

OPERA ATELIER

timeless



Photo Credit: Bruce Zinger

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

The Magic Flute

April 6 – 13, 2013

Study Guide

Making of an Opera

February 25 – March 1, 2013

www.operatelier.com

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About Opera Atelier

Opera Atelier holds a unique place in the North American theatre community, producing opera, ballet and drama from the 17th and 18th centuries. These productions draw upon the aesthetics and ideals of the period, featuring soloists of international acclaim, period ballet, original instruments, elaborate stage decor, exquisite costumes and an imaginative energy that sets Opera Atelier apart. Opera Atelier is not in the business of “reconstruction” - rather, each production is a new creative effort and takes its own place in history. We strive to create productions that would have been recognized and respected in their own time while providing a thrilling theatrical experience for modern audiences.

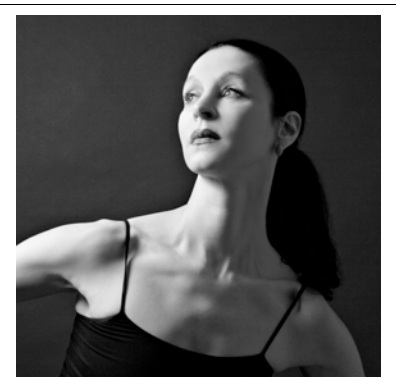
Founded by Marshall Pynkoski and Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg in 1985, Opera Atelier has been acclaimed throughout Canada, in Houston, Cleveland, New York, Stuttgart, Halle, Bremen, London (BBC Proms), Paris, Montreux, Citta di Castello, Singapore, throughout Japan and, most recently, in Seoul, Korea. We collaborate with some of early music’s most distinguished artists including Andrew Parrott, Trevor Pinnock, Hervé Niquet, Marc Minkowski and many others. Opera Atelier’s 2000 production of Lully’s *Persée* (performed for the first time since the 18th century) was hailed by William Littler of The Toronto Star as “the operatic event of the year, a triumph for director Marshall Pynkoski, choreographer Jeannette Zingg, their design team and their cast....”

Mr. Pynkoski and Ms. Lajeunesse Zingg also direct the School of Atelier Ballet (SAB) which operates under the umbrella of Opera Atelier. Graduates of the SAB are performing professionally in companies throughout North America and Europe, including the National Ballet of Canada and Opera Atelier.

Opera Atelier’s commitment to education extends to our Making of an Opera Program, which has introduced thousands of children to all aspects of production and performance. Opera Atelier has received four Lieutenant-Governor Awards for Excellence in Arts Management.



Marshall Pynkoski



Jeannette Lajeunesse
Zingg

Baroque Opera Explained

Baroque opera has its beginnings in the late Renaissance in Italy. It was originally conceived as an attempt to revive ancient Greek drama. Although no classical Greek music survived, Renaissance scholars were aware that Greek drama included declamation, and choral chanting. Consequently, early attempts at reviving this art form included these elements in addition to stories based on Classical themes and mythology.

As absolute monarchs throughout Europe identified themselves more and more strongly with Greek heroes and myth-makers, they appropriated these stories and frequently used them as a means of personal promotion.

By the 17th century, opera had become a highly respected and codified art form in its own right. The gorgeous and elaborate productions of the 17th and 18th centuries were expensive to mount and required exceptionally well-trained singers, instrumentalists, dancers, machinists and scenic artists.

The greatest composers of the world lent their talents to developing this art form that came to be seen as one of the sublime examples of human creativity. Opera encompasses all of the arts, and enjoyed unparalleled popularity from its conception right up to today.

Opera is the stylish, dazzling, often beautiful, often sad, warm-hearted, funny, serious and even sexy form of music that has enriched our lives for hundreds of years. Originally an art form for a privileged few, opera has evolved into an international multi-media crowd pleaser.

The word “opera” is Italian and comes from the plural for the word “opus” which means work.

Opera combines the best of all worlds: spectacular singing, rich orchestral sounds, drama, dance, beautiful sets, lavish costumes, elaborate lighting and special effects. These artistic qualities combine to make opera one of the most powerful and comprehensive art forms.

