime, other than in church – to be fair, she was frequently in ill health from the complications of successive pregnancies, which might have prevented her singing even if he had approved. Another factor may have been that Wolfgang clearly experienced some jealousy when they were apart, though nothing in his letters indicates that he ever truly doubted his wife’s fidelity. H.C. Robbins Landon, in *Mozart’s Last Year*, offers only the highest praise of Constanze and accuses “German musicologists” of destroying her reputation to enhance the Mozart legend. He goes so far as to include a chapter entitled, “Constanze: A Vindication,” which concludes with the penultimate phrase from the marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer: “Whom therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”¹⁴ The Mozarts’ correspondence is indeed most tender and loving, and at times both explicitly sensual and hilariously funny; but Wolfgang does give Constanze little lectures on how to behave when they are apart. “You know, I am glad when you are having fun – I truly am . . . [but] a Woman has to always behave properly – otherwise, people will talk.”¹⁵ (It is fair to mention that this letter was written while he was writing *Così*, a time when indiscreet flirtation was likely to have been on his mind.) Like countless generations of men on their way up in the world, both before and since, Mozart undoubtedly expected his wife to be an excellent hostess – elegant, charming, witty, accomplished, personable, and, as he says, *fun* – thus helping to further his professional

¹⁴ H.C. Robbins Landon, *Mozart’s Last Year* (New York: Schirmer, 1988), 198-199.

¹⁵ Spaethling, 415, letter of mid-August 1789.

interests, without going so far as to create the wrong impression with any of his male colleagues.

Since no one is perfect, man or woman, Constanze may well have strayed occasionally across the fine line between charm and flirtation. Those instances may even be represented in Mozart's incomparable *soubrette* characters – most notably Zerlina, who flirts with Don Giovanni (and is saved from a much worse mistake by the intervention of Donna Anna and Donna Elvira) but makes everything right with her Masetto in two very suggestive arias, “Batti, batti,” and “Vedrai, carino.” One imagines that if the Mozarts had their share of couple “spats,” they also enjoyed making up (much in the manner of Blondchen and Pedrillo in *Die Entführung*). Yet to paint Constanze merely as a Mozart *soubrette* would be grave injustice indeed.

Constanze was not only wife, lover, and mother; she was an accomplished musician and alternately served as Wolfgang's editor, copyist, and business manager – functioning particularly well in the latter capacity. Had she gotten hold of the family finances at an earlier point in their marriage, it is entirely possible that the state they eventually reached, and Wolfgang's ill health from overwork in trying to right that situation, might never have occurred. (Her frequent pregnancies and the loss of several babies probably contributed to Wolfgang's shielding her from business matters.) The Mozarts do not appear to have been excessive spendthrifts, despite having been portrayed to the contrary for most of the past two centuries: Landon gives a detailed account of their assets and liabilities, with the values translated into modern dollar terms, and they were not gravely in debt at the time of Mozart's death.¹⁶ They did have heavy expenses, particularly related to the excessive cost of decent housing in Vienna, medical treatment

(again, multiple pregnancies and miscarriages), and the need for “networking” to promote Mozart’s music, which involved giving dinner parties and having suitable clothing and furniture. These are problems that any professional musician living today in New York City can understand only too well. Still, the Mozarts do not seem to have been unduly frivolous.

In 1790, Mozart was called away to Prague and left Constanze in charge of the family’s business affairs. During that time she brilliantly refinanced a loan, pledging their furniture as collateral; a pledge she had good reason to believe would never be called in, as Mozart’s fortunes had begun to take a decided turn for the better with the success of *Don Giovanni* and the commission for *La clemenza di Tito*. She continued to oversee the family’s finances, negotiating several other agreements to their benefit, for the remainder of Wolfgang’s life. Both Landon and Robert Gutman praise her financial skill, the latter acknowledging that during her recovery in 1790 from a serious illness, “she had begun to emerge as a force in managing the household’s financial affairs. . . . An early plan involved repayment in installments deriving from new Mozartean scores; . . . an indulgent scheme allowing Mozart to think of his obligation in terms of composing. She pursued this enterprise as he occupied himself with the activities of [Leopold’s] coronation.”¹⁷ One of the great tragedies of Western music (indeed, Western history) is that Mozart was awarded the coveted position of *Kapellmeister* at St. Stephen’s Cathedral only a few weeks before his untimely death. With his income from that position, and Constanze’s skills as business manager, they would have been, in

¹⁶ Landon, 28-29.

¹⁷ Gutman, 714.

modern parlance, set for life, and he would have had ample time to continue composing his operas and symphonic works. But that was not to be.

Left on her own, however tragically, Constanze continued to prove herself a fine businesswoman. The Masons helped her to negotiate a modest settlement from the Court (Mozart's official position was not high enough to entitle her to much, but his renown was sufficient to prompt Leopold to give her somewhat more, with the stipulation that this was a one-time *largesse* not to be expected by the widows of average musicians); but that pension would not have kept her in much comfort. She was, however, astute enough to realize that Mozart's manuscripts – which had miraculously escaped the probate court – would provide the chief source of security for her and her children in the years ahead.¹⁸ She negotiated a number of contracts with major publishers including Breitkopf and Härtel, Peters, and later Novello (the English publisher who, with his wife, came to see her in a well-recorded visit during the 1840s). Constanze, who had not sung professionally since her marriage in 1782, organized and performed in concerts of Mozart's music throughout German-speaking Europe, often joined by Aloysia or Josefa, and even sang in performances of several of the operas, which served the dual purpose of bringing in revenue and keeping Mozart's music before the public. She provided a comfortable income for herself and their two surviving boys, Karl and Franz Xaver Wolfgang, until her marriage in 1809 to Georg van Nissen, a Danish diplomat and admirer of Mozart, whom she had grown to know and love in the decade that preceded their wedding and who was ultimately to write one of the first major biographies of Mozart. Even in her second marriage, Constanze continued to honor her first.¹⁹

¹⁸ Gutman, 750–51.

¹⁹ Glover, 327–331.

Mozart loved his “little wife” very dearly, as is evident again and again in the letters that he wrote to and about her; but did he understand all of her nobler qualities well enough to immortalize them in any of his heroines? Certainly the Konstanze and Belmonte of *Entführung* stand as proxies for Constanze and Wolfgang at the time of their marriage, facing parental opposition (i.e., the Pasha) but triumphing at last; and indeed, Constanze copied out much of the score for her *fiancé*: Jane Glover says, “Both literally and figuratively, her hand is in this ground-breaking score; and his heart, his strength of feeling for her, is in every bar of it.”²⁰ Robert Spaethling writes that he was so in love with both his real and his fictional heroines that “it is difficult to say which of them received more of Mozart’s love and attention between the summers of 1781 and 1782, and in the course of the year he began to confuse not only the spelling of their names but even, at times, their respective roles in his life.”²¹ (He did sometimes spell his *fiancée*’s name with a K when writing to his father during that year. The fictional heroine was originally spelled Konstanze, from the title of the play on which the opera was based, although posterity has frequently accorded the real Constanze the compliment of spelling the fictional heroine’s name with a C. For clarity, this paper uses K for the operatic heroine and C for Mrs. Mozart.)

Yet the idealized Konstanze who faces down torture and death seems to bear little practical resemblance to the girl whom Mozart recommended to his father by saying, “She knows all about householding and has the kindest heart in the world.”²² That description would seem perfectly to suit Susanna, the charming, clever (and very brave) maidservant of *Le nozze di Figaro*. Glover maintains that, of all his women characters,

²⁰ Glover, 115.

²¹ Spaethling, 265; author’s commentary, not referring to a specific letter.

“Susanna can be seen as Mozart’s perfect woman,” and she would certainly seem to share many traits with the young Frau Mozart: “Bright, quick, loyal and adorable . . . excited, a little vain, besotted with her Figaro [read Wolfgang]; and extremely astute.”²³

Indeed, Susanna may have been Mozart’s ideal at the time he created her in 1786; but Pamina is an elevated version of Susanna, as reflected not only in her rank but in her more developed intellectual understanding of Enlightenment principles rather than just good natural instincts. The real Constanze seems to have possessed all of Susanna’s good qualities, and more of Pamina’s than she is generally given credit for. Nicholas Till describes her as “a woman, who, whatever her many admirable qualities, was renowned for her lack of . . . sophistication,”²⁴ but this does not square with Constanze’s obvious business acumen, the level of musical virtuosity that she clearly possessed, or the fact that she was quite sophisticated enough to have engaged the affections of the greatest musical genius of her time as her first husband and an urbane, well-traveled foreign diplomat as her second. Till goes on to praise Pamina as “the ideal of womanhood, the spiritual partner of Tamino, his guide and muse.”²⁵ Constanze, in various ways, fulfilled all these roles for Wolfgang. Perhaps it is not too great a stretch of the imagination to suggest that Mozart’s ideal woman was, in truth, his “little wife.”

A case has been made by Peter Shaffer in *Amadeus*, among others, that in creating the Queen of the Night, Mozart was referencing his mother-in-law, Caecilia Weber (whose first name, interestingly enough, was that of the patron saint of music and to

²² Spaethling, 297, letter of December 15, 1781.

²³ Glover, 251.

²⁴ Till, 290.

²⁵ Till, 292.

whom Shaffer refers crudely as “a real bitch”).²⁶ Mozart certainly relates in no uncertain terms to his father that he believed Frau Weber had attempted to trap him into marrying Constanze by offering him lodging in their house and then having rumors spread that he had dishonored her daughter; but Wolfgang, while vehemently denying these accusations, also avows his devoted love for Constanze and his intent to marry her: “Don’t suspect my dear Konstanze [*sic*] of having such conniving thoughts – you must believe me that I could not possibly love her if she were a schemer.”²⁷

In fact, Frau Weber and her daughters’ guardian, Herr Thorwart – an influential man in the Viennese theatrical world – forced Wolfgang to sign a marriage contract in which he was required to marry Constanze within three years or pay her the not-insignificant sum of 300 *gulden* a year. Again, he said to his father, “Nothing in the world was easier for me to write – because I knew I would never have to pay those 300 *gulden* – for I shall never forsake her.”²⁸ But Constanze, in a display most worthy of her operatic namesake, ripped the prenuptial agreement to shreds, saying she trusted in his love and would hold him to no such obligation.

There is certainly some fodder here for Pamina and the Queen; but, as in the opera, it may be viewed from more than one angle. Although Mozart seems to have felt that his honor was being questioned unnecessarily, Frau Weber was perhaps not unjustified in attempting to protect her daughter’s welfare against a high-spirited young man in an uncertain profession, whose interests could have been much better furthered by marrying a woman of higher rank and means (and of whom he did count several among

²⁶ Peter Shaffer, *Amadeus*, 4th ed. (New York: Samuel French, 2003), 13.

²⁷ Spaethling, 303, letter of January 30, 1782.

²⁸ Spaethling, 299, letter of December 22, 1781.

his close friends). Wolfgang's letters leave no doubt of his love for Constanze, but he was also trying very hard to convince his father of her integrity and of the urgent need to get her away from her mother (i.e., to expedite their marriage and his own physical and emotional fulfillment therein).

After the wedding, Wolfgang seems to have been on cordial terms with his mother-in-law and all the Webers, even Aloysia, for whom he continued to compose music. The fact that he wrote specifically for the sisters' voices is well documented, but they were certainly not his only influences. He was a man of many interests and moved in the wider cultural world of the time – a world that manifests itself clearly in the women of *Die Zauberflöte*.

Chapter III

Literary and Historical Role Models

Other than the women in his own personal circle, Mozart's sources of inspiration for his characters are not immediately identifiable. Among the women rulers of the day, Maria Theresa was no friend of the Enlightenment (certainly not of the Masons, at any rate), and Mozart never had the chance truly to know Marie Antoinette, however taken he might have been by her heroically tragic end, had he outlived her. Queen Charlotte of England, though sympathetic, wielded very little personal authority and was forced to cope with her husband's chronic illness while the true power (fortunately, as most would say) resided with the Prime Minister, William Pitt, and Parliament. America was too young a country to have yet produced any women figures of sufficient international renown to attract Mozart's attention (although Abigail Adams and Dolley Madison, among others, would have made excellent Mozart heroines); and Catherine the Great of Russia, even leaving aside her alleged personal proclivities, was too Machiavellian to satisfy the Mozartean ideal.

An obvious source for at least portions of *Die Zauberflöte* would seem to be “Lulu, or the Magic Flute” by Christoph Martin Wieland, part of a collection of fairy stories published in 1786 under the title *Dschinnistan*. As a stock prince-rescues-princess plot, with the innovation of the flute as playing an active part in the rescue, it certainly must have contributed some ideas, but no strong feminine characters emerge from this fairy tale to provide a basis for the opera’s realization of Pamina or the Queen. “Lulu” had already inspired several *Singspiels* with such titles as *Kaspar the Bassoon Player*, or *The Magic Zither*; Mozart went to see one such production while working on *Zauberflöte* (probably wanting to ensure that his own work could not be accused of plagiarism) and wrote to Constanze that it had “nothing to it.”¹ Another work often cited as a source, *Sethos* (a Greek myth translated into German by Matthius Claudius in 1777–78), is significant primarily in its portrayal of the title character, who resembles Tamino in Mozart and Schikaneder’s version.² For complex women characters, composer and librettist would have had to look elsewhere.

Women of principle and courage did exist in the operas of composers who predate Mozart, but none seems to have exhibited the particular combination of sweetness, high intelligence, and sheer pluck that Mozart’s heroines almost unanimously possess. Armide, Ariadne and Alceste, perhaps the three most famous female characters of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century opera – portrayed by composers from Monteverdi and Lully to Gluck and Haydn – possess differing attributes that encompass some of those found in Mozart’s women, but none fulfils all the requirements of the Mozart heroine.

¹ Landon, 53, letter of June 12, 1791.

² Gutman, 724; Till, 126.

The legend of Alceste, first made famous on the operatic stage in 1674 by Lully and his librettist Quinault, and nearer Mozart's own time by Handel and then Gluck, is based on Euripides and centers on the mythological figures of Admetus, king of Thessaly; his wife, Alceste; and Hercules, who is staying at the Thessalonian court. Admetus is dying, but he obtains a delay from Apollo on condition that someone else be sacrificed in his place. Alceste volunteers, and the gods take her away to the realm of the dead. Admetos begs the gods to take his life and release Alceste, but they refuse. Hercules, however, vows to save them both. He descends into the Underworld to rescue Alceste and he saves Admetos as well. Thus, the king and queen are once more united among the living.

Armide, as set by Lully, Handel, Gluck, and Salieri, among others, is based on a section of *Gerusalemme liberata*, the famous epic poem by sixteenth-century Italian poet Torquato Tasso, which tells the story of the capture of Jerusalem by Christians during the First Crusade (1096–99). The section on which the various operas are based recounts the story of Armide, a sorceress who falls in love with the Crusader Renaud, her sworn enemy. In its own day, Lully's *Armide* was known as "the ladies' opera," probably because of its emphasis on Armide's internal conflict. Armide banishes the spirit of Hate (theretofore her ally) because she cannot give up Renaud; Hate then condemns Armide to the punishment of undying love. In the end, duty and honor compel Renaud to leave Armide, demons destroy her enchanted palace, and Armide flees in a flying chariot, her life in ruins.

Ariadne, probably the most universally beloved of this triumvirate, was immortalized by Monteverdi in 1608, Handel in 1734, Haydn in 1789, and numerous

lesser-known composers in between (not to mention Richard Strauss in 1914).

Abandoned by her beloved, Theseus, on the lonely island of Naxos, she at first cannot believe herself deserted, then rails against Theseus for leaving her, and finally comes to a desperate, almost suicidal resignation. Her story has differing endings: in one, the god Apollo, out of pity, transforms her into a crown of stars to light the night sky forever; in another, happier version, she marries the god Dionysus and the crown of stars is his gift to her.

One may well assume that Mozart would have seen some of these works – notably the Lully or Gluck versions of *Armide* while he was in Paris, and possibly Salieri's *Armide* and Haydn's chamber work *Arianna* in Austria – and he might have drawn upon traits from all these characters in creating his own. Yet it is significant that he himself chose to set none of them, popular as they were, to music. *Armide's* intentions are not sufficiently noble to meet the Mozartean standard, although her conflict between love and hate could well have influenced Mozart in creating the Queen of the Night; *Ariadne*, though almost wholly sympathetic, does little to try to remedy her situation, while Mozart's female protagonists generally make a real effort to influence their own fates; and *Alceste*, whose willingness to die for her husband is truly heroic, still does not actively control her own destiny – it is Hercules who rescues her. Many of Mozart's women protagonists – among them Konstanze and Blondchen, the Countess and Susanna, Donna Anna, and especially Pamina – have at least some hand in rescuing themselves.

One role that seems to foreshadow Pamina is that of Rodelinda, the title character and heroine of Handel's 1725 opera, which was still performed in London during the

1760s when the Mozarts were living there. Rodelinda believes herself to have been widowed when her husband Bertarido, king of Milan, is defeated in battle; the victor, Grimoaldo, seeks to marry her and establish himself on the throne, but she refuses. In an astonishing turn of events, she takes the calculated risk of announcing to Grimoaldo before the court that she will marry him only if he kills her little boy, Bertarido's rightful heir; Grimoaldo, as expected, can't bring himself to do so, and Rodelinda buys herself some time (during which she discovers that her husband is not dead, and ultimately helps him to regain his throne). The relationships between Rodelinda and her husband and son are depicted by Handel as most loving, and the marriage as both a passionate and an egalitarian one. Rodelinda is indeed brave, and it is clear that the gamble she takes in offering up her son has been well considered beforehand, though she never fully explains her logic in making such an extreme gesture. As an example of feminine heroism, she is an interesting forebear to Pamina, but not entirely a direct one.

