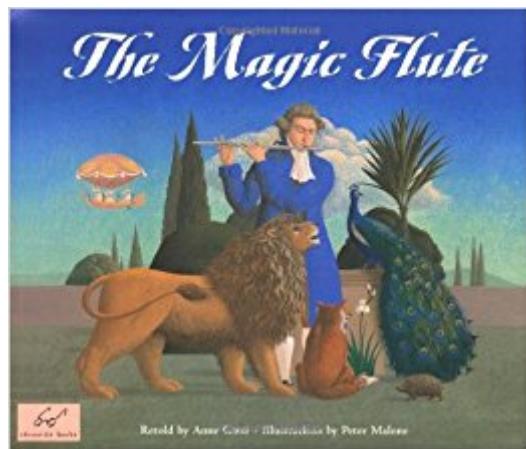


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The Magic Flute



Synopsis

Brought to life with glorious illustrations, this enchanting retelling of Mozart's famous opera is sure to delight lovers of fairy tales and music alike.

Book Information

Paperback: 40 pages

Publisher: Chronicle Books (October 6, 2005)

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Customer Reviews

Mozart's last opera, the simultaneously comic and serious fairy tale *The Magic Flute* (Die Zauberfloete), is as problematic as anything in the medium. Some deplore it for its perceived sexism and racism; some deplore it for its arguably goofy plot. "Depending on your perspective," writes David Foil in his essay in this book, it "is either the silliest opera ever written or a work of profound insight that happens to be dressed in the trappings of a cartoon." That it is Mozart's sublime music that ennobles something meant to be merely a short-lived popular entertainment is not in question. This volume, issued by Black Dog Opera Library, puts together Foil's essay, lots of pictures, a complete libretto (with running commentary) in English and German, and a classic recording on two compact discs in one comfortably priced hardcover package. It is a fine introduction to what remains a great opera, goofy plot or no. (And Bellini's plots aren't even goofier?) It is worth buying just for the now out-of-print EMI/Angel 1972 (remastered in 1987) recording, contained on two very long-playing CDs, found inside the front and back covers of the book. The dialogue portions work better in this version than in most recordings. Anneliese Rothenberger is an appealing Pamina, and Walter Berry is a delightful Papageno. Edda Moser nails the difficult music of the Queen of Night, while Kurt Moll is our day's definitive Sarastro. Wolfgang Sawallisch, brisk and never lugubrious, conducts his soloists and the Bavarian State Opera Chorus and Orchestra with total certainty. --This text refers to

an alternate Paperback edition.

Adapting any work to sequential art is intimidating, but adapting opera takes a special kind of confidence. Adapting comic opera—particularly one by Mozart—takes a confidence that borders on hubris. Fortunately, Russell, who's adapted everything from Neil Gaiman's short stories to *The Ring of the Nibelung*, has the talent to back up his ambition. Sure and confident, Russell's art switches from tense action sequences to slapstick without missing a beat. His sense of physical characterization is also impressive, helping readers keep track of Mozart's often confusing cast of characters. Even traditionally less-recognized aspects of comics presentation, like color and lettering, here serve the story brilliantly. And as impressive as Russell's art is, his writing is possibly even more noteworthy. Much of this graphic novel is told without narration or dialogue (presumably to simulate the longer musical passages Mozart included in the opera), and Russell's selection of sequential images keeps the story moving along without ever losing readers. When he does use dialogue, often the hardest part of a graphic novel to pull off properly, he hits just the right tones: brash and aspiring for young Prince Tamino, earthy and hearty for cynical bird-catcher Papageno, haughty and cryptic for the mysterious Queen of Night. NBM's reprint of Russell's classic adaptation superbly displays the artist's skill at both writing and illustrating. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I bought this because we were going to see a local abbreviated production. Now, my daughter wants us to read it to her all the time. And she wants the CD playing in the background as we read. She is very happy that Papagena wears pink. She is very concerned about the padlock on Papageno's mouth. She has cast the opera from the beautiful illustrations. The first lady is Mommy, the other ladies are her sitter and her sitter's mother (?). Her brother Will is the serpent, "but it is just a costume." "Mommy kills 'ill" is a frequent refrain (wishful thinking? Nah, she dotes on her brother. She is just type-casting. That is why I, her father, is Prince Tamino. She knows many of the details of the story, even though we often selectively edit the text when we read it to her. My only quibbles, as someone who has performed, directed and conducted this opera many times, are the odd deviations from the libretto. Some plot points are muddled and some characters are misinterpreted. I find myself telling the story as written by Schikaneder and Mozart more often than not, which is extra work. Also, some of the musical selections are odd. I would have picked numbers that move the plot such as the quintet of the "bad guys" in the finale rather than arias that stop the show, such as Sarastro's snoozer.

I just wanted to warn people thinking of getting this book -- make sure you're getting the one you want! The editorial review for the children's version of "The Magic Flute" refers in part to a Black Dog Opera version -- *that's* the one with the libretto and two CDs. The children's version (retold by Anne Gatti) has only one CD of selections from the opera, and no libretto, just a retelling of the story. I bought the children's version by mistake, based on the editorial review and the customer reviews (some of which also claim that 2 CDs are included), but it turns out these do not refer at all to the children's version. That said, if you're just looking for something for your kids, definitely go for the children's version (ASIN 0811810038). The illustrations are cute, and the text is written to follow along with the CD selections... fine for the age range they indicate. If, however, you want the full libretto with translations, and the full opera on CD, make sure you get the "Black Dog" version which is referenced as "hardcover edition" on the kid's version page. (Hope that makes sense!)

This retelling is child friendly as well as a nice overview of the opera's plot for any age of reader. It is best as a read aloud - in smallish doses - to children younger than fourth grade due to the word density. I send this book home frequently when my piano students play excerpts from The Magic Flute. The artwork is bright, and the CD gives the students an idea of the original work. I recommend reading the book and then viewing some scenes on YouTube.

Nowhere else will you find such a deal. I was skeptical at first, but was not disappointed when my first Black Dog set came in the mail. The book is extremely informative, helpful, and educational, and the CDs are high-quality recordings of notable performances. I do not know how they do it for such a good price, but get them while you can --- I wish I had known about these two years ago!

I did not buy this for myself, but for my seven year old grand nephew, together with the abridged Met Magic Flute. His father, my nephew, has reported the two of them going together like hand and glove. I trust his judgement, so I am recommending the combo to anyone who wants to introduce children to the magic of opera.

Thank you

The book includes the lyrics but also the story of the "making". My children (under 9) and I really enjoy listening to the 2 CDs

This is definitely the best opera by Mozart. This edition is well organized and gives you all music and dialogs.

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