

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was twenty-eight years of age when, in the autumn of 1784, he joined a Masonic Lodge. As a pianist, little Wolfgang had been an infant prodigy, exhibited by his father throughout Europe, but he was now a recognized and admired composer living in Vienna. The very year of his initiation his first great opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*, had been produced in Paris. This was, however, before the days of copyright law and the earnings of genius were meager.



During the eighteenth century, Freemasonry in Vienna had a political as well as a benevolent side. It counted as its members many highly placed politicians and ecclesiastics whose ideal was the regeneration of humanity by moral means. It was hated by the Catholic Church and certain despotic political authorities who deemed it dangerous, both to religion and the wellbeing of the state. The Church, however, even as today in certain Latin countries, did not consider it expedient to challenge high-placed persons nominally its members but also of the Fraternity.

The Empress Maria Theresa had been one who was opposed to Masonry and, in 1743, had ordered a Viennese Lodge raided, forcing its Master and her husband, Francis I, to make his escape by a secret staircase. The Emperor Joseph II (1780-90) was favorably inclined to the Fraternity, although the clergy did their best to get the Lodges suppressed.

Such was the Masonic milieu when Wolfgang Mozart became a Master Mason. He must have been greatly moved and inspired by his experience. Almost immediately he composed his *Freemason's Funeral Music* and his music for the opening and closing of a Lodge. He now composed his opera, *Don Giovanni*, and his three great symphonies - the E flat, the G minor and the C major, as well as a great number of concertos and chamber-music works.



His last great opera, *The Magic Flute*, opened in Vienna on the evening of September 30, 1791. Mozart conducted the first two performances, when he was overtaken by his last illness. He lingered on while the opera had an unprecedented run of more than one hundred consecutive performances. It is said that in his sick bed, watch in hand, he would follow in imagination the performance of *The Magic Flute* in the theatre. Then he died after its 67th performance.

The Magic Flute makes no mention of Freemasonry as such, but it has always been accepted as a Masonic opera. Musicians assert that even the music has much Craft significance, beginning in the overture with its three solemn chords in the brass.

In keeping with the fashion of the time, the plot is half-serious, half-comic, a fantasy of magic and mystery laid in a never-never land called Egypt. It depicts the ancient mysteries and presents much Craft symbolism. To the Viennese of that day, *The Queen of the Night* was clearly the unfriendly Empress Maria Theresa; the good Sarasto was Ignas von Born, an eminent scientist and Masonic leader; the hero Tamino was the good Emperor Joseph and the heroine Pamina, the Austrian people themselves.



The first program credited the libretto to the actor-producer, Schikaneder, but it is now thought that it was written by Giesecke, the friend and intimate of Goethe and Schiller, who probably desired to remain anonymous for political reasons.

The opera has remained popular through the years and is included in the present repertoire of the Metropolitan Opera Company.

Source: Bro. Newcomb Condee