Among the women in Handel's operas, Cleopatra stands out as a possible predecessor to the Queen of the Night, and she would have been a familiar figure historically, even though it is unlikely that Mozart and Schikaneder had ever seen *Giulio Cesare* (though Mozart might have been familiar with the work from his childhood sojourn in London, and he did reorchestrate several Handel scores including *Messiah*). Like the Queen, Cleopatra finds herself caught in a difficult political situation, torn between her complex relationship with her brother and co-ruler Ptolemy and her romantic feelings for Julius Caesar. As a heroine – or perhaps, an anti-heroine – she shares many of the complications that we encounter in the Queen's circumstances and character: caught in a political struggle with her brother, she is forced to act in a manner that might

be viewed (and certainly would be, by Sarastro) as too aggressive or unfeminine, with political and personal objectives clamoring for priority. (In the Queen's case, at least, the personal and the political are essentially entwined until well into the second act of the opera, and even then, their divergence is open to debate.) Unlike the Queen, Cleopatra is ultimately triumphant, insofar as the opera goes: her brother is murdered, leaving her in full possession of both the Egyptian throne and Caesar's love. Yet Cleopatra's circumstances, like the Queen's, also command a certain degree of our sympathy, and thus, she is a most interesting antecedent for Mozart's nocturnal monarch. Of note, Cleopatra, though of Hellenistic descent, took as her patron the Egyptian goddess Isis, and during her reign she was believed to be the re-incarnation and embodiment of the goddess of wisdom – a fact that becomes quite significant in the context of *Die Zauberflöte*.

Although the plot of *Giulio Cesare* does not follow the action of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, in which Cleopatra makes no appearance, she is the heroine of his *Antony and Cleopatra*, leading to the question: What about the influence of Shakespeare, in general, on *Die Zauberflöte*? Schikaneder had presented many Shakespearean plays in his theatre, and was known as an outstanding actor in the role of Hamlet. (He had toured Salzburg in that role during the winter of 1780-81, while Mozart was away in Munich working on *Idomeneo*; in November 1780, Mozart wrote an aria for Schikaneder, which he sent by way of Leopold, and he mentions the Ghost scene from *Hamlet* in a letter to his father written a week later. The two young men became close friends and brother Masons after Mozart moved to Vienna.)³

³ Spaethling, 215-217, letters of November 22 and 29, 1780.

“Mozart's models for his compositional task [notably in composing *Abduction*] were the dramas of Shakespeare, then being translated into German,” according to David Shavin in his study of Volkmar Braunbehrens’ 1991 work, *Mozart in Vienna: 1781-1791*.⁴ One can hardly discount the idea that some of Shakespeare’s works could have influenced the libretto of *Die Zauberflöte*; among them, *The Tempest* has been cited as having particular similarities, with Prospero as Sarastro and Monostatos as Caliban. But none of the women characters seems closely to resemble those of *Zauberflöte*.

Still, other possibilities merit consideration. An obvious parallel seems to exist between the Queen of the Night and her Three Ladies with Hecate and the Three Witches in *Macbeth*; yet this analogy is overly simplistic. Hecate’s malevolence is untempered from start to finish, whereas we are left for much of the opera in suspense as to the Queen’s real motives, and even in the end with some feeling that she may have been a victim of sorts herself. It is far more interesting to study the resemblance between the Queen and Lady Macbeth. Both women have objectives that, however misguided or misinformed (in the Queen’s case, at least), stem at least partly from love – Lady Macbeth’s for her husband; the Queen’s for her daughter and, by extension, her late husband. Yet the Queen threatens to disown Pamina (“Verstossen sein auf ewig! Verlassen sein auf ewig! Zertrummert sein auf ewig, alle Bande der Natur”/“Abandoned and forsaken be forever all the bonds of Nature”),⁵ while Lady Macbeth goes so far as to say she would have “dashed the brains out [of her own child], had I so sworn”⁶ (the real Lady Macbeth had a mentally handicapped child, fathered by her first husband, to whom

⁴ David Shavin, “The Battle Mozart Won in America’s War with Britain,” *Executive Intelligence Review* (September 1991), reprinted in *The New Federalist Newspaper*, http://members.tripod.com/~american_almanac/mozart.htm.

⁵ Mozart/Schikaneder, *Die Zauberflöte*, NMA (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2007), Act II, Scene 8, mm. 52-67.

Shakespeare may have been alluding). Both women wield daggers – Lady Macbeth with fatal success; both attempt to work upon the better natures of their loved ones (again, Lady Macbeth succeeds where the Queen does not); both end in ruin – Lady Macbeth kills herself, and the Queen, depending on the director’s staging, is either cast into Hell or, at the very least, stripped of her supernatural powers. Yet neither woman is a wholly unalloyed representation of evil – though, of the two, the Queen remains the more sympathetic.

In the case of Pamina, similarities to Shakespeare’s young heroines do abound. As Maynard Solomon notes, Tamino’s “silent treatment”⁷ of Pamina is not so different than Hamlet’s rejection of Ophelia; at least when viewed from the receiving end, this treatment is so harsh that it sends both girls to attempt suicide (Ophelia successfully, Pamina stayed by the Three Boys). Far more pleasant resemblance is to be found among the characters of Viola (*Twelfth Night*), Rosalind (*As You Like It*), and Portia (*The Merchant of Venice*), all young women who must impersonate males to achieve their worthy objectives. Viola stands out among the three, in that both Rosalind and Portia have fun with the masquerade and Viola does not. She is very much a girl, does not enjoy pretending to be a male, and finds herself forced into having to plead the cause of the man she loves with another woman. Yet she does not abandon her purpose. Of the three, her unwillingness to sacrifice her own femininity while attempting to chart her own destiny makes her most akin to Pamina. Although the plot twists are dissimilar, the two young women – Viola and Pamina – bear considerable likeness in that each is thrust into a situation where she is alone, vulnerable and confused, yet adheres steadfastly to her

⁶ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), Act I, Scene 7, lines 56-59.

⁷ Solomon, 513.

principles. And both, despite misunderstandings along the way, achieve happiness, thanks in no small part to their own efforts (as do Rosalind and Portia). While unlikely to have been primary sources of inspiration for Mozart and Schikaneder in creating Pamina, these young heroines – and the archetype they represent – were a part of the contemporary cultural lexicon and Schikaneder was surely well acquainted with them, so they cannot be discounted entirely as possible models in fashioning the character of the princess.

If Mozart's specific ideal of womanhood represents a fusion of masculine courage and feminine sweetness, what voice or voices did he choose to portray that ideal? In virtually every Mozart opera preceding *Die Zauberflöte*, the woman with the highest voice and the most florid music is usually the most morally upright – Donna Anna, Constanze, even Fiordiligi. Although the highest soprano voices are often associated with youthful characters, in Mozart's operas this is not always the case. (Aloysia Weber's Mme. Herz in *Der Schauspieldirektor*, who has three high Fs to sing, is an established *prima donna* and older than her upstart *soubrette* rival, Mlle. Silberklang, who is required only to sing a high D; similarly, the Queen of the Night, with her famous five high Fs, is the mother of a grown daughter whose highest note in the score is a C.) However, in Mozart's works, the woman with the highest music is *always* the woman of highest social rank in the story. (The single – and partial – exception to this rule is Blondchen in *Die Entführung*, who has three short high Es to sing; but in that opera, Konstanze's music lies consistently above the staff, with more than 20 high Ds, while all the rest of Blondchen's music sits in the standard *soubrette* middle register. Also,

Blondchen is English and may have been given the high Es for philosophical reasons, as discussed in Chapter I.)

Mozart's approach to vocal rank would seem to be entirely consistent with the prevailing musical expectation of the day, according to Brigid Brophy. "Opera is not a creation exclusively for but round the soprano . . . [who] having captured our ear in the first place, has the best qualifications for holding it, either because the soprano is really the most flexible voice or because our ear is more sensitive to the subtlety and variety couched in its register."⁸ She goes on to say that virtuosity contributes greatly to the glamour of the performer, her 'otherness,' and hence her adulation by the audience: "the technical superiority . . . is much more specialized and conspicuous . . . [and] the barrier is correspondingly electrified with a higher degree of numinous awe. The auditors . . . can perhaps sing but cannot sing like *that*."⁹ A coloratura soprano singing *fioriture* in the extreme upper register is more distant technically and physically from what the average person can produce than any other voice (as a coloratura myself, I hope I may be forgiven this observation on behalf of my vocal kind), and therefore, this voice was often the prevailing choice for operatic heroines until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Under the German *Fach* (or voice classification)¹⁰ system, many of Mozart's leading ladies belong to a vocal category that exists in the works of only a few other composers (notably Donizetti and Verdi): *Dramatischer Koloratursopran*, or dramatic coloratura soprano. Their vocal lines are highly florid, with substantial orchestral accompaniment and dynamic markings that demand an unusual degree of vocal power

⁸ Brophy, 35.

⁹ Brophy, 43.

¹⁰ Robert Rushmore, *The Singing Voice*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dembner, 1984). Extensive discussion of voice classification.

and agility, sometimes covering a range of as much as two-and-one-half octaves in a single measure; yet the voice must also command the ability to sing *legato* well, sustain high *pianissimi*, and convey sweetness, poignancy, or despair. These characters, as well as those roles in other composers' works for which Mozart wrote interpolated concert arias to show off Aloysia Weber's extraordinary range, are among the most difficult to cast in all operatic literature because of the enormous vocal demands they place on the singer. Of these characters and their music, Sergius Kagen says, "In some instances [citing the above roles], Mozart writes for a voice of unusually wide range and power. . . . His use of florid passages . . . is emotionally significant, naturally within the stylistic frame of his time."¹¹

The Queen of the Night, last in this extraordinary line among Mozart's characters, has the highest and, some believe, the most technically difficult music of all. (By using the term 'last,' I am referring specifically to those roles written for dramatic coloratura soprano, and exempting *La clemenza di Tito* because it does not contain such a role and is a stylized *opera seria*, written to a commission, that harks back to an earlier era and does not reflect Mozart's full musical/dramatic evolution.) Yet, by all appearances, the Queen is anything but heroic; indeed, the primary argument for the paternalism of *Die Zauberflöte* is generally placed at her feet. Why, suddenly, would Mozart ascribe his vocal "code" for feminine goodness and bravery to a creature he meant to portray as purely evil? He endows the Queen with enormous power, and it is difficult to believe that he intended all that power to be malevolent. Attempting, in all sincerity, to distance myself from the personal affection I feel for this music, and even for the character, I

¹¹ Sergius Kagen, *Music for the Voice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), 234-235.

cannot believe that Mozart would have chosen to pervert completely the vocal ideal he had portrayed in almost every previous work. The role was written for his eldest sister-in-law, Josefa Weber Hofer, whose voice was as high as Aloysia's but slightly more robust, and of whom, by all accounts, he was quite fond. In her 2004 novel, *Marrying Mozart*, Stephanie Cowell attempts to paint Josefa as having a bevy of psychological issues including confusion about her sexual orientation; pretending to have an affair with a married man while still a virgin; and the discovery that she was sired illegitimately by a man other than Fridolin Weber, who then married her mother out of kindness. None of this has any basis in record – but it is all too clearly intended to plant in the reader's mind the rather hackneyed notion that because the role of the Queen was written for Josefa, who was an emotional wreck, then the Queen must be one, too. This is ridiculous. While one cannot argue that the Queen is the heroine of *Die Zauberflöte*, there must be a more enlightened understanding of her character and the music Mozart wrote for her. Mozart loved all four Weber girls in different ways, and it is abundantly clear that he loved the high, facile soprano voice which at least three of them possessed (the first-soprano solos in his C Minor Mass, written for Constanze, also demand this type of voice). It is highly unlikely that he would have bestowed that voice on a character he personally loathed.

All of Mozart's exceptional heroines, however, are not dramatic coloratura sopranos: he writes copiously for the full lyric soprano voice and for the light, *soubrette* soprano as well. Few of his roles were written for mezzo-sopranos, and of these, Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*, probably the most famous, is a pants role (that is, a teenaged boy portrayed by a woman). The mezzo Dorabella in *Così* is a flibbertigibbit, far less morally strong than her soprano sister Fiordiligi. It would seem that Mozart

found the tessitura of the soprano voice more attractive – hardly surprising, considering his early attachment to Aloysia and the fact that both Constanze and Josefa were also high sopranos – and perhaps a more effective vehicle for expressing his particular concept of womanhood. Yet he chooses different soprano voices almost unerringly to convey shadings of age, rank, and personality, from the full lyric or *spinto* soprano voice required for the Countess in *Figaro* or Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, to the *soubrette* soprano used copiously to portray young peasant or servant women – all of whom possess considerable charm and intelligence, qualities they use to manage (Despina in *Così*) or outwit (Susanna in *Figaro*, Blondchen in *Die Entführung*) their superiors in rank. This *Fach*, in Mozart’s hands, conveys a range of emotions and depth of thought neither before nor since associated with the girlish characters that it usually portrays.

Finally, Pamina, Mozart’s most complete vision of ideal womanhood, may be sung by a soprano voice of almost any weight or color, depending on the conductor’s and director’s preferences. Her vocal writing is perhaps less specific than that of any other Mozart heroine; it does not automatically dictate a particular *Fach*. Although this role is listed as *Lyrischer Sopran* under the German classifications,¹² it has been sung successfully by sopranos whose voices are as divergent as those of Kathleen Battle, Joan Sutherland, and Kiri Te Kanawa. Pamina’s music combines elements of almost every heroine whom Mozart created before her – simple, honest and direct, sometimes adorned with graceful melismas that give the music a softer, more feminine character. There is no extreme of range or dynamic that absolutely demands a certain voice, and thus Pamina is something of an abstraction – an ideal, yet not an unattainable one.

¹² Rudolf Kloiber, *Handbuch der Oper* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1985), 899.

The fact that Pamina and not the Queen is the heroine of the opera may signal a change in Mozart's own psychology and his approach to vocal characterization that he was never able to explore further. And it is impossible to examine this journey, or indeed Mozart's concept of femininity, without returning to the impact of his marriage to Constanze on the portrayal of women in his music. There is no question that the eponymous heroine of *Die Entführung* was created during one of the happiest junctures in his life, and little doubt on close examination (to be pursued in Chapters 5 and 6) that the fictional Konstanze is the musical forebear to both Pamina and the Queen of the Night. Tonal relationships and musical motives for both characters are clearly traceable to Konstanze's arias. Robert Gutman maintains that, more than any other source (among which he also cites *The Tempest* and Wieland's fairy tales), *Die Entführung* was the model for *Die Zauberflöte*, each of its plot twists and its primary characters (with the exception of the Queen) having a direct counterpart in the later opera: Belmonte recast as Tamino; Pedrillo as Papageno; the Pasha as Sarastro; Blondchen as Papagena; and, most significantly, Konstanze as Pamina.¹³ He also recognizes an earlier Mozart heroine as common ancestor to both Konstanze and Pamina: "By way of Constanze [*sic*] in *The Abduction*, Zaïde's courage as well as her moral refinement and belief in the human capacity for benevolence descended to the heroine of *The Magic Flute*."¹⁴

At the time *Die Entführung* was written, Mozart's vocal and feminine ideal may still have been Aloysia Weber; although the role of Konstanze was written for "the agile

¹³ Gutman, 724.

¹⁴ Gutman, 490. Zaïde is the heroine of an unfinished opera of the same name, which Mozart began in 1780 and which anticipated both the locale and much of the plot of *Die Entführung*. Gutman says that Mozart "exploited her rash, almost mad defiance ... anticipating Constanze's [*sic*] audacious, if more stately, heroism in 'Martern aller Arten'" (488).

throat of Mme [Caterina] Cavalieri,”¹⁵ the celebrated soprano who was also Salieri’s mistress, its extreme coloratura feats could have been equally well designed for Aloysia’s voice, and indeed, Aloysia was to sing the role many times during her illustrious career. In creating his musical Konstanze, Mozart’s heart still may have been divided, even unconsciously, between the sister he had once loved, whose voice echoes throughout the character’s music, and the sister he married, who shares the character’s name. But Wolfgang’s relationship with his real Constanze had grown and deepened in the decade between *Die Entführung* and *Die Zauberflöte*, and so had its musical manifestations. Gutman suggests that in *Così*, Mozart consigned Aloysia’s memory to the flightier and more promiscuous Dorabella – Aloysia was, in fact, pregnant at the time of her wedding to Josef Lange – while investing Fiordiligi with the higher principles of his wife. He goes on to state even more explicitly that “she [Constanze] would next materialize on stage [in *Die Zauberflöte*] as a protector and guide sharing her lover’s struggle to the full.”¹⁶ It is entirely possible, in this vein, that Mozart gave Aloysia’s coloratura fireworks to the Queen of the Night (ironically, to be performed by her elder sister Josefa), while creating music for Pamina that far more closely resembles that of the first-soprano solos in the Grand Mass in C Minor, written for his bride nine years earlier. Constanze Weber might not have possessed the extreme upper extension of her sisters, or been able to execute all the musical acrobatics required of her operatic namesake – but, if we are to judge from “Et incarnatus est,” Constanze Mozart most certainly could have sung Pamina.

¹⁵ Spaethling, 286, letter of September 26, 1781.

¹⁶ Gutman, 708.

If the Konstanze of *Die Entführung* is the girl Mozart wished his wife to be at the time of their marriage, then Pamina, nine years later, may indeed be the woman he grew to love and cherish. It is to Pamina, and the ideal she represents, that the Masonic priests in *Die Zauberflöte* sing their stirring, hymnlike tribute: “A [woman] who’ll pass through death and night is worthy to receive the light.”¹⁷ The following chapters will examine how Mozart and Schikaneder underscored this tribute with visual symbols and, more particularly, how Mozart uses tonality, vocal color, and specific melodic patterns to present his vision of feminine heroism.

¹⁷ Mozart/Schikaneder, *Die Zauberflöte*, NMA, trans. Andrew Porter (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1980), Act II, Scene 28, mm. 267-274.

Chapter IV

Feminine Iconography in *Die Zauberflöte*

Much has been made of the symbolism used in *Die Zauberflöte*, particularly regarding its relationship to Masonry. Notably, the number three recurs throughout the opera, from the three-flat key signature of the overture, E-flat major (also considered the opera's "home" key, to be discussed further in Chapter 5) to the Three Ladies, Three Boys, etc. Many other symbols have been divined by various authors and used to justify one hypothesis or another.¹ In the Metropolitan Opera's 2005 production, Julie Taymor assaulted the libretto with her own particular interpretation, featuring Pamina inexplicably attired in red, white and blue (a goodwill ambassador for the French Revolution, perhaps?) and a bevy of polar bears that bar Tamino's entrance to the temple.