The word “Baroque” was originally used as an insult to describe art or music that was overly extravagant, even slightly bizarre. It comes from the Portuguese word *barroco*, a misshapen pearl. In the 20th century it has become the respectable name for music from about 1600, when opera was born in Italy, until about 1750, the year of Johann Sebastian Bach’s death.

The Magic Flute Facts

Composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in 1791, libretto written by Emanuel Schikaneder around 1790.

Mozart and Schikaneder became friends when Schikaneder visited Salzburg with his theatre troupe in 1780. Mozart began work on the score in March 1791, and completed it by July – only four months later. Two months after that, the opera premiered in Vienna on September 30, 1791. Mozart conducted the premiere, Emanuel Schikaneder performed the role of Papageno, and Mozart’s wife’s sister – a member of Schikaneder’s theatre company – performed the role of The Queen of the Night. Mozart died just two months after the premiere of *The Magic Flute* on November 20, 1791, at just 35 years old.

Opera Atelier’s production of ***The Magic Flute*** will run April 6 – 13, 2013.

The Characters and Voice Types in *The Magic Flute*

Tamino	tenor
Pamina	soprano
Papageno	baritone
The Queen of the Night	soprano
Sarastro	bass
Three Ladies	sopranos
Monostatos	tenor
Papagena	soprano
Speaker of the Temple	bass-baritone
Three Spirits	sopranos
Armed Men	
Priest	

A Glossary of Opera Terms

Aria: Italian for 'air', an aria is the major vocal piece where one singer expresses feelings and showcases the voice. Called a "static" moment in the scene, an aria freezes the action of the plot to focus on the emotion or thought.

Duet: An aria composed for two. Two singers express their feelings to each other or to the audience.

Libretto: Italian for 'little book,' a libretto refers to the script of an opera, written by the librettist. There is much debate over which is written for which: libretto for the music, or vice versa!

Recitative: Speech-singing, where the singer semi-chants the words in rhythm of free speech. Recitative is used to further the plot ("kinetic") or set up an aria and can be seen as a precursor to hip hop music and spoken word poetry.

Singspiel: A German term, a singspiel is a highly theatrical opera involving fantasy and has spoken dialogue between arias.

Chorus: A group of singers who perform the vital role of providing support to the principle singers. The chorus sets the scene and creates the mood for an opera, much like the way a Greek chorus furthers the plot and propels the action. It is composed of all voice ranges.

Voice Categories and Types

Bass: The lowest of the male voices.

Basso Buffo: Italian for "buffoon bass", who plays comic roles.

Baritone: A middle-range male voice.

Castrati: Castrati flourished during the period 1650-1750 singing both male and female roles in the soprano range. Their popularity was due to the strength and flexibility of their voices.

Coloratura Soprano: Singer with the highest range of notes.

Contralto: The lowest range of the female voice, rich voice quality. Mezzo and Contralto singers are almost interchangeable, and for this reason we almost never hear of contraltos.

Countertenor: A male alto who trains his falsetto voice rather than the lower range. Countertenors specialize in parts originally written for castrati.

Haute Contre: The "high tenor" usually sings higher than the other tenor roles.

Helden Tenor: Literally a "heroic tenor" with a strong voice and great stamina.

Mezzo-Soprano: A middle-range female voice.

Soprano: Singer with a high range of notes. Lyric sopranos are light in quality while dramatic sopranos have a full rich tone.

Tenor: Has the highest range of notes of the male voices.

The Magic Flute Synopsis

ACT I

The young prince Tamino faints while pursued by a dragon. The Three Ladies kill the dragon and run to tell their mistress, The Queen of the Night, of the handsome stranger. An ostentatious bird-catcher, Papageno, arrives and claims he saved Tamino's life. The Three Ladies return and tempt Tamino with the portrait of their mistress's daughter, Pamina, and The Queen of the Night arrives to beg Tamino's aid in rescuing her daughter from an evil sorcerer, Sarastro. The Three Ladies provide protective magical instruments to both Tamino and Papageno.

At Sarastro's castle, Pamina is attempting to escape the clutches of Sarastro's slave, Monostatos. Monostatos flees when the flamboyant Papageno arrives, and Papageno tells Pamina her rescuer Tamino is near. Tamino has been led to the temples of Reason, Nature and Wisdom. He is welcomed by a priest, The Speaker of the Temple of Wisdom, who informs Tamino that Sarastro is not the villain.

Monostatos and his gang are again in pursuit of Pamina, but Papageno saves her again. Sarastro arrives and tells Pamina that her mother is not to be trusted. Tamino and Pamina meet for the first time. The priests of the Temple of Wisdom lead Tamino and Papageno to be purified before initiation.

ACT II

Tamino and Papageno are warned of the great trials they must pass to achieve wisdom, and the rewards (Pamina for Tamino and a wife for Papageno) if they succeed. They begin the first trial – to stay silent and refrain from eating or drinking.

Pamina is still being pursued by Monostatos. He is driven off by The Queen of the Night, who arrives to give Pamina a dagger with which to kill Sarastro.

Papageno fails the trials almost immediately, and encounters an old woman who claims to be his sweetheart just before she disappears.

Pamina follows the sounds of Tamino's flute, but is heartbroken when he won't speak to her. Tamino is praised for his faithfulness to his vows, and the lovers are told they must part so Tamino can finish the rites. Distraught, Pamina is about to end her life when Three Spirits stop her and lead her back to the prince. They vow to stay together, and pass through the last two trials together.

Depressed, Papageno attempts to hang himself when he is also saved by the Three Spirits. They remind him about his magic bells, and at their sound the old woman re-appears and becomes the beautiful Papagena. The Queen of the Night is joined by Monostatos, and together their forces attempt unsuccessfully to attack Sarastro. Sarastro, Tamino and Pamina celebrate their victory over darkness.

Baroque Acting and Gesture

By Marshall Pynkoski, Opera Atelier Co-Artistic Director & The Magic Flute Director

Over the past 25 years Opera Atelier has developed an extremely detailed and recognizable performance style based on the gestural acting/oratorical technique of the 17th and 18th centuries. Essays in classical oratory by Quintillian and Cicero provided a model for Baroque actors, as did postures and gesture taken from both classical and contemporary paintings and sculpture. Rhetorical gesture was designed to accompany individual words of text, rather than to display the pervading emotions. Like the text, gestures were coherently and gracefully linked to provoke the maximum response from the spectator. Ideally, the use of gesture assists the actor in eliciting an emotional response from the audience, while he maintains control of his technique – a necessity when dealing with the sheer density of text of most Baroque opera and drama. The Baroque actor is a storyteller. It is his job to make the audience feel what he describes. The Baroque actor strives to ensure that audience members are not voyeurs, rather they are participants in the emotional journey of each player.

The gestures for both rhetoric and opera fall into the following categories:

- Emphatic gestures – in which the actor enforces the important words by gesture;
- Imitative gestures – in which the actor imitates, for example, the gentleness of a scene he talks about with a gentle gesture;
- Affective or expressive gestures – in which the actor expresses a particular passion such as fear or grief with specific gestures.

Some of the gestures can be combined to form a complex gesture expressing two or more meanings at once. Each of them can be performed in such a way as merely to suggest its meaning rather than to make it explicit. Baroque gesture and rhetorical speech patterns prevailed on the European stage throughout the nineteenth century

The proscenium stage that we know today was invented in the 17th century. Before this time theatrical events took place out of doors on movable carts and platforms or in the banqueting and reception halls of palaces and great homes. Opera as we know it was invented in this period as an entertainment for rich and powerful patrons wealthy enough to commission these spectacular and frequently allegorical dramas set to music. An increasing demand for these entertainments led to the creation of public theatres with seating arranged around a stage that very much resembled a picture in a frame. The scenic designer of these productions (who often worked as an architect, engineer and painter) treated the stage as his canvas and the carved and gilded proscenium as his frame.