¹ Numerous authors cited in this paper canvass the Masonic symbolism in *Die Zauberflöte*, including Chailley, Robbins Landon, and Till; however, an excellent summary is offered in Jacques Henry's *Mozart the Freemason* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2006), Chapter 3: "From Symbols to Music," 22-37.

(Who among us knew Sarastro lived at the North Pole? Maybe he is, after all, Santa Claus.) Leaving aside the temptation to dissect such images, this paper will confine itself primarily to those symbols that may be perceived as “feminine” or relate directly to the female characters of the opera.

In *The Magic Flute Unveiled*, Jacques Chailley postulates that “Night” is feminine and “Day” is masculine; hence, he says, in the Masonic schema, “Night” cannot be as fully evolved as day since women can never be initiated fully into the Masonic order. He offers a schematic depicting Sarastro as the Sun and the Queen of the Night as the Moon, with Tamino, Pamina, Papageno and Monostatos arranged below them, respectively, in descending order (see Example 4.1), as Fire (Tamino), Water (Pamina), Air (Papageno), and Earth (Monostatos).²

There can be no doubt that Sarastro is the Sun and the Queen is the Moon; only the implications of those characterizations are open to interpretation. The depiction of Papageno as Air also seems well conceived – such modern-slang appellations as “space cadet” or, indeed, “airhead,” hardly seem misappropriated in describing the good-natured birdcatcher (and I presume to think Mozart would not disagree). Chailley comments that Papageno’s very association with birds, and his costume covered with feathers, mark his element quite clearly.³ And Monostatos certainly represents Earth in the sense that his objectives, lust and power, are solely those of the flesh, not the spirit: every other character in the opera has at least some motives that are intellectual, spiritual or philosophical. Even Papageno, for all his warbling about lack of female companionship,

² Chailley, *The Magic Flute Unveiled*, 100.

³ Chailley, 104.

Example 4.1. Table depicting the cosmogony of the leading characters in *Die Zauberflöte* (Chailley, p.100). From *The Magic Flute Unveiled* by Jacques Chailley, © 1992, translated by Inner Traditions/ Bear & Co. by arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Published in French by Robert Laffont, Paris, France © 1968. Used by permission.

views the potential consummation of his long-awaited physical love for Papagena as meaning something more – a marriage that fulfills the social and religious contract, for their own good and for the good of the world (exemplified by their rapturous anticipation of having children together, as expressed in their justly famous duet from Act II).

The concept of Tamino and Pamina as Fire and Water is most intriguing, and will be addressed later in the chapter. But since the schematic devolves from Sarastro and the Queen, the Sun and the Moon must be examined first.

The symbolism of Sarastro as the Sun and the Queen as the Moon, as Chailley interprets it, relates to Sarastro's "enlightenment" and the Queen's supposed "blindness." Hence, Sarastro is depicted as Day, and the Queen as Night. Chailley views the comparison as so self-evident that he dispatches the Queen's place in the schematic with two short sentences: "She has no proper name, and we have seen what the personage signifies: a lunar symbol of rebellion against the 'strong sex.' We dealt with that in the preceding chapter [in which he discusses female Masonic Lodges of Adoption, whose initiates were never permitted the full degrees of Masonry]."⁴ And thus, he dismisses the Queen to her 'proper' place. But there are flaws in his theory.

It is an incontrovertible scientific truth, of the kind to which the late eighteenth century was devoted, that night is darker than day (though to varying degrees in varying seasons and at different latitudes) – and darkness traditionally has been associated in religion and philosophy with moral and spiritual blindness and evil. Yet while "darkness" may be a void, or an absence of light, "night," *per se*, is not. Masonic rituals certainly were designed to lead prospective brothers to the "light," yet night itself cannot

⁴ Chailley, 100.

be regarded as inherently evil (as even Chailley agrees), nor is it necessarily always dark (depending upon the phase of the moon, the season, and the degree of cloud cover).

Mozart was a Mason, but he was first a Catholic. In the first chapter of Genesis, the earth begins in darkness, but that darkness evolves into night, which is ultimately very different:

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. *And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth. And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.* (KJV, Genesis I:1–5, 14–18; italics and underlines mine.)

In Christian tradition, Jesus' birth is generally depicted as occurring at midnight, beneath the light of the star that eventually leads the Three Kings to His manger. He is born to Mary, the Virgin, without the seed of mortal man; if night is "feminine," this is surely its purest manifestation. The Light of the World comes in darkness to an innocent young girl; a star guides the faithful to behold Him. Long before the time of Christ, in Jewish tradition, the Passover occurred at night, and the Jewish people were spared under cover of darkness while the firstborn of every Egyptian household was destroyed. Psalm 121 says, "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night" – acknowledging the equally destructive powers of both night *and* day (among the latter, death from dehydration or skin cancer because of too much sun exposure), if left unsupervised by

God (and perhaps, from Mozart's and Schikaneder's point of view, Reason). In God's hands, night is not necessarily a cloak for the malevolent: it can also be a protector for the innocent. Night, therefore, cannot be intrinsically evil in the Judeo-Christian – and thus Masonic – tradition.

In many productions of *Die Zauberflöte*, the Queen first enters seated in the crescent of the moon, long regarded across many cultures as a benevolent influence. Indeed, as Brigid Brophy points out in *Mozart the Dramatist*, the cult of Isis and Osiris, to which Sarastro and his followers adhere, worshipped Isis as the goddess of the moon (a fact that is, as she says, highly problematic in the course of the opera's eventual *dénouement* with its hymn to Isis and Osiris). Although Chailley dismisses the Queen as a nameless entity, Brophy reminds us that the Queen is introduced as “die Sternflämmender Königin (the star-flaming Queen)” by Papageno (Brophy even goes so far as to note that “Queen of Heaven” or “regina coeli” is a title appointed in Roman Catholicism to the Virgin Mary, who is often represented in Catholic iconography by seven stars that signify her seven joys and sorrows; hence, it merits great respect).⁵ Greco-Roman mythology revered the goddess Artemis/Diana, who was associated with the moon, with the hunt, and with virginity or independence from men – which, in the Queen's case, is imposed by her recent widowhood. What is the significance, then, of that widowhood?

The King of the Night (although he is never referred to by name) is a powerful presence throughout the opera. His death is the impetus for every action that takes place

⁵ Brophy, 151.

in the story that we see played out onstage. In the original version of the libretto, the Queen explains to Pamina (in dialogue just before her Act II “Vengeance Aria”) that before he died, he divided his powers between his wife and his “brother” Sarastro (we infer that he and Sarastro were “brothers” in the Masonic sense), so she would have the guidance of a more experienced (and, yes, male) leader. (See Example 4.2, following.) This speech is, unfortunately, cut from most productions of the opera.⁶ (The iconic Ingmar Bergman film version not only omits it but goes so far as to say that Sarastro himself is Pamina’s father, utterly subverting the plot.)⁷ Nowhere, however, does it appear in the libretto that Sarastro has done anything whatsoever to “guide” the Queen, other than taking her daughter away “to maintain ... supremacy over the adverse world of Women and the Night.”⁸ The King of the Night was a man, and, we are told, a man of principle (i.e., a Mason); he was the ruler of “Night”; thus, by the opera’s own logic, Night itself is neither “feminine” nor “less enlightened” than Day. Why should it become so only when the Queen assumes responsibility? As Maynard Solomon says, “If the Queen of the Night is evil, we may find ourselves condoning the theft of her child”⁹ – which, instinctively, we do not.

Moreover, Nicholas Till emphasizes the eighteenth-century reverence of “constancy”¹⁰ as a supreme moral virtue, particularly for women. Brigid Brophy also canvasses this subject extensively, calling it “the central moral dilemma of the eighteenth

⁶ Both Osborne (326) and Brown-Montesano (94) lament the traditional omission of this dialogue.

⁷ Ingmar Bergman, *The Magic Flute (Trollflötgen)*, (Stockholm: Gaumont, 1976).

⁸ Chailley, 102.

⁹ Solomon, 511.

¹⁰ Till, 288.

Example 4.2. Mozart/Schikaneder, *Die Zauberflöte*, NMA, Act II, Scene 8, spoken dialogue.

century” and juxtaposing the two very different takes on fidelity presented by *Così* and *Die Entführung* (whose heroine’s very name denotes constancy).¹¹ Jane Austen beautifully crystallizes this debate in the moving dialogue that takes place near the conclusion of *Persuasion* between its heroine, Anne Elliott, who has waited eight years for the man she loves, and his fellow naval officer, Captain Harville. The Captain laments the rapidity with which his late sister’s *fiancé* has become engaged to another woman, but allows that the same likely would have been true in reverse; Anne protests and says, “All the privilege I claim for my own sex . . . is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone.”¹² (Fortunately for Anne, her beloved, Captain Wentworth, overhears this exchange and is so moved that he proposes marriage to her almost on the spot.)

The Queen gives every appearance of constancy in honoring her husband’s memory by wishing to retain control of his dominions as Regent for her daughter; if she is being inconstant, or betraying his memory in some way, that is never adequately explained to us. Brophy gives a detailed account of the process by which she believes the opera’s plot was changed – in her view, to protect Masonic secrets given the increased vulnerability of the order under Leopold II, following his sister Marie Antoinette’s imprisonment in the Tuileries – thus subverting the original portrayal of the Queen as a just monarch and a loving parent who represented Isis herself.¹³ Whether or not this hypothesis is accurate, the Queen is presented initially as a completely sympathetic figure whose rank and dignity command our respect, as underscored by the particular vocal

¹¹ Brophy, 119-122.

¹² Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, 1353-54.

¹³ Brophy; see Chapters 14 and 15, 131-202, for her extensive presentation of this theory.

writing Mozart employs to introduce her (to be discussed further in the following two chapters).

We are first taken to the Kingdom of Night (or perhaps more accurately, the Realm of the Night, since it is currently a matriarchy) at the commencement of the opera, when the Three Ladies enter to save Tamino from the serpent, a task they accomplish quickly and without any difficulty. Their prowess makes Tamino look rather silly: if he's such a brave, strong prince, why couldn't he kill the serpent himself? Jacques Chailley explains this scene within the context of Masonry by saying that Tamino is performing the ritual "swoon" required of Masonic initiates (similar to candidates for the priesthood prostrating themselves before the altar at ordination) and that the Three Ladies are already initiates of the female Masonic order. Their initiate status will allow them to get past the barriers into Sarastro's castle, but they will never achieve true enlightenment because, as women, they cannot attain to the higher levels of the order. He suggests, moreover, that they are initiates whereas the Queen is not, and therefore have the ability to interact with Sarastro's people.¹⁴

This explanation may work well enough within the context of Masonry, since it is known that some lodges, known as Lodges of Adoption, did allow women's auxiliaries but only permitted their initiates to reach the lower degrees. But from a theological standpoint it is quite insufficient, as the Ladies, rather than succumbing to the serpent as described in Genesis, actually vanquish it to protect a man who is physically incapacitated and unable to defend himself – both reinforcing the concept that Night is benevolent and foreshadowing Pamina's bravery in the trials to come. Chailley's

¹⁴ Chailley, 109-113.

suggestion that the Ladies would be initiates of any degree, when the Queen is not, violates every convention with respect to rank and voice type that Mozart had theretofore observed in his operas, and thus seems ridiculous (unless she had deliberately “planted” them in the order). If one uses their various appearances in the “Kingdom of Light” as evidence that they are initiates while the Queen is not, that idea cannot withstand examination; the Queen is very well able to get into Sarastro’s castle when she needs to. Perhaps the Queen herself is a female Mason who desires to attain a higher degree of initiation than was typically accorded women in the Lodges of Adoption; this would certainly explain Sarastro’s fierce efforts to quash her, but that is a different argument entirely than the one Chailley puts forth.

In her first appearance, the Queen presents herself as a grieving parent, and she has every right to mourn: her husband has died (fairly recently, we infer), her daughter has been kidnapped, and she seeks Tamino’s help in restoring Pamina to her. To aid him in this effort, her ladies-in-waiting present Tamino with the magic flute, and say that he may call upon its powers whenever he is in danger. He accepts it, and does call upon it, but the flute leads him ultimately into the preserve of Sarastro, where he discovers not only Pamina but disturbing questions about the Queen’s motivations – she and Sarastro have been involved in an ongoing political and (Sarastro says) moral battle (metaphorically, between “darkness” and “light”), and Sarastro has kidnapped Pamina, as he says, to get her away from her mother’s influence. We later learn in the libretto, though it’s easy to miss this in the course of an actual performance, that Pamina’s father fashioned the flute “at midnight”¹⁵ from an oak tree, imbuing it with magical powers, and

¹⁵ Mozart/Schikaneder, Act II, Scene 28, mm. 293-97.

that he subsequently passed away, leaving it in the hands of his wife with the expectation that she would have help from Sarastro – help that, as we have seen, has not been forthcoming. (Once again, the fact that the flute was created “at midnight” underscores the inherent benevolence of Night.)

The Queen of the Night, like many dysfunctional parents, does love her daughter; but she also wants to use Pamina for her own political ends (not unlike the Empress Maria Theresa and Marie Antoinette, as noted previously). Kristi Brown-Montesano says, “History is full of male potentates and guardians who have placed the exigencies of power or kingdom above even the most beloved child. A king must be king before father; society has never seriously questioned the truth of this concept. But the terms ‘mother’ and ‘monarch’ have clashed in the cultural mindset of Western civilization for centuries.” (In our own time, Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain has been widely criticized for shaking little Prince Charles’ hand in public rather than hugging and kissing him – a contrast all the greater when drawn against her more publicly demonstrative mother and her daughter-in law Diana.) She goes on to say, “More specifically, it is believed that ‘mother love’ – that mysterious quasi-instinctual emotion that is affirmed as immutable – cannot genuinely exist in a woman who places such a premium on her own personal power and the well-being of her realm.”¹⁶

Meanwhile, the Queen of the Night herself is well aware of the limitations of her power. W.H. Auden, in his “Metologue to *The Magic Flute*,” composed for the bicentenary of Mozart’s birth in 1956, calls the Queen “a highly-paid and most efficient

¹⁶ Brown-Montesano, 87.

Dean (who, as we all know, really runs the College),” while Sarastro, a professor, is merely “tolerated for his knowledge.”¹⁷ Perhaps that analogy would ring truer if they were married – but they’re not. The Queen never ‘bosses’ Sarastro around; the only woman who actually gets to do that to a man in *Zauberflöte* is Papagena. Even Pamina’s sublime command to Tamino, “Now take the magic flute and play,” is delivered gently and after much suffering on her part. Whatever authority she may hold henceforward over her husband is of a very different nature than that presumed to belong to a wife who “rules the roost.”

The Queen is never on an equal footing with Sarastro in terms of political power, nor does she claim to be (as noted earlier in this chapter, even the Bible describes the moon as “the *lesser* light to rule over the night”). Moreover, much of her power has been rent from her by her husband’s death, and dealt an even further blow with the abduction of her only child. When she says to Tamino, “Meine Hilfe war zu schwach” (“My help was too weak [to save Pamina]”) she isn’t pulling the wool over his eyes – she is perfectly sincere.¹⁸ Mozart sets the last word of the phrase unerringly at the end of a descending scale on one of the weakest notes in a coloratura soprano’s voice – middle G. The singer-Queen can neither call upon the more increased volume and resonance of her chest register nor the naturally greater ease and power of her upper register to make her point. Coloraturas spend their lives trying to strengthen their middle voices – and Mozart, who loved more than one high soprano in his day, surely knew this. Similarly, “Der Hölle Rache” ends on middle A – letting us know that for all the Queen’s bravado

¹⁷ W.H. Auden, “Metologue to *The Magic Flute*,” from *Collected Poems of W.H. Auden*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Modern Library, 2007), 578.

¹⁸ Mozart/Schikaneder, Act I, Scene 7, mm. 53-61.

throughout the aria, she has no real power to carry out her threats. As Brown-Montesano points out, “She makes no secret about the fact that she needs outside – and specifically *male* – assistance”¹⁹ and “pins her hopes on an almost total stranger – Tamino – merely because he is a man and therefore has a better chance of slipping into Sarastro’s temples”²⁰ (although I believe this is an oversimplification of her motives in choosing him, as will be discussed further).

The harsh portrayal of a female parent while seemingly excusing a father or father-figure whose motives may be equally questionable, is hardly a technique confined to *Die Zauberflöte*, and again calls forth some interesting similarities to Jane Austen. Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* has been regarded for two centuries as a money-grubbing hick who “married up” based on her looks and drove her more genteel husband to a life of intellectual misery – when, in fact, she is far more cognizant of the family’s financial predicament than he, realizing that at least some of her daughters must marry well in order to safeguard their own, and hopefully their family’s, ultimate safety and well-being. Although her matchmaking tactics are usually too overt and even downright crude on occasion – always to great comic effect – the mother is not wrong in her purpose, if sometimes in her methods (as Austen, and arguably Mozart in the Queen’s case, knows). Unlike Mrs. Bennet, however, the Queen of the Night has the discriminating good taste to pick Mr. Darcy for her daughter from the very beginning! Tamino is, indeed, very like Darcy in his resolve to put duty first, his silence toward Pamina, and his ultimate triumph over the obstacles to their marriage. When Mrs. Bennet insists that Elizabeth marry her buffoon of a cousin, the Reverend William Collins, to

¹⁹ Brown-Montesano, 92.

²⁰ Gutman, 86.

save the family estate, Mr. Bennet pronounces, “From this day forward, Elizabeth, you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do *not* marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you *do*.”²¹ We are meant to take this statement as tongue in cheek, but in a very real way, it is not: Mr. Bennet is dismissing his wife’s legitimate concerns along with her less than desirable means of resolving them. Sarastro says essentially these same words in earnest to Pamina, at more than one juncture in the opera. The Queen of the Night, like Mrs. Bennet, makes a strong stand in attempting to protect her daughter’s future – and they share the same fate of being reviled for their efforts.

In choosing Tamino to rescue Pamina, the Queen is clearly making a sound, and presumably loving, decision: we know that Tamino is strong, brave, and principled. Any mother would be happy to have him as a son-in-law! She gives him her husband’s flute, which she knows to possess magical powers, to aid him in his mission. Does she genuinely expect to subvert his moral character? If she does, he won’t be a good husband for Pamina; and indeed, he may not be able to withstand the obstacles thrown in his way by Sarastro – obstacles presented, we are told, with the aim of further ennobling his character – as he attempts to achieve his ultimate goal. It is the flute that leads him to Pamina and the flute that gives him the strength to maintain the vow of silence imposed on him by Sarastro as a condition of winning her, even when she pleads with him to speak. So the question remains: If the Queen’s motives are evil, why does she give away such a powerful tool – and one with such close associations to her late husband?

²¹ Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 299.

There may be several answers to this question. *Die Zauberflöte* rests indisputably on the threefold principles of Freemasonry: Truth, Beauty, and Reason. While the Queen may well be physically beautiful (this is never described, but since she is a supernatural creature one has reason to think it quite possible), she frequently seems neither truthful nor reasonable. Yet, in giving to the Queen the enormous power she possesses – exemplified by music that is widely acknowledged to be among the most difficult vocal writing ever penned, and a tessitura that has struck fear in the hearts of many renowned sopranos – Mozart makes a powerful statement. The very complexity of the Queen’s music is an affront to Sarastro: “A well-bred woman [in the late 1700s] who took music seriously constituted a threat to social boundaries,” writes Richard Leppert in *The Sight of Sound*. He cites the eighteenth-century critic Erasmus Darwin’s “fear of music as a fear of feminine eruption, of a musical ‘she’ who ceases to charm us, who in effect denaturalizes herself, losing her simplicity, becoming complex, astonishing, and more like a man.” Could there be a more accurate description of the Queen as she is perceived by Sarastro and his cadre? Leppert goes on to quote Darwin’s admonition to the English fathers of his day: “Let our daughters [not] ever attempt any thing but select pieces of familiar, easy, simple construction, such as may delight the ear of their friends, and contribute to improve their own hearts by directing its influence to the proper object.”²² (This may be irreverently redacted as: Watch out, girls; if you can sing high and fast, then you probably *are* high and fast – or at least, people will think you are!)

Brown-Montesano says that the Queen is problematic in that she represents both the beautiful and the sublime – the sublime having been reserved for male virtues and

²² Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 67-68.

heroics by such philosophers as Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, and Rousseau²³ – while Till points out that in the eighteenth century, women “in the public sphere (as represented by the Queen and her Ladies in the opera) . . . are feared and denigrated, while in the private, domestic, moral and spiritual sphere they are idolized.”²⁴ Mozart was surely aware of these social conventions when he penned the Queen’s music – and, as previously stated, high, fast music was the hallmark of almost all his heroines in the operas that preceded *Zauberflöte*. The Queen’s coloratura, particularly in “Der Hölle Rache,” is not always necessarily beautiful or feminine (Konstanze’s is, even in her defiant “Martern aller Arten”); rather, the ear perceives those five staccato high Fs (and the punctuated arpeggios by which they are approached) as supernatural or superhuman – sublime – which Mozart well knew would be the case when he wrote them. (Osborne calls them “a series of fierce dagger-thrusts,” an aural image that underscores her words.)²⁵ The Queen’s vocal virtuosity is not an indictment of her character, but it does mark her as an extraordinary being. She is operating outside the established “social boundaries” of her late-eighteenth-century world; but then, so were the Founding Fathers of the United States (many of whom were Masons). She is not, *ipso facto*, in the wrong.

As demonstrated clearly in her two arias, the Queen is a woman of exceptional talents; she just doesn’t use them consistently in the most rational way. We see very little of her in the opera (when we do, she is entirely the center of attention); but in the second of her three appearances, she rescues her daughter from the clutches of a would-be rapist, Sarastro’s servant Monostatos, then turns around immediately and orders Pamina to kill

²³ Brown-Montesano, 98.

²⁴ Till, 288.

²⁵ Osborne, 332.

Sarastro. The Queen is confused about how to use her power, and Schikaneder's libretto would have us believe that this is because she is a woman left alone who needs a man in her life. As noted by Jacques Henry and others, besides the likelihood that Ignaz Von Born actually contributed to the libretto from his perspective as Grand Master of Mozart's Lodge, a number of music historians have thought that Mozart and Schikaneder were making fun of Von Born's pomposity by creating Sarastro as they did.²⁶ Sarastro, presumably speaking for Von Born if not the two younger Masons, says that he does not think a woman by herself is fit to govern – though there had been plenty of notable examples of women rulers throughout Western Europe, from Elizabeth I to Maria Theresa to Catherine the Great, who seemed to do pretty well, and men (notably George III of England and Louis XVI of France in Mozart's own time) who did not. If she were an English princess, Pamina, as an only child, even though a girl, should have inherited her father's power, with her mother as Regent; in most countries on the Continent, a suitable husband would be found for her, as Francis Stephen was for Maria Theresa, in order to continue the royal bloodline (and as the Queen sets out to do in choosing Tamino for her daughter). By either standard, Sarastro has committed what we would today call a violation of international law by abducting Pamina, as he claims, for her own good. If Pamina's father was an honorable man, then the Kingdom of Night, in and of itself, is not evil; but Sarastro maintains that it has been rendered so because there is no lineal male heir to its throne and the King's widow (reasonably) seeks to act as Regent for her daughter. Even Mozart's own wife and her sisters had a male guardian, their father's friend Herr Thorwart, who shared guardianship with their mother after Herr Weber's

²⁶ Henry, 107.

death. (The practice was a time-honored one to give a widow the assistance and counsel of a man in dealing with legal and financial matters; it certainly was not intended to allow the male guardian to take the children away from their mother.)

Perhaps the Queen does need the tutelage of a more experienced leader to mentor her, as her late husband seems to have indicated in his will. That she would be happier on a personal basis if her husband hadn't died is a safe assumption. On the most Freudian level – and it is reasonable to assume that this thought crossed the minds of Mozart and Schikaneder – she is now living in enforced celibacy, and taking out her sexual frustration on everybody from Sarastro to her own daughter. She may even be going through menopause with its accompanying symptoms (if that happens to supernatural beings); but fluctuating hormones do not make her inherently evil or insane, although such symptoms were frequently misdiagnosed as the latter in Mozart's day. (Even migraine headaches with their often-attendant “auras” and visual disturbances, more prevalent in women than men, elicited that diagnosis well into the early twentieth century from a poorly informed medical community.)

Repressed sexuality as the precursor of hysteria was a widely accepted notion during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and one that has certainly been used many times in opera to dramatic effect.²⁷ But the Queen's famous Vengeance Aria (“Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen”) is no standard-issue “mad scene” – this aria stands as one of the finest examples of *stile concitato* that exists after Monteverdi.²⁸ It is not the

²⁷ See Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), Chapter 4, for a discussion of “Mad Scenes” and their literary and psychological background in the early nineteenth century (80-111).

²⁸ As explained by Gary Tomlinson, in *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) “*Stile concitato* ... was nurtured by the love-as-war metaphor ... for this reason [it] is almost invariably not a depiction of simple anger but a portrayal of the hostilities of war” (201-203).

tragic, hysterical ranting of Lucy Ashton, a wronged young girl defending herself from what she can only perceive as rape, but the marshalling by a supernatural woman of every power at her command in order to achieve her political objectives. The dagger in the Queen's hand and the dagger that Donizetti's Lucia brandishes on her wedding night are very different instruments.²⁹ Yes, the Queen is vanquished in the end, but the messages we receive about her are very mixed. Perhaps she raises questions that Mozart and Schikaneder themselves were not prepared to answer. Occasional stagings of the opera in which the Queen is not banished to Hell, but pardoned by Sarastro (as in the 2005 Salzburg Festival production conducted by Riccardo Muti and directed by Graham Vick)³⁰ – open up the possibility that they might be able to govern jointly (or even, in a romantic if far-fetched scenario, marry) – and what a partnership they could forge!

The images of heroism presented in *Die Zauberflöte* are not confined to either gender, but they are sometimes ambiguous. Among the male protagonists, Tamino is represented in Chailley's schematic as Fire, which would indicate virility or life force; yet, when we first meet him, he is running for his life from a serpent – like a girl, one might be tempted to say – and is saved only by the appearance of the Three Ladies. The motives of the Ladies and subsequently the Queen are, at first representation, entirely pure: they save Tamino, and they ask him to save Pamina, who has been abducted against her own, and her mother's, will. Only later do their ethics come into question. But the fact remains that they *do* rescue Tamino; and where, we may well ask, is Sarastro while

²⁹ McClary, 90-92. Lucy Ashton was the heroine of Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*, a novel based on a real historical incident, which was later to become Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

³⁰ George Jahn, "Surprise! Sarastro Is Evil, Queen of the Night Is Good in Salzburg Festival's *Die Zauberflöte*" (Associated Press, July 2005), <http://www.andante.com/article/article.cfm?id=25789>, accessed September 2008.

all this is happening? Chailley describes Sarastro as “a static personage, almost an abstraction; he knows nothing of passions or peripeties.”³¹ Perhaps, in true eighteenth-century Deistic fashion, he is merely allowing events to unfold; but one must wonder why he does not intervene to save the young prince. As for Tamino, his subsequent behavior certainly satisfies our expectations of heroism: his willingness to persevere in the face of mortal danger, to delay physical gratification for the spiritual (he does not eat when the opportunity presents itself, though Papageno does), and to jeopardize his own personal happiness in the service of a noble cause (as he certainly does when he maintains his vow of silence by refusing to speak to Pamina) are all actions we demand of a true hero. Nonetheless, it is the Ladies who kill the serpent, repudiating the fall of Woman in the Garden of Eden at the very outset of the opera, while Tamino faints helplessly and Sarastro remains either oblivious or aloof.

Papageno, lovable “Air” creature that he is, wants two things: food and sex (albeit, like Mozart himself, within the context of a loving marriage). On first introduction, he does seem to be functioning at the lowest level of Abraham Maslow’s pyramid of moral reasoning: he will try to tow the line, but only because it serves his interests.³² Chailley says that he “stands for ‘ordinary’ humanity, full of good will certainly, but lacking courage and intelligence, and therefore unworthy of initiation.”³³ In defense of Papageno’s courage, he does help Pamina to get away from Monostastos when they first meet, and he seems to feel genuinely protective toward her. He isn’t

³¹ Chailley, 101.

³² David G. Myers, *Exploring Psychology: Sixth Edition* (New York: Worth, 2005), 372-3; quoting Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970). In fact, Papageno is at level 3 of the pyramid, since he seeks love as well as basic needs like food and shelter.

³³ Chailley, 104.

sexually promiscuous, but states specifically on numerous occasions that he wants a wife, and his Act I duet with Pamina on the nobility of marriage is heartfelt and touching. His is a promiscuity of speech: he can't keep his mouth shut, so the Three Ladies have to put a padlock on it. Chailley tells us that birds were the symbol of "feminine curiosity"³⁴ (a trait very much to be suppressed) in the Lodges of Adoption, and Papageno's feathers should tell us right away that he has a little too much of this female characteristic. Yet this, again, begs the question: Sarastro has imposed the vow of silence; the Three Ladies work for the Queen; why are they helping Sarastro by ensuring Papageno's cooperation? Presumably, both the Queen and Sarastro want to secure Pamina's safety, though for different reasons; if Tamino fails in the vows of honor he has made, he ceases to be a worthy rescuer, husband, or heir to Sarastro's mantle, and thus, Papageno's potentially bad influence on him must be kept to a minimum. Still, both the Ladies and the Three Spirits seem to manage to work for both sides with no difficulty at all. This, perhaps more than any other facet of *Die Zauberflöte*, is never adequately explained, even by Chailley; and the only reasonable explanation for it, leaving aside his interpretations of Masonic ritual, is that the two kingdoms are really part of one whole – an idea that argues strongly for a different ending than the one we typically see, and one much more closely aligned with Mozart's creed of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Of the lock itself, the observation may be made that Papageno's loose tongue is the only thing standing in the way of his stated objective: marriage. By Sarastro's decree, he isn't going to have a wife and lover until he learns how to keep silent. In a very real way, then, the lock is a chastity belt! Moreover, it is controlled entirely by women: the Three

³⁴ Chailley, 104.

Ladies place it there, and only Papagena has the power to remove it. In its own time, this was a great joke on the male population, which had used the devices for hundreds of years on their womenfolk; such humor hardly seems the work of misogynists.

Under this scenario, Papagena, brief and vocally negligible though her music may be, has a considerable share in what one might jokingly call the opera's "girl power." She is Papageno's spiritual guide, to the extent that he requires or can comprehend such guidance; to employ an affectionate stereotype, she is already "keeping him in line," in the long-accepted wifely way. (Tellingly, in the original libretto she is listed in her first entrance as 'Weib', or 'wife', not as Papagena or 'old woman' as her disguise might indicate; she is Papageno's destined soul mate on the path to enlightenment – at least, as far along that path as they can go – and thus, she is more than just a stock *soubrette*.)³⁵ Although she guides Papageno to the fulfillment of his dream, she clearly has a practical side: There will be plenty of love and good food in store for her birdcatcher, but no crumbs or feathers allowed on those freshly swept floors!

It is Pamina, however, who represents the culmination of all that Mozart appeared to believe was best in womanhood. In Chailley's schematic she is Water, arguably the most feminine of the elements. On its most profound level, Water is the source of all life; in an immediate and personal sense, women are generally more likely than men to express intense emotion through tears (Konstanze and Pamina have strikingly similar 'weeping' arias, to be explored further in Chapter 6). Yet tears are not necessarily a manifestation of heartbreak or grief; sometimes they flow from joy, but they may also express resolve, as Pamina (and Konstanze before her) clearly demonstrates.

³⁵ Mozart/Schikaneder, Act II, Scene 15, spoken dialogue.

When we first meet Pamina, she is trying, quite rightly, to escape Monostatos – and when Papageno arrives on the scene, though his physical presence and bizarre appearance are of some real help to her, she is the strategist in their escape. When Papageno explains his mission to help Tamino rescue her, and expresses his own longing for a wife, she offers sympathy and encouragement; later, when brought before Sarastro to explain their attempted flight, she accepts full responsibility. (Papageno asks her, “What shall we say now?” to which she replies, in an exquisitely set phrase, “The truth, the truth – even though it is a crime.”)³⁶ In so doing, she demonstrates virtues that are both traditionally feminine (the wish to remain chaste rather than submit to Monostatos; the willingness to offer comfort and nurturance to a friend) and traditionally masculine (bravery in the face of danger, assertiveness, intellect and leadership). Both Pamina and Tamino demonstrate an essential and unwavering honesty that is neither intrinsically masculine nor feminine, but represents the best of both.

Pamina’s most defining moment in Act I, however, comes when she first sees Tamino. Although they have never met, the two young people recognize one another instantly as soul mates (“Er ist’s!” / “Sie ist’s!”; “Es ist kein Traum” – “‘Tis he!” / “‘Tis she!” “It is no dream”); Jessica Waldoff explains in *Recognition in Mozart’s Operas* that “the use of the verb *sein* itself is the mark of recognition: Pamina does not exclaim, ‘At last I see him!’ or more simply, ‘Tamino!’ but ... ‘It is he.’”³⁷ Pamina then goes on to vow, “Es schling mein Arm sich um ihn her, und wenn es auch mein Ende wär” – “I will

³⁶ Mozart/Schikaneder, Act I, Scene 17, mm. 366-370.

³⁷ Jessica Waldoff, *Recognition in Mozart’s Operas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 58.

wrap my arms around him, even if it means my death.”³⁸ With those words, she states both her objective, and her bravery, in unequivocal terms.

Certainly, Pamina has moments of what would traditionally be considered “feminine” behavior – that is, she reacts emotionally rather than intellectually. This is hardly a surprising response from someone who has been kidnapped, threatened twice with rape, ordered by her own mother to commit murder, fallen in love with her would-be rescuer, and been spurned by him publicly without being told why. Dismayed at her mother’s willingness to use her as a political pawn, and crushed by Tamino’s refusal to acknowledge her during his trial of silence, she finally decides, quietly, to commit suicide – not the act of a physical coward, at any rate – before being informed by the Three Boys that the vow of silence is something Tamino must undergo in order to win her, and that he does love her, after all.

It is important to understand that suicide, in Classical if not Christian thought, was not necessarily regarded as a sign of weakness. Roman Stoic philosophy held that in untenable circumstances it was sometimes the only honorable alternative, of which Seneca’s decision to slit his wrists rather than comply with Nero’s deranged demands is a prime example. It is this type of suicide that Pamina is contemplating, based on the information available to her; she believes she has been betrayed by everyone she loves or trusts and that death is the only course open to her (in contrast, Papageno’s suicide “attempt” is clearly comic, as Mozart lets us know by various musical means to be discussed in the next chapter).

³⁸ Mozart/Schikaneder, Act I, Scene 19, mm. 449-461.

In the opera's most touching sequence, Sarastro releases Tamino from his imposed silence just before he must undergo the trials of fire and water, so that he may bid Pamina goodbye in the event that he does not return. And then, in a surprising twist on the typical fairy-tale pairing of rescuer and rescued, Pamina says that she wants to go with him. This is the opera's pivotal moment: Pamina takes the flute and explains to Tamino that her father (whom we infer that she loved very much) created it to be used for good, and she shows Tamino how he should play it in order to preserve their safety. By placing the flute – theretofore an icon of masculine prowess – in Pamina's hands, Schikaneder acknowledges that she herself possesses as much physical courage as Tamino himself, if not more (we should not forget that she has already withstood kidnapping, imprisonment, and attempted rape – twice – at the hands of Monostatos).