Part of the challenge in designing the various locations specified in an opera was creating the illusion of depth on a frequently shallow stage. We need only to look at the painting of the period to discover the inspiration for theatrical designers of the day. Artists since the Renaissance had perfected the study of perspective drawing and painting. These principles were used by stage designers to create painted scenery that reduced in scale as it approached the back of the stage. This "forced perspective" was employed on painted backdrops, side panels that slid back and forth into the wings and borders that were raised or lowered from the ceiling. Using these elements the designer could create changeable scenes of pastoral landscapes, turbulent seas, cloudscares (often people with gods and goddesses) or virtually any desired location. Wooden clockwork machinery operated by stagehands was concealed below or above the stage and moved the scenery and provided the means for many special effects; hand-cranked waves could churn a painted sea, chariots flew through the air on ropes, and demons and dragons ascended from hell through trap doors. All theatres at the time were lit with candles or oil lamps and it is not surprising that most eventually burnt to the ground. A famous and perfectly preserved example with original machines and scenery is the Drottningholm Court Theatre in Sweden.

Opera Atelier is a company devoted to the production of period inspired opera, ballet and drama. As part of a creative team, the set designer's task is to understand and visually interpret the style and technology of the Baroque stage. While never recreating historical designs, Opera Atelier produces original sets and costumes inspired by these early sources.

Having researched the conventions of the early stage, the designer must then study the storyline of the opera by reading the libretto and determining the changes of location from scene to scene. At this point he or she must consult with the director about an overall visual concept for the piece.

Ultimately, a good design is one that is both beautiful and functional. To ensure that it works in conjunction with the movements on stage required that the designer work closely with the director from the start.

Drawings, painting, and scale models are employed to establish the mood of each scene and to determine entrances, exits, and special effects. Generally a complete miniature set is created in advance so that the designer, director, carpenters and scenic artists can consult on the practicality and cost of the design. The designer must work with a technical director who oversees the construction and installation of the set, a lighting designer who will help create the changing atmosphere on the stage and prop-makers who build furniture and objects handled by the singers or actors.

The Orchestra

Excerpts from Tafelmusik's study guide, *Go for Baroque* by Allison Mackay.

How is a Baroque orchestra different from a modern orchestra?

1. Opera Atelier's orchestra, Tafelmusik, plays on so-called "original instruments" - the instruments which the composers of Baroque music played themselves. Orchestral instruments have changed over the years to reflect changing tastes in sound production. Modern violins have to be loud enough to be heard in the back row of a large concert hall; the violin of Bach's time was usually played in a small church or the salon of a palace and the warm sound of gut strings (made from sheep intestines) was loud enough to fill the intimate space.
2. One of the most striking features of a Baroque orchestra is the continuous presence of the harpsichord. It doubles the line played by the cello and bass in the left hand and makes the orchestra sound louder by filling out the harmonies with chords. The harpsichord's distinctive sound is created by quills made from bird feathers which pluck the strings, making the bass line sound clearer and the rhythms more driving.
3. Baroque orchestras were usually directed by one of the players instead of a separate conductor (although at Opera Atelier, we have a conductor because there are soloists and choristers who need direction).

The Orchestra - A Baroque Innovation

In Renaissance instrumental ensemble music, each part was played by one musician. Baroque composers continued to compose solo and chamber music but they also experimented with creating a fuller sound by putting several performers on one part to form an orchestra.

Baroque composers began to compose more extended instrumental pieces than in earlier times and they created forms in which several movements could be grouped together. Sometimes these movements were in contrasting but related keys. Our modern system of major and minor keys is an invention of the Baroque period; Baroque composers were the first to think of their music as a series of chords built above a bass line, each having a relationship with the main note of the key.

Dance Terms

Corps de ballet: A group of dancers in a ballet company separate from soloists and principals.

Renaissance Dance: Renaissance dance was the first dance style to be recorded. The High Renaissance dates from approximately 1400 to 1600 although none of these periods can be pinned down to exact dates. Renaissance social dancing varied from lively group dances such as the Branle, to stately court dances such as the Pavane. Theatrical dances were often versions of social dances with complex patterns. The dances of the Commedia dell'Arte were very acrobatic in contrast to the court ballets.

Baroque Dance: The Baroque period 17th and 18th centuries developed both theatrical and court choreographic styles greatly due to the Academy of Dancing established during the 1660's at the behest of Louis XIV. Many Baroque dances have come down to us through dance notation. The vocabulary of steps is huge and far more virtuosic than in earlier periods.