We do not know until this moment in the opera that Pamina's father was the creator of the flute, and this is information of huge significance. Pamina, like any daughter who is an only child (as am I), is also her father's "son." As his heir, she would legally inherit the Kingdom of the Night (although either the Queen or Sarastro, or both, might serve as Regent until she attained full majority, and Regents wielded a great deal of power in Europe when monarchs were too young to rule alone); it is therefore her responsibility to uphold the family's honor and continue its bloodline. (Again, as mentioned in Chapter II, this recalls Maria Theresa's accession to the throne of Austria.) Through the flute, Pamina's father gives his blessing *in absentia* to Tamino as a husband for his daughter; and Pamina, by her willingness to show Tamino how to play the flute, is

saying that she has found a man who can fill her father's place. But she doesn't intend to stand meekly behind him – the lyric clearly states that she will walk “at his side.”³⁹

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, depicting a flute in the hands of a woman in visual art had been largely a conceit meant to indicate that she was a prostitute or, at best, a courtesan. Her ability to “play the flute” indicated that she knew how to give sexual pleasure to her partner or, indeed, to any number of partners. Richard Leppert explains that “instruments with phallic associations were viewed as contaminating,” and goes on to quote John Essex, writing in 1722: “Some instruments . . . really are unbecoming to the Fair Sex: as the Flute, Violin and Hautboy; the last of which is too Manlike, and would look indecent in a Woman's mouth; and the Flute is very improper.”⁴⁰

Pamina is virtuous and innocent, but she understands intuitively how to play the flute. The demonstration of her fearlessness in entering the trials by fire and water, and her knowledge of the flute, hint clearly at the physical pleasure that she will share with Tamino after he passes through the trials and they are free to marry. But it is a pleasure that he (and she) will have earned, and one that is ennobled and enhanced by their courage, purity of heart, and enduring commitment. Thus, Tamino and Pamina's physical attraction is presented within the Masonic compass of the ideal and the traditional Christian parameters for sexual fulfillment. (Even Papageno and Papagena, who announce their plan to make lots of babies when they leave the stage, intend to marry first, and have gone through their own ‘trials’ of sorts.) One cannot help feeling that Mozart's own thoughts on the sanctity of marriage, as expressed to his father upon

³⁹ Mozart/Schikaneder, Act II, Scene 28, mm. 293-97.

⁴⁰ Leppert, 67.

his marriage to Constanze, are omnipresent in this scene. As Brigid Brophy says, “Man and wife attain to the Godhead ... Mozart is building a monument to marriage.”⁴¹

The religious aspect of the trials by fire and water is easily traceable to Isaiah, Chapter 43, verses 1 and 2:

But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

The verses that follow contain no such operatic imagery, but they were perhaps known to Schikaneder and more likely to Mozart, devout Catholic and erstwhile church musician that he was. Of these, verse 7 is most telling:

I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.

This passage equates sons and daughters in the sight of God, and underscores the spiritual blessing of the relationship, which is given in the exquisite four-part chorale sung by the priests as they pay tribute to Pamina’s courage: “A woman who does not fear night is worthy of the light.” Indeed.

What, then, of Chailley’s description of Tamino and Pamina themselves as Fire and Water? Interestingly, he says, “Contrary to appearances, Fire and Water are not incompatible, but complementary; without Fire, Water may be frozen”⁴² (meaning, in this sense, sexually unawakened). This is true enough; yet he says nothing of Water’s effect on Fire. Water may seem gentler, or more passive, than Fire; and yet it is also fully capable of vanquishing Fire. (This is a critical point that should be duly noted in

⁴¹ Brophy, 125.

⁴² Chailley, 99.

relationship to my thoughts on the masculine and feminine tonalities of the opera, to be discussed in Chapter 5.) Taken too far, Water's power may become misdirected or emasculating (the characterization applied by Chailley, and many others, toward the Queen); this idea is in line with the long-prevailing precept that a wife must "manage" her husband, gently and unobtrusively, to help him attain his full potential (as Papagena does, bearing out the old adage that behind every successful man there is a woman). But what if these are two *equal* elements, neither of which can survive without the other? Fire is necessary to Water if the latter is to be warmed – that is, if love or passion is to be awakened – but may also cause it to evaporate. Water is necessary to temper Fire's extremes – and capable of destroying it altogether. It is in the complementary joining of these two elements, each enhancing without harming the other, that the symbolism of *Die Zauberflöte* reaches its apotheosis.

Die Zauberflöte is, in its simplest interpretation, a fairy tale, and, at its most complex, an exalted vision of how men and women are capable of behaving at their finest. Mozart – and, to some degree, Schikaneder as well – must have believed that women were capable of as much heroism of principle as men, or they could not have created Pamina as she exists. Through the use of visual and musical symbols, they communicate their vision of feminine courage and principle, first by challenging established notions of a woman's 'place' in society through the Queen, and then by melding old and new concepts of womanhood to create a perfect fusion of sweetness and strength in Pamina. She inherits the bravery shared by Zaïde, Ilia, Konstanze, Blondchen, and Susanna, and raises it to a new and still higher level. As Brophy says,

“Pamina is the heroine who represents Mozart’s own utmost development of Constanze”⁴³ – and since she chooses throughout her work to use a capital C in spelling the name of both the real and the fictional Constanzes, perhaps one may fairly assume she is referring to young Mrs. Mozart as well as her operatic counterpart.

This work has thus far examined the women of *Die Zauberflöte* primarily in terms of the religious, philosophical, Masonic, literary and personal influences that might have helped to shape their personalities and moral choices as demonstrated by the actions we see onstage and the iconography that is employed to illuminate their characters. The final two chapters will focus on how Mozart communicated those characters and choices through tonality and musical notation.

⁴³ Brophy, 125.

Chapter V

The Tonal Scheme

It is in the tonal scheme of *Die Zauberflöte* that Mozart's influence on his characters, both male and female, begins to become most evident. The words of the libretto may be Schikaneder's (with some perhaps suggested or provided by Ignaz von Born or Johann Georg Metzler, known as "Giesecke"),¹ but the choice of *how to set them* was Mozart's, and his alone.

To say that Mozart had no hand in creating these characters, because he was handed a libretto, is absurd (just as it would be absurd to suggest that Verdi had no hand in creating Gilda or Violetta because their literary predecessors were conceived by Hugo and Dumas and he was provided libretti by Piave). Of course he did. As Brigid Brophy notes, "Mozart was not one of the composers who set words to music: he was a composer who believed and explicitly said that in a successful opera the words are 'written solely

¹ Henry, 107.

for the music' [letter to Leopold from Vienna, September 26, 1871] – a composer, in fact of the Wagnerian pattern, for whom both drama and music are inextricably present from the moment of composition."² By Mozart's choice of key, meter, tessitura, tempo, rhythm and pattern, he tells us as much as (if not more than) the words themselves about who these people are – and what he thinks of them. This chapter will concern itself with tonality; the final chapter will examine the other elements mentioned above.

The "home key" of *Die Zauberflöte* is widely acknowledged to be E-flat major. The overture, the hero's aria ("Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön"), and many of the ensemble pieces, including the finale, are set in E-flat – which, as has been noted in this paper and many other works, contains three flats and may be taken to symbolize both the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as well as the triune Masonic ideals of Truth, Beauty, and Reason. The key of E-flat may be considered the opera's primary "masculine" tonal center, with its relative C minor (also bearing three flats) and C major being the secondary male keys.

Jacques Henry and Jacques Chailley both point out that since C major has neither flats nor sharps, it is "pure" and, therefore, Masonic – as Gounod said, "God speaks in C major."³ Thus, Mozart's choice of C major for Konstanze's "Martern aller Arten" is most interesting: the aria demonstrates the heroine's moral and physical courage, as well as the singer's virtuosity, in a manner rarely equaled among operatic soprano *scenas*. "Martern" is among the most physically demanding yet emotionally satisfying arias in the coloratura soprano repertoire for the performer, and one of the most stirring for the audience; Mozart's use of C major, a 'masculine' or *durus* tonality, hardly seems an accident in setting Konstanze's extraordinary defiance of the Pasha's threats.

² Brophy, 30.

³ Henry, 29.

Kristi Brown-Montesano states that “[t]he keys of E-flat major and G minor . . . have been connected with two contrasting ideas, love’s bloom and sweetness (No. 3, “Dies Bildnis,” and No. 7, “Bei Männern,” in E-flat major) and the loss of a beloved (No. 4, “Zum Leiden,” and No. 17, “Ach, ich fühl’s,” in G minor). There is a hierarchical relationship between these two keys as well in terms of the overall tonality of the work: the opera’s primary key, E-flat major is used to represent male amorous emotion and matrimonial harmony, while G minor, the ‘weaker’ mediant key, is used to convey feminine suffering and separation.”⁴ I agree completely with this statement, as far as it goes. However, in my view, the opera has multiple “feminine” tonal centers within the context of a larger “couple” scheme. (See Example 5.1 for a listing of the major feminine arias and ensembles by key.) The primary “feminine” keys in the opera are B-flat major and its relative minor key of G, with secondary forays into F major and D minor. The Three Ladies briefly sing in C major with Tamino and Papageno, but only Pamina is permitted to sing in E-flat major, and then only in ensembles with male characters. To take this theory one step further, I believe that the opera has “heroic feminine” tonal centers (and heroic masculine centers, for that matter).

No key signature is consistently “heroic” among all of Mozart’s major works (one need only look at Dorabella’s manic “Smanie, implacabile” from *Così*, or Cherubino’s paeon to raging adolescent hormones, “Non so più cosa son” from *Figaro*, both set in *Zauberflöte*’s much-vaunted home key of E-flat major, to determine this); but Mozart often does use particular tonalities across his operas to make specific statements. For

⁴ Brown-Montesano, 121.

Major Female Arias and Ensembles from *Die Zauberflöte*

Act I

Queen's entrance aria	B-flat major/G minor/ B-flat major
Three Ladies' trio	B-flat major
Pamina/Papageno duet	E-flat major
Pamina/Tamino first meeting	F major

Act II

Queen's vengeance aria	D minor/F major/D minor
Pamina's aria	G minor/B-flat major/ G minor
Pamina/Tamino/Sarastro trio	B-flat major
Suicide scene (Pamina, Three Spirits)	C minor/E-flat major
Reunion and Trials by Fire and Water (Pamina, Tamino)	E-flat major/C Minor/ A-flat Major/ F major
Papagena/Papageno duet	G major
Attempted entry into palace (Queen, Ladies)	C minor/G minor/C minor
Finale	E-flat major

Example 5.1. Arias and ensembles from *Die Zauberflöte* that prominently feature the major women characters: The Queen of the Night, Pamina, Papagena, and the Three Ladies.

example, throughout his oeuvre, Mozart frequently employs the key of G major for buffoonery and patter songs sung by both men and women (among these are Despina's "Una donna" from *Così*; Leporello's "Madamina" from *Giovanni*; Blondchen's "Welche Wonne" from *Entführung*; and Papageno's aria "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" and his duet with Papagena in *Zauberflöte*).

Mozart may well have "seen" tonalities in color, as do many individuals with perfect pitch. This phenomenon, known as synesthesia, is now well documented and understood by both physical scientists and psychologists.⁵ (Olivier Messaien and Alexander Scriabin are documented to have been synesthetic, and I myself have always perceived notes in color.) For singers and those who work closely with them, "bright" and "dark" are familiar and important concepts: voices are inherently brighter or darker, and singers may take specific physical actions to alter the natural color of their voices for a particular piece of music (deliberately raising the soft palate and placing the resonance farther back on the hard palate will create a "darker" sound; relaxing the throat without consciously raising the soft palate, and placing the resonance farther forward on the hard palate, will result in a "brighter" sound). "Squillo," or brightness, has long been the goal of classical Italian singing; American vocal pedagogy in the last quarter century has tended toward the preference of a darker, more "covered" sound. (The "cover" is the element that primarily differentiates today's operatic technique from the legitimate musical theatre technique used on Broadway through the era of Rodgers and Hammerstein, which typically produced a bright, clear sound – not to be confused with the musical theatre style that generally prevails today, which is artificially over-brightened and frequently breaks between the registers.) Taken too far, both excessive

pursuit of the “cover” or of over-brightening can be very dangerous to the health of the singer’s instrument, particularly in the case of lighter voices, but that is a subject for another paper.

Mozart was said to have described the key of A major as “a pattern of many colors,”⁶ although it is not one he typically used for his soprano arias; the beautiful concert aria, “Vorrei, spiegarvi, o Dio” (K. 317), written for Aloysia Weber Lange, is an exception, as is Blondchen’s aria, “Durch Zärtlichkeit.” (Jacques Henry notes that while E-flat is taken to be the “Masonic” key because of its three flats, A major qualifies equally well because of its three sharps, and he points out that the Quartet in A major [K.464] was written very shortly after Mozart’s initiation as a Mason in 1785.⁷ Both of the above-mentioned arias are sung by women characters expressing bravery and constancy in the face of would-be seducers – with some necessary self-protective sarcasm, in Blondchen’s case, as discussed in Chapter 2 – and might thus in Mozart’s estimation have qualified for a “Masonic” tonality.) Whatever the scientific basis may have been for his association of certain keys with certain types of characters, he did return again and again to the same tonalities in similar musical/dramatic situations.

The arias that Mozart wrote in B-flat major for his female characters consistently portray nobility of character and steadfastness of principle. (Brown-Montesano calls this the key of “duty.”)⁸ Fiordiligi’s “Come scoglio” and Konstanze’s “Ach, ich liebte” are prime examples of this choice of tonality. Both are characters for whom we are expected

⁵ Richard E. Cytowic, M.D., *The Man Who Tasted Shapes* (New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 1993), 115-116.

⁶ Julius Portnoy, *Music in the Life of Man* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963), p. 139. This passage also references Isaac Newton’s theory that the seven notes of the diatonic scale correspond to the seven colors of the spectrum, a concept many composers embraced during the Classical period.

⁷ Henry, 65.

⁸ Brown-Montesano, 121-22.

to feel respect (or, in the case of Fiordiligi, sympathy at least). His first aria for Aloysia Weber, “Non so d’onde viene” (K. 294, 1778), features an extended section in B-flat, as does another Aloysia aria, “Ah, non sai, qual pena” (K. 416, 1783), as well as large sections of Ilia’s ensemble music in *Idomeneo* and a replacement Ilia aria, “Non temer, amato bene” (K. 490, 1786). Although Donna Anna’s “Non mi dir” begins and ends in F major, substantial portions are in B-flat (with Kristi Brown-Montesano citing the return to F major as “a conciliatory gesture for Ottavio,” who has asked Donna Anna to move the date of their marriage forward – an interesting point with respect to F major, to be discussed further below).⁹ Likewise, the Queen of the Night is introduced to us with the noble fanfare and recitative in B-flat that opens her first aria, “O zittre nicht.” The aria follows the opening recitative (section A) in two distinct sections (B and C), with the Queen expressing appropriate motherly grief at the loss of her daughter in G minor (“Zum Leiden bin ich auserkoren”), before returning to the triumphant majesty of B-flat major in the C section (“Du wirst sie zu brefreien gehen”). She is first presented in all the splendor of her rank, in the key of B-flat, and then (whether sincerely or cunningly, one must decide) becomes a grieving parent like any other, in G minor, before recovering her dignity, spectacularly, in B-flat major.

Tonal scheme of “O zittre nicht”

Measures 1-10	Orchestral introduction in B-flat major
Measures 11-20	Recitative in B-flat (A section)
Measures 21-61	Aria, B section, in G minor
Measures 62-end	Aria, C section, in B-flat major

Example 5.2. Tonal scheme, “O zittre nicht,” Act I, Scene 7, from *Die Zauberflöte*.

⁹ Brown-Montesano, 28-30.

When we meet the Queen, we are intended to sympathize with her, just as Tamino does. Both her royal station and her motherhood have been violated by Sarastro's abduction of Pamina. From all that we know at this point (and perhaps all that she herself knows), she has every reason to believe she has been wronged. We have no reason yet to doubt the Queen's motives; perhaps Mozart simply wants to pull the wool over our eyes by setting her aria in a key he had typically reserved for feminine heroics.

But he could have chosen another key, even with a specific singer's voice in mind. D major, for example, is an excellent key for high sopranos and was often used by Handel in his soprano arias ("Let the Bright Seraphim" from *Samson* and "Sweet Bird" from *L'Allegro ed Il Pensieroso*, are two famous examples with which Mozart might have been familiar; Michael Arne's "The Soldier Tir'd," from *Artaxerxes*, is another). D major also allowed for the interplay of soprano voice and solo D trumpet, a popular compositional technique of the eighteenth century. (Both "Seraphim" and "The Soldier Tir'd" use this combination, as does Handel's renowned aria for bass, "The Trumpet Shall Sound," from *Messiah*.) D major would have been a key with regal connotations, but may have seemed too "bright" a choice for the nocturnal Queen. A-flat major, however, is a soft, *mollis* key, often used to great advantage by coloratura sopranos who can easily interpolate high E-flats (less demanding, and more reliably cast, than the high Fs that Mozart gives to the Queen). It is also the subdominant of the opera's "heroic male" key of E-flat, and would seem a likely psychological choice as the "feminine" tonal center of the opera. Yet Mozart sets the Queen's aria in the *dominant*, B-flat major. What are we to make of that choice? Is she a heroine, or a dominatrix? Or both?

After the Queen gives Tamino her commission and withdraws, the Three Ladies continue in B-flat until we meet first Monostatos and then Pamina in their brief G-major trio with Papageno. Pamina is agitated and frightened (with good reason), as damsels in distress usually are, but she also defies Monostatos to go ahead and kill her (recalling Konstanze's challenge to the Pasha in *Die Entführung*). The choice of G major (again, a frequent comic key for Mozart) lets us know that Monostatos is not powerful enough to do any real harm, and Papageno, as we already know, is a good (if not always stalwart) fellow. He's no hero, but he uses the ready weapon at his disposal – his very odd appearance – to frighten Monostatos away. He then explains his mission in coming to Pamina, and the two join in singing their lovely duet, “Bei Männern welche Liebe fühlen” (“In love man finds joy”), set in the “masculine” key of E-flat. Both Pamina and the Three Ladies occasionally do stray into the masculine keys of E-flat and C major (the Three Ladies only in the latter key, and generally with some duplicitous purposes in these spots); Mozart actually allows Pamina two scenes in E-flat. But all of these instances are ensembles in which male characters appear.

When Pamina and Papageno venture further into Sarastro's palace, they briefly pass through G major and then C major, but that journey is intended only to get them to F major, wherein Pamina meets Tamino for the first time (and in which she and he will later enter together into the trials of fire and water).¹⁰ The key of F is of utmost significance in *Die Zauberflöte*: B-flat is the dominant of E-flat, but *F is the dominant of B-flat*. The Queen attempts unsuccessfully (whatever her justification may or may not be) to defy Sarastro and establish her power in B-flat; Pamina will succeed in joining her

¹⁰ Mozart/Schikaneder, Act I, Scenes 16-19, mm. 228-461.

heroism and fate to Tamino's in the key of F. Thus, the tonality of F major may perhaps be taken, in the context of the opera's plot and its tonal scheme, to represent resolution in the war between the sexes: it unites man and woman into one perfect whole.

Jacques Chailley takes an opposing view: "The framework of E-flat is amputated and reduced to two flats for the aria (B flat) of the Queen of the Night, and in the end reduced to a single flat (F natural) for the combat of the Queen and the initiates."¹¹ But Jacques Henry disagrees with this logic, saying that "Chailley analyzes what he means by adapting the symbol [the flat] to the needs of his argument" – that is, in Henry's view, there is no cycle of flats that becomes "less Masonic"; three is simply the Masonic number, period. He adds that "[we] could jokingly say that it's a good thing the choice of keys stopped there [in F], otherwise the successive amputation of flats would have led, from one diminution to the next, until there were none at all and we arrive at C major, which is, however, the key of God – [so] that would be illogical."¹² I quite agree.

Pamina and Tamino are not to be united in their brief, first meeting; many trials lie ahead for both of them, as Sarastro makes very clear in his typically peremptory fashion. But F major is nonetheless a foretaste of the union to come.

A most interesting tonal interplay takes place in this scene. Pamina, in a moment of great musical and dramatic significance, introduces F major with her lovely, forthright admission to Sarastro that she has tried to escape ("Herr, ich bin zwar Verbrecherin"/"Sire, I am all to blame"), straying into the "weaker" feminine key of D minor when she (quite rightly) blames Monostatos for frightening her. Sarastro steers the conversation back into F major as he assures her that she will not be punished, though he

¹¹ Chailley, 68.

¹² Henry, 29.

reiterates that he will not let her go. Pamina then pleads on behalf of her mother, whom she loves and misses very much, in the Queen's key of B-flat ("Mir klingt der Mutter Name süsse" / "How sweet I hold my mother's name"). Sarastro interrupts her much more forcefully than before, in a somewhat unstable suggestion of C minor (the relative minor of the heroic male key, E-flat – used in 'weaker' male moments, such as Tamino's attempt to escape the serpent), declaring that her mother is only a woman and that "a man must decide her fate."¹³ Nonetheless, the dialogue returns to F major (briefly interrupted by Monostatos) for the entrance of Tamino and the joyous exclamations from both young people at discovering one another. The scene and act end with the chorus extolling Sarastro in the masculine key of C major, but the feminine, masculine and "couple" tonal references have been clearly established.

Shortly thereafter, the Queen appears to her daughter within the palace walls. She arrives just in time to save Pamina from Monostatos, who has come upon the sleeping princess and once again intends to press his advantage. But no sooner does Monostatos disappear than the Queen – now apparently made desperate by the knowledge that Tamino has "gone over" to Sarastro's side – presents her daughter with a dagger and orders her to kill Sarastro. She explains her reasons very clearly in the dialogue that precedes the aria, which, as noted in the preceding chapter, is unfortunately cut from most performances. (See Example 4.2.) The Queen's explanation of what she at least perceives to be Sarastro's misappropriation of her husband's – Pamina's father's – power is left on the cutting room floor, so to speak; the audience hears only the Queen's final line "Kein wort!/Not a word!" The ability of this speech to sway Pamina, particularly in

¹³ Mozart/Schikaneder, Act I, Scene 18, 396-440.

concert with the aria that follows, might be considerable (I can't speak for Pamina, but as an only daughter, I would not look kindly on *anyone* who stole *anything* of my father's, whatever the explanation). But, without the preceding dialogue, the persuasive power of the Queen's singing must stand alone.

The aria, "Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen," is one of the most famous in all operatic literature. It begins in D minor, the relative minor of B-flat (the Queen's heroic key), underscoring that she has subverted her better nature (and perhaps betrayed her husband's memory) in making this unreasonable demand of her only child. But the brilliant coloratura section, which ascends to the fabled four high Fs, is set in the key of F major – the key of union for man and woman in this opera. This is an intriguing and somewhat perplexing choice of key. What does Mozart intend to convey? As discussed already, the keys of E or E-flat major would be somewhat easier to navigate for most sopranos, even very high ones, although choosing E-flat major was out of the question since it represents the male heroic key in *Die Zauberflöte*, and E major has no relation to any of the opera's other tonal centers. Yet he chooses the "couple" key of F major for this dazzling display of supernatural power (which is, as such, unrivalled in all of vocal literature). The pyrotechnics are intended to overcome Pamina's resistance, as their very brilliance may bewilder her in the manner of a sparkling object waved before the subject's eyes in hypnosis (let us not forget that Mesmer was a Mason and that he commissioned the boy composer's *Bastien und Bastienne*).¹⁴ Perhaps Mozart chooses to underscore the Queen's manipulation of her daughter by having her, as it were, knowingly place the vocal fireworks in the "couple" tonality where Pamina has already found some foretaste of happiness with Tamino, and quite possibly the key where her

parents were happy together. Indeed, Mozart may be saying that were the Queen to use her power wisely – perhaps in concert with a male counterpart – she could be a great leader. This possibility is discussed more fully in the next chapter, but the choice of key alone, in the overall tonal context of the opera, is most intriguing.

After the Queen completes the section in F major with “So bist du meine Tochter nimmermehr” (“You shall be my daughter no longer”), she returns to D minor for further threats and a recapitulation of the arpeggiated coloratura section in the lower, and less forthright, key. In another unusual choice, Mozart does not end the aria on the tonic, but on the fifth – A natural above middle C (customary in recitative of the period, but not in an aria). This leaves the listener somewhat unsettled – as indeed, Pamina must be – but it also poses questions as to the Queen’s own certainty of purpose. She has asked her daughter to do a terrible thing: Perhaps she is unsure that this course is the right one.

Pamina is comforted by Sarastro, with the low extremes of his voice providing a counterweight to the Queen’s high Fs in the previous aria. He assures Pamina that he means no harm to her or to her mother, and says that she is permitted to see Tamino. Yet, shockingly, he sings in the key of E major – completely outside the tonal scheme of the opera and the established “Masonic” key structure Mozart had used in previous works. This could, at its most benign, signal Sarastro’s ‘otherness’ – a higher level of moral reasoning than that of any other character in the story – but such an interpretation seems too much of a stretch. In fact, the key choice is quite jarring (if Mozart had wanted to set the aria in F, he had good reasons to do so: both consecutive “parental” arias would then be sung in the ‘couple’ key, an indication that the Queen and Sarastro might eventually

¹⁴ Henry, 8-9.

unite, and moreover, the half-tone higher would undoubtedly be easier for most basses). The use of E major, instead, would seem to belie the very words he sings to Pamina when he assures her he will spare her mother: he is *not* singing in the key of Enlightenment, and he does *not*, as has already been canvassed extensively, offer clemency to the Queen in the end. By setting this aria in E major, Mozart would seem to be telling us quite a bit about what is really going on in Sarastro's mind and heart beneath the exterior of imperturbable philosopher. Despite having had an intimate working knowledge of this opera for many years, I had never, until pursuing this research, pondered the idea that Sarastro's intent in kidnapping Pamina was to have her for himself, until he somewhat reluctantly gives her over to Tamino in the Finale of Act I. If that is indeed the case, then his motives are highly suspect, and still more reason for taking this aria with a 'grain of salt,' as the oddly chosen key would seem to indicate. Nor is the immediate effect of his consolations anything other than hollow. Joyfully, Pamina goes to greet her prince, only to be treated with complete silence, a condition imposed on Tamino by the quasi-Masonic initiation rituals of Sarastro and team as part of his initiation into their order (as Sarastro surely already knew before subjecting Pamina to this humiliating rejection).

Pamina's "Ach, ich fühl's" is set in G minor, the relative minor of the opera's "feminine heroic" key of B-flat major. The aria is very short – only 41 measures versus 103 and 99 measures for the Queen's two arias, respectively – yet it is regarded by many opera-lovers and critics alike as the 'jewel' of the opera and its emotional center. Much of the aria's power, indeed, may lie in its very brevity. Though it defies precise classification (it is more akin to a song in length and form than to the typical arias of Mozart's heroines), it is written very loosely in ABC form, recalling the Queen's first aria, "O zittre nicht,"

which is clearly ABC. The opening measures also follow those of the earlier aria's B section ("Zum Leiden") in tonality, length, and melodic shape (Examples 5.3 and 5.4).

Notably, the only measures of coloratura singing Mozart gives to Pamina are in the brief (nine-measure) B section in B-flat major, also recalling the tonality of the Queen, and of Konstanze before her (specific vocal patterns will be studied in the next chapter).¹⁵ Mozart thus satisfies the dual objectives of casting this "weak" moment in a minor key while retaining Pamina's stature as heroine through the tonal relationship to B-flat major. G minor is also the key choice that he had made almost ten years earlier for Konstanze's lament, "Traurigkeit," in *Entführung*, which is sandwiched between her brave declaration to the Pasha of her love for Belmonte, "Ach, ich liebte," set in B-flat major, and the almost superhuman courage she displays in "Martern Aller Arten," set in the typically "male" key of C major. (Although Konstanze fully expects to die, she defies the Pasha to first torture and then kill her – the former being even more extraordinary than the latter, as swift execution was traditionally accorded the nobility throughout European history, with commoners and heretics being burnt at the stake or drawn and quartered, and ladies of Konstanze's rank generally dispatched by the relatively more merciful method of beheading.) Pamina, grief-stricken at Tamino's silence, vows to die by her own hand. One must remember, in fairness, that this decision is driven not only by Tamino's refusal to speak: Pamina has been nearly raped by Monostatos more than once, and ordered by her own mother to murder Sarastro or face disownment. Her attempted-suicide scene begins in C minor (the "weak" relative of E-flat major), then segues into the masculine home key of E-flat as Pamina is joined by the

¹⁵ Mozart/Schikaneder, Act II, Scene 18, mm. 1-41.

Example 5.3. Aria, "O zittre nicht," Act I, Scene 7, from *Die Zauberflöte*, (Mozart/Schikaneder), mm 1-7.

Example 5.4. Aria, "Ach, ich fühl's," Act II, Scene 18, *Die Zauberflöte*, mm 1-7.

three boys. As discussed in the previous chapter, this may well be a nod to the Roman Stoic acceptance of suicide, which, under certain circumstances, was regarded as the most honorable alternative to continuing life under intolerable conditions. As such, it is not inherently “weak,” but heroic, and thus E-flat is an appropriate choice. (It should be noted that the boys play a very different suicide scene with Papageno in G minor – surely no man worth his salt in *this* opera would seriously try to commit an honorable suicide in G minor! – which resolves cheerfully to the expected comic key of G major when Papagena is finally introduced.)

The three boys stay Pamina’s hand, explaining to her that Tamino’s silence was not of his own choosing, and that if she will come to him, he is now free to speak to her. She goes with them happily, and this time, his reception of her is all tenderness. The chord progression here is stunning in the masculine/feminine context of the opera. Pamina speaks first, saying Tamino’s name on an F major chord: “Tamino mein, O welch ein Gluck” (“Tamino mine, O happy fate”), resolving downward through G to the masculine C (as though asking a question). Tamino then says her name in B-flat – the feminine key – and answers her by resolving downward through G minor to F major, the key of perfect union in *Die Zauberflöte*. The lovers embrace and prepare bravely to face the trials by fire and water – originally intended only for Tamino to complete, but now to be faced with Pamina at his side.

By contrast, in *Die Entführung*, Belmonte and Konstanze sing their love duet in the key of B-flat; that duet expresses great courage in the face of death, but it is a passive courage; there is no indication of an active fight to avoid such an end – and hence, perhaps, the “feminine” key choice. (Yet is Konstanze who comforts Belmonte, not the

other way around; it is she, not he, who says, “Was ist der Tod? Ein Übergang zur Ruh” / “What is death? A gateway to joy.”)¹⁶ But Pamina’s bravery, united with Tamino’s in F major, makes for an active and optimistic duet, all the stronger for being fused from two halves (E-flat, B-flat), into a whole (F).

Of course the lovers survive their trials and are brought joyfully before Sarastro to be married – though not before a last unsuccessful attempt by the Queen, the Three Ladies, and Monostastos to recapture Pamina, which is set in C minor, the relative minor of E-flat (with a side trip into the “weak” feminine key of G minor, just in case anyone missed the point). The Queen and her supporters are vanquished – this time permanently, it appears – and the majestic finale concludes in E-flat major as everyone extols the gods Isis and Osiris and the virtues of Truth, Beauty, and Reason.

¹⁶ Mozart/Stephanie, Act III, Scene 7, mm. 13-14.

Chapter VI

Musical Characterizations of Feminine Heroism

Mozart and Schikaneder managed to convey images of feminine heroism in *Die Zauberflöte* through plot, dialogue, visual symbolism, and tonal choices. But the task of vocal characterization is much more complex than just choice of key; it involves tempi, tessitura, and motives. Did Mozart write vocal music that was encoded as specifically feminine and specifically heroic? And if he did, how may we decipher that code?

As discussed in Chapter III, Mozart's treatment of his female characters represents in many ways the evolution of his personal relationships, and most particularly that with his wife. His concept of feminine heroism seems to have developed through Ilia and Zaïde, reaching its fullest fruition, before Pamina, in the heroine who bore his wife's name. And it is to the Konstanze of *Die Entführung* that Pamina and the Queen trace their musical lineage, in a journey both poignant and fascinating.

In *Entführung*, the elements of Konstanze's character are fused into one cohesive whole; no inherent contradictions exist between the sentimental and defiant aspects of her personality. Both traditional "feminine" sentimentality and the "masculine" courage to face torture and death, rather than betray her *fiancé*, are portrayed convincingly in her music. All these traits serve her well and bring her, with Belmonte, to the opera's joyous conclusion. It is certainly no coincidence that *Entführung* was written in the summer of 1782, while Mozart was preparing for his marriage to the real Constanze. Nine years later, suffering from chronic illness and financial pressures, Mozart was completing *Die Zauberflöte* while his wife recovered from childbirth, and yet another lost baby, at the spas in Baden. Through all of this, he managed to write her delightful letters, full of gossip, mischief, and love, all the while creating one of the most sublime musical works ever written, and one that harkened back more than any of his other operas to the one he had written at the time of the marriage. And yet the musical elements that united so perfectly to portray the fictional Konstanze of 1782 are divided in *Die Zauberflöte*, as clearly as if surgery had been performed with a scalpel, between the Queen of the Night and Pamina – in several instances using virtually identical musical figures to those he had given Konstanze in *Entführung*, and some even in the same keys – but, particularly in the case of the Queen, to very different psychological purposes.

Konstanze bravely faces death at two junctures in *Entführung*: first alone, and then with Belmonte. Both her spirited defiance of Pasha Selim in "Martern aller Arten," and the tender expectations of a love to be shared throughout eternity in her duet with Belmonte, attest to her courage and nobility of spirit; yet, in both these instances, she is expressing her resolve to die for her principles. Although Belmonte and Pedrillo devise a

rescue plan to “abduct” Konstanze and her maid Blondchen (hence the opera’s title), Konstanze has no real expectation that she and Belmonte are going to outwit and escape the Pasha or convince him, by reasoned argument, to spare their lives.

Blondchen, in contrast, actively plans to get away, but she lacks the pure nobility of spirit that Konstanze demonstrates throughout the opera. Blondchen’s coloratura is sprightly rather than bravura, and far less demanding technically. She is eminently practical, and shows pluck and good judgment in a number of stressful situations, even when, despite the comic setting, she would reasonably consider herself to be physically threatened by Osmin. Mozart and Stephanie endow her with a healthy dose of common sense and charm, but withhold from her the sublime willingness to die for love that Konstanze repeatedly demonstrates. (Blondchen delivers a resounding slap to her sweetheart, Pedrillo, when he and Belmonte hint at the possibility that their ladyloves might have been sullied during their sojourn in the harem; Konstanze’s sense of honor is similarly wounded and outraged, but she weeps instead of striking out.) As discussed in Chapter I, Mozart gave a nod to Blondchen’s exceptional qualities by incorporating three short high Es into her aria, “Durch Zärtlichkeit” – a major third beyond the vocal range of any other *soubrette* character in his operas (the highest note in any other of his *soubrette* arias is a B-flat in Despina’s “In uomini”; Susanna has high Cs, but only in ensembles). One story goes that the notes were inserted to satisfy the wishes of the singer who created the role, but they are such an anomaly among the arias habitually given to young serving women – by Mozart or any other composer – that one assumes he was very conscious of the breach of rank he was creating. The high Es set Blondchen apart from every other such character in Mozart’s operas, and those of the composers who came after him, as a

young woman of exceptional courage. Again, Blondchen is English, and she expresses the political point of view that liberty is her birthright – underlined by those three Es, which we see nowhere else in Mozart’s writing for this type of character.

Pamina is in some respects a fusion of Konstanze and Blondchen. In both rank and demeanor, she is Blondchen’s superior by far (the pertness in *Die Zauberflöte* is assumed by Papagena); but Pamina’s willingness to take on physical risk in an active plot to survive – which Blondchen certainly does when she defies Osmin – is perhaps more reminiscent of the servant girl (and of another brave chambermaid, Susanna in *Figaro*) than of the mistress.

The traditional Western heroine – whether historical or fictional – had been one who sacrificed her life for faith, country, or true love. Those women who survived great peril or intrigue usually did so at some sacrifice of principle, or because they were rescued by a hero. With the Enlightenment, and perhaps with Mozart’s own maturity, came the philosophical framework for the portrayal of a heroine who sought to live through her own mental and physical efforts, and to do so honorably. Moreover, with the blurring of rank in society came the freedom to give a fictional princess qualities that theretofore had been portrayed only by her servants.

Yet Mozart’s strict observance of rank and vocal classification remains intact in *Die Zauberflöte*. Not only does the Queen have the highest voice and the showiest music, she also has two arias to Pamina’s one. But Pamina sings duets with Papageno and Tamino, and a duet/trio with Tamino and Sarastro (the latter two underscored by the chorus of priests). The Queen never sings with anyone else, except for the quintet in the opera’s finale, after Pamina has passed through the trials and thus negated (or perhaps

assumed?) her mother's power. The Queen's voice is always alone. Her daughter, by contrast, sings with all the major male characters in the opera – Tamino, Papageno, Sarastro, and even the Three Boys and Monostatos. Also, Pamina, like Konstanze before her, is onstage and singing throughout much of the opera; the role of the Queen is vocally glorious, but in terms of time onstage, it is, in its way, a cameo. Is Mozart trying to tell us, through the Queen, that the established European royalty was becoming increasingly isolated from reality and from the world? Does Pamina represent a new, egalitarian princess who retains her rank yet mixes easily across all social strata? (That image certainly calls to mind Diana, Princess of Wales, in our own time; or, perhaps even more accurately, Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, who remained in London with her children during the Blitz and went out among her countrymen to offer comfort and encouragement.) Is Pamina a woman who exemplifies traditional feminine qualities in the best sense, yet is capable of true and equal friendship with men? What, exactly, is Mozart trying to say through the music of these two characters?