Early Ballet: Early ballet began to evolve out of Baroque toward the end of the 18th century. It shares many aesthetic principles with the Baroque but is also an attempt to reflect Greek and Roman antiquity due to the discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Romantic Ballet: Romantic ballet (approximately 1830 - 1860) was a revolutionary change in aesthetic with story ballets and a change from Greek myths to European fairy tales as subject matter.

Classical Ballet: Classical ballet came after the Romantic and is characterized by brilliant virtuosic technique, the short tutu, and the predominance of the ballerina.

Pas de deux: A dance for two.

The Magic Flute Choreographer's Notes

By Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg, Opera Atelier Co-Artistic Director & The Magic Flute choreographer

“Here is where the movements of the dancers, all the while preserving the discipline of classical technique as they weave and unweave, strike us with their self control and absence of any hurriedness or tension; there is not the slightest constraint among the contiguous or juxtaposed pairs who are dancing together or opposite one another. Everything is strictly in place, measured, firm and in harmonic accord with the rhythm and tempo that flow from the orchestra.”

Akim Volynsky 1861-1926

Russian art historian and journalist, on the corps de ballet

This description applies to Baroque dance forms as much – or even more – than it does to later styles. I have always enjoyed creating choreography for a large number of dancers because of the powerful spiritual quality that emanates from a group of people working harmoniously together, with a common sense of serving the art form. Mozart's music for the Dance of the Priests encourages this selfless quality in its gravitas and ordered calm. The dancers' movements are in the noble style of the late eighteenth century. This legacy of the Ancien Régime, with its sense of harmony, balance and human dignity reflecting an enlightened mind, becomes a visual statement about Sarastro and the ideas that he represents.

“If I appreciate so highly the value of classical dance, it is not simply a matter of taste on my part, but because I see exactly in it the perfect expression of the Apollonian principle.”

Igor Stravinsky

-Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg

A Convincing Fight!

By Jennifer Parr, Fight Director

What is stage fighting? It is exactly that, fighting for the stage; but what does that mean?

Perhaps we should start with what it is not. It is not fencing. Although a stage fight should look as though it is being made up before your eyes, it is, in reality, a very carefully choreographed set of movements similar to a dance. Stage fighting is sometimes referred to as 'combat mime' because fighters must work together to create an illusion of spontaneity, an illusion of danger for the audience while doing their best to protect each other from any real danger of injury.

In the 17th and 18th centuries the 'Science of Arms' or 'Art of Self Defense' was an inescapable part of the life of every man of the upper classes. Not only was the ability to handle a sword necessary for war but it was also fashionable. Duels were constantly fought throughout this period although they were against the law, and boys would be taught from a young age 'the art of elegantly dispatching a neighbour to the next world.' Some girls managed to share their brothers' lessons, or otherwise learned the skills necessary to protect their own honour; some even fought duels, but they were the exception not the rule.

When a stage fight is choreographed for an Opera Atelier production it draws on this wealth of historical material and then goes beyond the reality. A fight is always a 'spectacle', a display of virtuoso skill with the apparent chance of danger similar to a trapeze or tightrope act. At the same time a stage fight must also be something more than spectacle; it must tell the audience something important about the characters involved, and must advance, or give a new twist to, the story.

The process of creating a stage fight always begins with the libretto and music of the opera and with research into the historical period. The next step involves in-depth discussions between the director and fight director to determine the role of the fight in the director's overall vision of the opera, followed by discussions of set and costume design and casting. The fight director then prepares the choreography of the fight and teaches the performers (singers and/or dancers) working constantly with the director.

Opera Atelier stage fights have sometimes featured the use of broadsword and spear but usually focus on the rapier, either single rapier, or in combination with a second rapier, dagger, buckler, or cape – typical weapon combinations of the period. The first Opera Atelier production to feature stage fights was the gala performance of *The Loves of Mars and Venus* in 1990. Since then many more fights have been featured in productions ranging from Mozart's ever popular *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, to the exciting 'new Baroque' performances of Charpentier's *Medée*, Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* and Lully's *Persée* (on both stage and film).