It is impossible to understand fully either the Queen's or Pamina's music without first looking at that of Konstanze. Because the Queen appears in the opera well before Pamina does, and because our initial impressions of Pamina are influenced heavily by the information her mother imparts to us, we will examine the Queen's music first.

In *Die Entführung*, Konstanze has three arias: "Ach, ich liebte" (Act I, Scene 6), "Traurigkeit ward mir zum Losen" (Act II, Scene 2) and "Martern aller Arten" (Act II, Scene 3). These three arias correspond in *Die Zauberflöte*, respectively, to "O zittre nicht" (Act I, Scene 7), "Ach, ich fühl's" (Act II, Scene 18), and "Der Hölle Rache" (Act II, Scene 8). The first and third arias belong to the Queen of the Night, while the second

is given to Pamina (though it occurs last in the course of the opera). Each bears striking similarities to its counterpart in *Entführung*; but Mozart seems to have chosen, deliberately, to recall Konstanze's forceful moments in the Queen's music, while giving the former's lament to Pamina.

Neither Konstanze nor the Queen appears onstage until well into the first act of her respective opera (Konstanze in Act I, Scene 6 of *Die Entführung*, the Queen in Act I, Scene 7 of *Die Zauberflöte*); we hear a great deal about each of these characters before she arrives on the scene. In both cases, we have a sense that the lady's rank and dignity preclude her introducing herself, either to another character or to the audience (a musical and dramatic nuance entirely consistent with the social protocol of the day). The Queen's Three Ladies and Papageno all describe her in detail to Tamino before she enters (with claps of thunder and lightning); Belmonte sings an exquisite aria extolling the virtues of his beloved before we meet her. After much anticipation, both Konstanze and the Queen are presented to us in arias that begin with slow, measured expressions of sadness and then move into bravura vocal fireworks above the staff, explicitly in defiance of a repressive authority (the Pasha in Konstanze's case, Sarastro in the Queen's).

The forms of these two arias are somewhat constrained by convention, opening in both cases with a quasi-recitative (in B-flat major, as noted in the previous chapter), followed in the Queen's aria by what a quarter century later, in *bel canto*, would be considered a *cavatina* in G minor, beginning in measure 21 with "Zum Leiden bin ich auserkoren," and then by a bravura or *cabaletta* section for both ladies. In each case, however, the constraint serves the character well, as both are women of high rank who would be expected to follow form unless it ceases to protect them (their later arias,

“Martern Aller Arten” and “Der Hölle Rache,” display both characters’ progression to more unconventional means of attempting to resolve their situations). Konstanze’s aria revisits both of its two opening sections with substantial variations (ABA¹B¹), indicating that she has more difficulty at this juncture in expressing her resolve without lapsing into grief; in contrast, the Queen’s initial aria is cleanly ABC, with no repeated sections, representing a complete evolution from grief to supplication to determination, without interruption, as she endeavors to enlist Tamino as her champion in the rescue of her kidnapped daughter.

In each of these introductory arias, Mozart seeks to woo our sympathies for the character, and in each case, he presents the picture of a woman whose spirit has endured despite great personal suffering. Like Konstanze, the Queen is at once majestic and – at this point in the opera – completely sympathetic, since her ladies-in-waiting have just saved Tamino from death and we know nothing of Sarastro, whom she paints for us as “ein Bösewicht” (“an evil fiend”).¹

Measures 109–112 of “Ach, ich liebte” and measures 83–88 of “O zittre nicht” (see Examples 6.1 and 6.2, following) are strikingly similar. Both arias are set in B-flat major, and both share the same ascending run pattern, first beginning on B-flat and then on D, culminating in a roulade figure from high B-flat to high D. But the ascending runs for Konstanze occur on the “and” of the third beat, following a sixteenth-note rest; this seems to indicate that she is gathering her courage to resist the Pasha, whereas the Queen’s ascending runs begin on a strong beat, indicating that, although under great emotional stress, she is still fully in control as she commissions Tamino to rescue her daughter.

¹ Mozart/Schikaneder, Act I, Scene 7, mm. 31-36.

Example 6.1. Aria, "Ach, ich, liebte," Act I, Scene 6, from *Die Entführung aus Dem Serail*, (Mozart/Stephanie), mm.109-112.

The opening measures of “Martern Aller Arten” and “Der Hölle Rache” are equally striking in their likeness (see Examples 6.3 and 6.4). There is no recitative, though “Martern” opens with an extended, 60-bar orchestral introduction (which may be dramatically justified in a variety of ways, but must have been intended at least partly to give Caterina Cavalieri a much-needed respite after “Traurigkeit,” which immediately precedes it). The vocal line in each begins on the downbeat with a descending fourth (if one discounts the three pickup notes in the first sung measure of “Der Hölle Rache”) and an upward leap of a sixth followed by a linear descent of three scale steps. The tonal centers of the two arias, however, are very different: “Martern” is set in C major, and “Der Hölle Rache” in D minor.

Konstanze is at her most powerful, morally and vocally, in “Martern,” and the choice of key underscores her nobility of purpose. As discussed in Chapter V, C major is a key that would have been considered *durus* – strong or masculine – in the tonal system of the century that preceded *Zauberflöte*, and which certain critics have also regarded as a Masonic or even sacred key. To set a woman’s aria in this key could be seen as a bold statement about her courage and her character, and Mozart certainly leaves us in no doubt of Konstanze’s principles.

The Queen of the Night, in contrast, has become someone whose motives we should no longer fully trust – whatever the Masonic or political machinations that may have driven its composer and librettist to bring her to such a moral downfall – and her tonality has shifted accordingly from B-flat major to D minor. This change of mode creates a sinister undercurrent beneath her words, although the famously brilliant

coloratura section, wherein she displays her full supernatural powers, is set in the relative major key of F – surely no accident on the composer’s part, and perhaps for reasons outlined in the previous chapter. Yet, despite their divergent moral choices, both women continue to display the level of vocal virtuosity consistent with their rank.

Mozart makes physical demands on Konstanze and the Queen that he asks of no other character, male or female, in any of his operas. (It should be noted that, aside from the high Fs required to sing the Queen, and the fact that the same type of voice typically performs both roles, singing Konstanze demands even greater stamina and skill as Konstanze is onstage for much of the opera and her vocal lines are consistently more complex than those of the Queen.) Each is required to cover a range of substantially more than two octaves (two octaves plus a minor third for Konstanze and two octaves plus a diminished fifth for the Queen). These notes are written into the scores, and both compositional technique and performance practice dictate that they cannot be evaded by clever ornamentation. Of the two, however, Konstanze must make the widest leaps in the shortest amount of time, as she alternates between despair and hope (see Examples 6.5 and 6.6, following; in the second, she must cover two octaves and a second in just five beats between mm. 230–232).

By contrast, the extremes of the Queen’s range are measures, or even pages, apart, with the predominant tessitura generally more contained, demonstrating that even in grief she has greater command of her emotions. Her entire B-section lament over losing Pamina covers only a minor ninth (from middle G to high A-flat, mm. 20–61); and in the C section, what the ear perceives as her widest leap, from middle D to high B-flat, actually occurs in stages (D⁴-B-flat⁴-G⁵-B-flat⁵ – see Example 6.7, mm. 70–72). As shown in Example 6.8, the stratospheric coloratura culminating in her first high F does not occur until m. 92, a full 20 measures later.

Why would Mozart write such fiendishly difficult music for these two characters, unparalleled in any of his operas? First, and most obvious, because he knew the singers for whom the roles were written had extraordinary range and facility, and could execute these feats with no problem (and for a certain type of soprano voice, the music is not necessarily as difficult as it sounds).

But, even more important, the *characters* are extraordinary: women whose strength, bravery, or skill far outshines the qualities exhibited by those around them. Konstanze looks rape, torture, and death in the eye, with no real expectation that she will be rescued, and does not quail; the Queen takes on a powerful male ruler – one who, from her point of view, has violated the sanctity of her home and family – and pursues her objectives with authority and purpose. That these objectives are somewhat misguided may be due in part – using the lexicon of modern management theory – to the fact that she does not have all the information she needs. Sarastro peremptorily abducts her only child, and does not tell either mother or daughter why he is doing so; nor does he ever give Tamino any reason for this monumental act other than his belief that women talk too much and are thus unfit to rule, as though that were sufficient.

While Schikaneder's libretto (at least, with the usual cuts) implies that Sarastro is entirely in the right, Mozart's music belies this premise. The Queen is in a difficult position, left alone and vulnerable by the death of her husband. If Sarastro had chosen to treat her and her station with consideration, rather than dictatorially presuming to know what was best for her and for Pamina, she might have reacted in a very different manner.

The Queen of the Night's second aria, "Der Hölle Rache" (or the "Vengeance Aria," as it is popularly known) is one of the most famous and vocally demanding in the

coloratura soprano repertoire. The four high Fs for which the aria is best known are not intrinsically difficult if the singer possesses the appropriate instrument, but the aria is demanding in that it requires a degree of vocal intensity that does not always go hand in hand with extremely easy high notes. It is far more psychologically complex than casual listeners realize, and that complexity is reflected in the musical structure of the piece.

The Queen's overt purpose in this aria is to convince Pamina to murder Sarastro; how she goes about it is a more subtle matter. She loves her daughter – after all, she has sent Tamino to rescue Pamina, and herself saves Pamina from Monostatos – but she wants to manipulate Pamina to her own ends. Mere threats won't do; she has to manipulate (or in modern slang, “guilt”) Pamina into doing what she wants. So there must also be expressions of a mother's love, however twisted, to further confuse Pamina's already jumbled feelings. Mozart brilliantly conveys this emotional assault in both the vocal and orchestral writing.

The aria opens in D minor, with one measure of tremolo in the violins and violas before the very strong downbeat of the second measure, in which the Queen begins singing. The tremolo immediately establishes the feeling of instability that pervades the aria; the downbeat of the second measure signals the Queen's psychological power over her vulnerable daughter. The first phrase of the vocal line – “Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen; Tod und Verzweiflung flammet um mich her” – encompasses a two-measure introduction and an eight-measure vocal phrase. The Queen's entrance on an upbeat in a rather weak note of her voice (A⁴) contributes to the sense of instability. The first phrase continues in the aurally unsettling key of D minor, but modulation occurs in measure 10 from the dominant, A major, to the relative major key of F in measure 11.

The modulation to F major is significant: the Queen has established that she means business; her object is now to achieve her evil ends by manipulating her daughter. It is telling that the words “Fühlt nicht durch dich, Sarastro Todeschmerzen (if by your hand Sarastro does not die),” mm. 11–16, are set in the much “sweeter” key of F (referred to as the “couple” key in Chapter V), as the Queen’s subtext is, “If you love me, you will do this for me.” The rising arpeggiated octave on “Fühlt nicht durch dich” in mm. 11–12 is a motive that recurs throughout the piece and is used for emphasis whenever the Queen wants to underscore a point. Measures 11–16 remain tonally centered in F major before instability returns in mm. 17–20, with the vii^o7 of V reinforcing the threat, “so bist du meine Tochter nimmermehr (you will no longer be my daughter).” Measures 11–20 complete the second phrase of the piece – once again, an “unstable” ten measures long.

The arpeggiated B-flat octave on “so bist du mein” in mm. 17–18 repeats the earlier motive of “Fühlt nicht durch dich” in mm. 11–12. Having made her point – that she will disown her daughter unless this murder is carried out – the Queen quickly repeats it, but this time in the “couple” tonality of F major, to further unsettle Pamina. The section in F major commencing on the last beat of measure 20 and leading into the arpeggiated staccati rising to the F above the staff is the most famous portion of the aria, and justly so. It is a vocal display, to be sure, but it is also a vocal depiction of hypnotic technique. Mozart endowed the Queen with enormous power; whether she uses that power wisely or righteously is a matter for the reader or listener to decide. In these measures she uses every tool in her considerable arsenal to convince her daughter to perform a deed that goes entirely against Pamina’s intrinsically noble nature. The repeated staccati on high C in measure 25, echoed on high A in measure 27, are like

pinpricks, indicating both the psychological stabbing of Pamina by her mother and the physical stabbing which the Queen wants Pamina to carry out against Sarastro; these are followed by the arpeggiated ascent to high F, which occurs twice in mm. 30–31. It is important to note that the dynamic marking for the orchestra throughout these measures is *piano*, though that instruction is not always observed by the singer. The Queen is engaging in supernatural vocal pyrotechnics (both the ability to sing the notes, and still more to sing them softly, can seem almost supernatural to the listener) to confuse her daughter as much as possible. Then, in mm. 32–35, on the words “so bist du mein,” she returns to more “normal” vocal territory on the staff to give Pamina a moment to reflect (and of course to give the singer a moment to rest) before resuming her vocal and psychological assault in measure 36 with a repetition of the staccati measures 25–31. Note that she does not does not fully repeat “so bist du meine Tochter nimmermehr” (“so bist du” is missing; thus, it is a fragment, not a sentence) in mm. 32–35, but waits until after the second set of high staccati to drive her point home in mm. 43–47. It is my opinion that because the sentence is not complete, the third phrase of the piece, and its first section, end with the cadence on F major in measure 47. Although the phrase is extremely long – mm. 21–47 – it is one complete psychological and musical thought, not finished until the singer cadences in measure 47. It may, of course, be subdivided into two groups, one of 15 measures and one of 12. However, for the performer, there should be no mental repose until the cadence in measure 47 even though there is a moment of physical regrouping in mm. 32–35. The orchestra does not cadence completely until measure 51, and then only for one beat, before the Queen moves on to a new set of threats and the music eventually returns to the tonic of D minor, where the piece ends. It

is notable that the Queen's last sung note in the aria is not the tonic D, but the dominant A, contributing still further to the overall sense of turbulence and uncertainty that pervades the piece.

In terms of tempo, the aria is marked *Allegro assai* – fast enough – and is open to some interpretation by the singer. Lighter voices generally take the aria at a faster clip; the staccati are more dazzling and bewildering that way, and the heavier passages are easier to navigate. Conversely, a singer with a heftier instrument may not sing the staccati as easily, but can bring a more threatening quality to the opening and middle sections of the piece by singing them at a more deliberate pace. While there is some latitude in choosing a tempo for the aria, it seems to have been Mozart's intent that the tempo must remain constant throughout as no other marking is ever indicated, suggesting that the Queen's relentless browbeating of her daughter, whether it takes the form of outright threats or more subtle manipulation, must continue unabated throughout the piece. Having sung this aria literally hundreds of times over many years, probably more than any other single piece in my repertoire, I would argue that both physically and emotionally it is more effective when the momentum remains unabated (that approach to the Fs has always worked best for me, at any rate, and the notation itself 'slows' the tempo slightly for "Verstossen sein' auf ewig, alle Bande der Natur" to make that point quite clear). All in all, the aria is a brilliant psychological exercise, and one that is too easily dismissed as a mere display of coloratura fireworks.

Indeed, given the information at her disposal, the Queen cannot be perceived as completely in the wrong until a later point in the opera than that generally cited. When she comes to Pamina's room and drives away Monostatos, she then brandishes a dagger

and orders Pamina to kill Sarastro. Certainly, this is no benevolent act: but given what has passed so far, and her incomplete knowledge of the situation, the Queen still has some legitimate reason to want Sarastro dead. And, to that end, she uses the fullest extent of her powers – the formidable sequence of four arpeggiated high Fs – to dazzle her daughter into obedience, as shown in Example 6.9, below and following.

Of course, Pamina recoils from the idea of killing another human being – and, to be fair, she has better information about Sarastro than her mother does at this point. Nonetheless, Sarastro’s motives remain unclear, and the Queen still has not lost all sympathy from either her daughter or the audience. (After she leaves and Pamina is confronted by Sarastro, the daughter pleads, “Sire, do not harm my mother,” and he replies, “Do not worry; you shall see how I take my revenge,” which implies an intention to grant clemency to the Queen – but he never does.) Not until the final scene, when we realize that she has allied herself with Monostatos – a man whom she discovered in the very act of trying to rape her daughter – do we know the Queen has abandoned all principle. And how does Mozart make absolutely certain that we know?

He takes away her high notes.

This is no laughing matter, as Mozart, from his intimate knowledge of so many singers, must have known. The Queen’s high notes, like those of any soprano, are the source of her power. And when she sinks down to a B below middle C, it is clear that she has forfeited that power (Example 6.10).

At this point, if we concur with Mozart’s philosophy that reconciliation is the overarching virtue, Sarastro should raise the Queen to her feet and forgive her. He himself has promised to Pamina that he will do so, and occasionally the opera is staged this way (notably at the Salzburg Festival in 2005 with Riccardo Muti conducting); but it is not specified in the libretto’s ending. One may hope that Sarastro would find a way to employ the Queen’s unique talents for good, and that if he did, her stratospheric range would be restored; but we are not given a satisfactory clue to be able to determine the

Example 6.10. Quintet, "Nur stille, stille, stille," Act II, Scene 30, *Die Zauberflöte*, mm. 811-815.

answer. Perhaps clemency was Mozart's and Schikaneder's original intention, and others convinced them that such an outcome did not provide the neatly wrapped-up conclusion that the mass audience would expect. (If, as Brigid Brophy posits, the Queen was intended originally as the heroine of the opera, and the plot had remained intact, no "clemency" would have been necessary.)² Whatever the reasons may be, the task of enlightenment is left to Tamino and Pamina.

Pamina, in her first appearance, could not present a more striking contrast to her mother. She is every inch the damsel in distress, captive, dragged by Monostatos against her will into a bedchamber. Her first words are a plea ("Will my tortures never end?"), followed by a threat from Monostatos and her reply that she is willing to die, only that she dreads the grief her death will cause the Queen. This is not "Martern aller Arten" or even "Durch Zärtlichkeit"; Pamina does not defy Monostatos, nor does she ridicule him. She asks him to dispatch her speedily if his heart cannot be moved by her pleas, death undoubtedly being preferable to rape in her mind. When no immediate response is forthcoming from Monostatos, she faints, in true feminine fashion – a reaction that, if nothing else, does have the effect of postponing whatever he might have been planning to do. (Jacques Chailley says this is Pamina's Masonic "swoon" and is meant to be the equivalent of Tamino's fainting in the first scene.)³ Everything in these 27 measures establishes Pamina as a sweet, innocent young woman who loves her mother and desperately needs a hero to come to her rescue.

Monostatos is further interrupted by Papageno, whose strange appearance frightens the former away and who then comforts Pamina, on her awakening, by

² Brophy; see Chapters 14 and 15, 131-202, for her extensive presentation of this theory.

³ Chailley, 128.

explaining what he and Tamino have come to do. But the tables turn quickly, as Papageno is himself in need of comfort. He is looking for love, thus far without success, and Pamina consoles him by saying that he will surely find someone soon. They follow with the charming duet, “Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen,” which serves a number of dramatic purposes: it shows that Pamina is capable of non-romantic friendship with a man; it portrays her in the traditional feminine role of nurturer, while also demonstrating that her intellect (or “understanding,” as it was often called in Mozart’s day) is far superior to that of at least this particular man; and it outlines what is to be the opera’s overriding premise: that man and woman are not complete without each other (Example 6.11).

Pamina is not called on, in this duet, to display any unusual vocal prowess. The range of her vocal line is only an octave plus a minor seventh; the phrases are not long enough to require great *sostenuto*; there are no high sustained *pianissimi* and no *fioriture*, other than the two gentle melismas that she sings at the end, which may be taken slightly out of tempo to facilitate their execution (the orchestra listens underneath). It’s a pretty ditty that one might sing to a child, which, in many respects, Papageno is. However, the duet does require close harmony and the ability to blend beautifully with another (male) voice; and this foreshadows Pamina’s interactions with Tamino. More than anything else, the duet serves to establish Pamina in the minds of the audience as a heroine in the tradition of every well-loved fairytale – a beautiful girl with a kind heart, who finds herself in distressed circumstances but whose goodness makes her worthy of rescue by the story’s hero. In the relationship between Pamina and Papageno we see manifestations of Wolfgang and Nannerl more clearly than in any other of his operatic characters. (Susanna and Cherubino have some such moments in *Figaro*, but with an

undercurrent of flirtation that never appears between Pamina and Papageno; nor is there ever any interaction between Konstanze and Pedrillo in *Entführung*.) The two have an immediate rapport, with no hint of physical attraction whatsoever; despite their differences in station, they quickly become friends, and Pamina offers Papageno comfort and encouragement in his quest to find a wife. (Pamina's behavior to Papageno very much recalls the words of Charles, Earl Spencer in his 1997 eulogy to Diana, Princess of Wales, when he described his sister as "someone with a natural nobility who was classless").⁴ One almost imagines Pamina being slightly older (though this is surely not the case, given the context of the story), just as Nannerl was a few years older than Wolfgang; she is so clearly more emotionally "grown-up" than Papageno. But then, girls generally do mature earlier than boys, and Mozart, with his customary keen insight about women, captures this disparity in Pamina's music.

If Pamina is to be more than just a passive heroine, however, we must wait for other qualities to manifest themselves as the plot unfolds. And so, indeed, they do.

In her next appearance (Act I, Scene 18), Pamina is brought before Sarastro to explain her attempted escape. As discussed in the preceding chapters, her nobility of spirit manifests itself quite clearly, as she assumes all of the responsibility for the deed. There are no distinguishing vocal lines in this scene, however; it is an extended dialogue between Pamina, Sarastro, Monostatos, and finally Tamino, requiring no vocal pyrotechnics on the part of any of the participants. Tonality, as noted in Chapter 5, does play an important part in underscoring the characters' relationships (most notably the first

⁴ <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9709/06/di.wrap> (accessed June 30, 2008).

meeting of Tamino and Pamina), but no explicit vocal devices are used further to delineate Pamina's personality or set her apart from her mother.

Not until the Queen has demanded that she kill Sarastro does Pamina have another opportunity to sing. After assuring her of his kind intentions, Sarastro has Pamina brought to meet Tamino, whereupon she is subjected to a humiliating rejection by Tamino's refusal (or enforced inability) to speak to her in the name of his enlightenment. This seems unnecessarily cruel on Sarastro's part, if not Tamino's; Pamina herself is bewildered and then heartbroken.

"Ach, ich fühl's" is in certain respects a truncated version of Konstanze's "Traurigkeit," in much the same way as both "O zittre nicht" and "Der Hölle Rache" may be seen as truncated versions of "Ach, ich liebte" and "Martern aller Arten"; but, like them, it does not suffer from the truncation. Into its short 41 measures is distilled a wealth of pure emotion matched by few other arias. Highly developed vocal virtuosity is not required to sing this piece affectingly (meaning no disrespect to any of the great singers who have made Pamina their own, as one must recall that the first Pamina was only seventeen); but the singer must have a keen sense of what she is saying and of the extremely deep grief that Pamina is attempting to express. There are frequent rests – meant to convey hesitation and uncertainty – so the vocal lines are not long; the range is contained in less than two octaves (from middle C-sharp to B-flat above the staff). In these respects, as well as in the choice of key, G minor, the aria resembles both "Traurigkeit" and the 'B' section of "O zittre nicht" when the Queen is at her most vulnerable and sympathetic. As shown in Example 6.12, coloratura is notably absent at the start of the aria, though a brief little descending melisma in measure 3 on the word

Example 6.12. Aria, "Ach, ich fühl's," Act II, Scene 18, *Die Zauberflöte*, mm 1-8.

“ewig” (“forever”) emphasizes the sense of finality and despair while creating the musical illusion of a sob (Mozart gives Konstanze the identical figure, a fourth higher, in measures 35 and 39 of “Traurigkeit”). The pulsations of the strings (in 6/8, ♪ 7 ♪ ♪ 7 ♪) underneath Pamina (Example 6.12) would seem to indicate her beating, anxious heart (a similar figure is used beneath Konstanze in “Traurigkeit,” although in 4/4: ♪ 7 ♪ 7). The fact that Pamina pleads directly to Tamino despite her embarrassment, and probably her sense of rank and dignity, speaks to her courage.

But something extraordinary happens in measures 14–15: Pamina’s briefly bursts into coloratura, on the word “Herz,” which seems intended to pierce through Tamino’s wall of indifference. The choice of word is deliberate; she is telling him that he has broken her heart, and clearly, she still thinks well enough of him to believe that she can reach him in some way (Example 6.13). At the same time, this figure bears a strong similarity, though the tempo is much slower, to her mother’s majestic extended melisma on “So sei sie dann” in the *cabaletta* of “O zittre nicht,” in which the Queen promises Tamino that Pamina will be his if he succeeds in rescuing her (Example 6.14, measures 80–83). Furthering the resemblance is the return to B-flat – granted, the relative major of G minor, but also the key that Mozart used consistently for both Konstanze and the Queen in moments of heroism. The major tonality and the *fioritura* – even at a slow tempo – indicate a certain degree of confidence on Pamina’s part in her ability to touch Tamino’s heart and regain his love. Perhaps, too, the coloratura expresses some anger – and why not? Pamina has been led to believe that Tamino loves her, by both Sarastro and Tamino himself; yet she is now faced with what she can only perceive as inexplicable and devastating rejection. If even a vestige of anger is present, then the use of a figure that

recalls the Queen's first aria, in which she paints Sarastro as "an evil fiend," is all the more appropriate. Despite her entreaties, however, Tamino turns away, and Pamina's music retreats back into the constrained melody and rhythm in which the aria began. As shown in Example 6.15, she has one more small outburst, "Fühlst du nicht der Liebe Sehnen?" ("Can you not feel my love?") in measures 27–30 – culminating, tellingly, in the word "Liebe" on high B-flat (as does Konstanze on "armes Herz" in the final phrase of "Traurigkeit" – see Example 6.16), before repeating, in increasingly short and increasingly lower phrases, "So wird Ruh im Tode sein" ("thus will my sadness end in death"), echoing Konstanze's melodic descent. The musical effect is rather like a flower bowing its head and closing in on itself, as Pamina resigns herself to grief and death; again, the figure is remarkably similar, though truncated, both to the final bars of "Traurigkeit" and of the *cavatina* or B section of "O zittre nicht" ("denn meine Hilfe war zu schwach"/ "my help was too weak" – see Example 6.17). Pamina will later emerge as her own person; but in this moment, she is very much the biological daughter of the Queen and the musical daughter of Konstanze.⁵

Kristi Brown-Montesano says, in comparing "Ach, ich fühl's" with "O zittre nicht," that "it is easy to hear what [Carolyn] Abbate calls their 'acoustic genealogy.' The vocal melodies of both arias initially descend from the fifth degree to the tonic, make a dramatic leap followed by a gently punctuating 6-5 appoggiatura, and fall again to a 4-3 appoggiatura over a dominant chord." Indeed, the sincerity of the daughter's grief, and the strikingly similar manner between its expression and her mother's earlier lament, may well lead one to reconsider any doubts about the veracity of the Queen's story and/or motives.

⁵ Brown-Montesano, 91, referencing Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 68.

Example 6.16. Aria, "Traurigkeit ward mir zum Losen," *Die Entführung*, Act II, Scene 2, mm. 129-143.

The trio (Act II, Scene 19) is analogous to the duet that Konstanze and Belmonte sing before their judgment by the Pasha, with the difference that Sarastro is physically present to keep Pamina and Tamino apart, while the Pasha's influence is felt *in absentia*. In contrast to their *Entführung* counterparts, Pamina despairs while Tamino remains more resolute (a reversal of Konstanze's and Belmonte's roles in their duet); Sarastro is the intruder. Initially, Tamino and Sarastro sing together in close harmony while Pamina asks her questions in bewildered apposition; tellingly, she wanders into G minor, the 'weak' and 'unstable' feminine key, while the two men try to convince her that their way is best (Example 6.18).

Yet Tamino shows signs of being torn; by measure 35, he is singing with Pamina against Sarastro ("Wie bitter sind der Trennung Leiden" / "Oh, how bitter is the pain of parting"). Brown-Montesano calls this Pamina's "bravest moment" in that she ignores Sarastro, addressing Tamino directly and attempting to take the fate of their relationship into her own hands – and, in so doing, "she refuses to let the Brotherhood mediate her love."⁶ Although their vocal lines break apart again, and he rejoins Sarastro while she pleads, "Tamino, Tamino!", the young lovers do reunite vocally in their poignant "Kehre wieder! Lebe wohl" at the trio's end, while Sarastro (in a somewhat serpentine vocal line underneath them) assures that the parting is not forever.

But the men depart, and Pamina is left alone – utterly alone, in her view, as she has lost father, mother, husband-to-be, and even Sarastro. There is only one alternative available – death.

⁶ Brown-Montesano, 120.

The Suicide Scene (Act II, Scene 26) is unremarkable vocally, although, as previously discussed, Pamina's resolve to take her own life in the Stoic tradition does display a certain heroism, as underscored by the scene's eventual modulation to the male heroic key of E-flat. What a contrast, then, is her entrance in Scene 28, before the trials of Fire and Water. She does not ask anyone's permission, but says, "Tamino, halt! Ich mus' dich sehn" ("Tamino, wait! I must see you"). It is here that she assumes the mantle of feminine heroism and here, she recalls Konstanze in "Martern aller Arten." For just a few measures, in C major, the key of "Martern" and Gounod's "key of God" (as referenced in Chapter V), she directs Tamino (again, she does *not* ask him) to play the magic flute (Example 6.19). These are, not coincidentally, the most flowing, unbroken lines she sings in the course of the entire opera.

What follows is almost a short *arietta* (in a play it would qualify as a monologue), in which Pamina retails her father's creation of the flute, and at the end of which she repeats her instruction to Tamino ("Nun komm und Spiel die Flöte an; Sie leite uns auf grauser Bahn" / "Now come and play the flute, and it will light our darkened way"). From the darkness of night in which the flute was made, it will lead them to the ultimate light of Truth, Beauty, and Reason.

After this moment, neither Pamina nor Tamino sings another solo line: their voices are completely intertwined for the remainder of the opera. Perhaps one may thus infer that Pamina has the last word; but if so, her intent is not to dominate Tamino but to join him as his equal. And that, above all, is the message of *Die Zauberflöte*.

Example 6.19. Duet, "Tamino mein, o welch ein Glück," Act II, Scene 28, *Die Zauberflöte*, mm. 303-324.

When Mozart wrote *Entführung*, just before his wedding, he created an idealized version of his Constanze, complete with vocal acrobatics that the real Constanze probably would not have been entirely comfortable executing. Perhaps she was still in the shadow of her more glamorous sister Aloysia, who had first captured his heart (and who frequently sang the role of Konstanze in the years that followed, even though it was not written for her). But he created Pamina at the end of nearly a decade's marriage to a young woman who loved him devotedly; with whom he laughed and grieved; who worked and studied by his side, offering advice and opinions to which he gave substantial weight; and who found a way to consolidate his debts and put him on a footing that, had his health not given way, might well have led him to the prosperity and fame he so richly deserved. They had, quite literally, been through the trials of fire and water together.

In Pamina, Wolfgang created a role that Constanze herself could have sung had she pursued a professional singing career, as is demonstrated clearly by its vocal similarity to the music that we know he wrote for her. His heroine no longer needed virtuosic embellishments. By giving those embellishments to the Queen, rather than to her daughter, perhaps he was declaring, once and for all, that a woman who could sing them was not necessary to his personal happiness. If the Konstanze of *Entführung* bore his beloved's name, Pamina *was* his beloved. No finer tribute has ever been penned by any man to the woman he loved.

In Mozart's life, and in her preservation of his musical legacy, Constanze was, and remains, a true feminine hero.

Conclusion

It has never been my intent to present *Die Zauberflöte* as a paean to feminine courage that ridicules men, or exposes them categorically as scoundrels or even benevolent despots. While that does seem to be the purport of many present-day books, movies, and television comedies in particular, it is not a viewpoint consistent with the Masonic ideals of Truth, Beauty, and Reason, nor one that I believe Mozart could possibly have endorsed. Moreover, it is inimical to my own personal beliefs and a thesis that I could never support. It has been one of the great privileges of my musical life to sing Konstanze and the Queen of the Night, and I would not dream of subverting what I believe to have been their composer's intent merely to satisfy modern political theory.

Rather, I believe that *Die Zauberflöte*'s portrayal of women has been misunderstood, particularly with regard to its treatment of the Queen, and that it reflects the real limitations placed on women – even those of royal birth – in the late eighteenth century. While the libretto seems in places to underscore stereotypical representations of

women as “too emotional,” and this may indeed have been the prevailing contemporary view, Mozart uses explicit musical devices to belie these implications.

The Queen is not perfect; but neither is Sarastro. He may be to some degree an “enlightened despot,” like Emperor Joseph, but he is still an autocrat, with much room for improvement. When Tamino and Pamina are united at the opera’s close, *both* rulers are succeeded by younger and more enlightened versions of themselves. This is as it should be. Has not mankind, throughout civilization, cherished the hope that each succeeding generation would grow in wisdom and justice?

For feminine heroism to flourish, one overriding element is required which I have not mentioned explicitly until now: *The hero must be worthy of the heroine*, particularly if she takes on great risk or makes any sacrifice on his behalf. Carrie Chapman Catt, in her call to arms at the National American Women Suffrage Association Convention in August of 1916, as the United States stood on the brink of World War I, spoke these words: “To many a family, the men will never come back. The husband who returns to many a wife, will eat no bread the rest of his life save of her earning.”¹ A woman supporting a disabled war veteran is heroic; one who maintains an addict or an adulterer is tragic. *Die Zauberflöte*, like *Die Entführung* (and *Figaro* to some extent), gives its heroine a worthy object, although it may be argued that Tamino and Belmonte both cause unnecessary grief for their sweethearts – Tamino by refusing to speak to Pamina, on Sarastro’s orders; Belmonte by questioning Konstanze’s fidelity. In each instance, the heroine’s courage – and hence, her love – emerges triumphant; though perhaps she is also, by forgiving or rising above those obstacles, more purely heroic than her male counterpart.

Die Zauberflöte demonstrates, in a manner equaled by few other works, the ideal of men and women as two halves of a whole, neither complete without the other. Tamino and Pamina each bring to their marriage complementary virtues that will make their union stronger; neither is morally or intellectually superior to the other. Although Tamino's behavior may be more "rational" and Pamina's more "emotional" at times, the outcome of the opera demonstrates clearly that both these dimensions are needed for a successful partnership – or, for that matter, a successful individual life. As Robert Wallace writes, "Symmetry withheld and finally granted is one of the basic satisfactions of eighteenth-century art."² Nowhere is this perfect resolution more evident than in the conclusion of *Die Zauberflöte*.

The opera's profound search for truth – first presented in Tamino's questioning by the priests and his subsequent vow of silence, and finally superseded by Pamina's willingness to join him in the trials of fire and water – could almost be an enactment of I Corinthians 13:

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (KJV, I Corinthians 13, vv. 9-13).³

Tamino's quest for truth is heroic and sincere, and yet, by itself, inadequate. It is Pamina's fearlessness, born of her love, that enables him to finish his journey. And so,

¹ http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/speeches/catt_the_crisis.html, accessed October 25, 2008.

² Robert Wallace, *Jane Austen and Mozart: Classical Equilibrium in Fiction and Music* (Athens: University of Georgia Press), 8.

³ I have taken the liberty of substituting 'love' for 'charity,' as has been done in all subsequent English translations; otherwise, text is directly from the KJV.

perhaps a fitting summation may be found in the closing lines of a twentieth-century fairytale, the 1989 film *Pretty Woman*:

Question: And what happened after he climbed up the tower and rescued her?

Answer: She rescues him right back.⁴

Wolfgang and Constanze Mozart would surely have agreed.

⁴ J.F. Lawton, *Pretty Woman* (Los Angeles: Buena Vista, 1990), final scene.

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