

Mozart, Music and Masonry

By William K. Bissey, MPS

(Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria on January 27, 1756 and died in Vienna on December 5, 1791. He was the seventh and last child of Leopold Mozart and his wife Anna Maria, nee Pertl. Mozart was baptized the day after his birth on the feast day of St. John Chrysostom; thus, his first two names. Of the seven children born to Leopold and Anna Maria, only Wolfgang and his older sister Nannerl (Maria Anna) survived infancy. Nannerl was four and one-half years older than her famous brother.

Leopold was a violinist and later organist and Assistant Conductor at the Court of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Austria. Among Wolfgang's paternal ancestors were several operative master masons (i. e., architects) including his great-grandfather David.

By watching his sister at her piano studies, Mozart was playing simple pieces on the Clavier at age four. He gave a public concert at age five and one-half. Over the succeeding year, Mozart played at the Royal Courts of Munich, Vienna, Paris, and London. He composed his first opera before he was fourteen (*Mitridate* K.87) and directed it for twenty performances in Milan, Italy.

Mozart and his father Leopold made several musical journeys throughout western Europe. Most of these journeys were made possible by the generosity of Archbishop Schrattenbach who recognized Wolfgang's genius and did not object to the projects. Schrattenbach's successor, Hieronymus von Collordeo, was a dull and unartistic individual who did not approve of the various projects. Mozart's relations with the new archbishop become increasingly strained and he left Salzburg for Vienna.

On August 4, 1782 Mozart married Contanze Weber. He described his wife as having no wit, but plenty of common sense and the kindest heart in the world. The union had six children, but only two survived.

In Vienna, Mozart achieved his greatest fame as a composer, but was never able to secure a decent paying post. Neither he nor his wife was capable of managing their financial affairs. And it was in Vienna that he became a Freemason.

There has been much confusion and many falsehoods about Mozart's death and burial.

In 1790 he was in poor health in Prague. He took ill again at the end of November, 1791 and was confined to bed. On December 4 his condition worsened and he died at 55 minutes past Midnight on December 5, 1791. The cause of death was originally registered as *hitziges Friesel Fieber* (severe military fever). Later his death was diagnosed as due to *rheumatische Entzündungsfieber* (rheumatic inflammatory fever).

Last rites were held at St. Stephen's Cathedral on December 7, 1791. Burial was at St. Marx Cemetery outside the city walls. He was quietly buried in a mass grave in accordance with Contanze's orders and in accordance with then contemporary Viennese custom. The lack of mourners at the burial was also a contemporary Viennese custom. The weather was mild with a frequent mist, with a light east wind and a temperature of about 37°F. A few days after the burial, a Lodge of Sorrow was held at Lodge *zur gekrönten Hoffnung* (Crowned Hope) which was the newly adopted name for Lodge *zur neugekrönten Hoffnung* (Newly Crowned Hope).

Austrian Freemasonry

The first lodge, in what was then the Austrian Empire, was founded in Prague in 1726.

In 1731, six English Brethren initiated and passed Francis, Duke of Lorraine, at an occasional lodge at the home of the English ambassador to The Hague of the Austrian Netherlands. He was later raised at an emergency lodge in Norfolk, England. He married Maria Theresa in 1736 and in 1740 became Emperor and joint ruler of the Austrian Empire of the Hapsburgs.

Maria Theresa was strongly opposed to the Craft. In 1764, she issued an Imperial Decree forbidding the practice of Freemasonry. This Decree was ignored.

In 1765, Francis died and his son, as Joseph II, became joint ruler with his mother. Joseph was not a Freemason, but had a benign interest in the fraternity. Maria Theresa died in 1780. On March 26, 1781 Joseph decreed that no spiritual or secular orders were to submit to a foreign authority outside the Empire. Thus on April 22, 1784 the *Gross Landesloge von Österreich* (The Grand Lodge of Austria) was established with 62 lodges.

On December 11, 1785, under pressure from the clergy, Joseph issued a decree ordering the consolidation of lodges. The eight lodges in Vienna were to be consolidated into three lodges. All lodges were to periodically submit detailed membership lists for the inspection of the government.

Joseph II died in 1790 and was succeeded by his brother Leopold II who was pro-Masonic. Leopold ruled for only two years. His son and heir Francis II was anti-Masonic and believed that all secret societies, including Freemasonry, were working against him. Given this climate, lodges voluntarily closed in 1794 and the Craft was formally suppressed in January, 1795. Freemasonry did not return to Austria until 1918.

Sadie notes in his biography of Mozart that "The society was essentially one of liberal intellectuals, concerned less with political ideals than with the philosophical ones of the Enlightenment, including Nature, Reason and the brotherhood of Man." This description of the fraternity was reflected in the membership of the Viennese lodges which included nobility, senior army officers, leading businessmen, and intellectuals of the city.

Mozart and Freemasonry

Mozart was proposed for membership in Lodge *zur Wohltätigkeit* (translated either as Charity or Beneficence) on December 5, 1784. On December 14 he was initiated as a *Lehrlinge* (Entered Apprentice), becoming number 20 on the lodge roll. Ten days later he attended Lodge *zur wahren Eintracht* (True Concord) and, at the request of his mother lodge, was passed to the degree of *Geselle* (Fellow Craft) in that lodge on January 7, 1785. The Master of Lodge True Concord was Ignaz von Born, a distinguished scientist and writer.

Leopold visited Vienna in early 1785. Because he was to be in Vienna but a short time, his progress through the degree work was expedited. Leopold was proposed as a candidate on March 28, 1785. He was initiated in Lodge Charity on April 6, 1785. It was in Lodge True Concord that he was passed on April 16, 1785 and raised to the degree of *Meister* (Master Mason) on April 22, 1785.

The date of Wolfgang's being raised to the degree of Master Mason is the subject of some debate. Smyth, Nettle, and others maintain that the actual date is unknown. Main and Chailley state he was raised on April 22, 1785. The divergence of opinions is due to the interpretation of the attendance register of April 22, 1785 of Lodge True Concord.

In a letter commenting on Bro. Smyth's paper on Mozart, Bro. F. de Backer of Kortrijk, Belgium states the following. The minutes of Lodge True Concord of April 22, 1785 show the following "Bro. Leopold Mozard (sic) of Lodge *zur Wohltätigkeit* ...[with two other candidates]...were raised to the Third Degree of our Royal Order with the accustomed ceremonies." Bro. de Backer continues stating that "In the Attendance Register of *Eintracht* for 22 April both Leopold and Wolfgang signed as a Master Mason but the name of Leopold was struck through because he had signed as a Master Mason while still a Fellow Craft." A photo copy of the attendance register in question is reproduced as plate 2 in Nettle's book *Mozart and Masonry*. Thus, Wolfgang Mozart was raised as a Master Mason sometime between January 7, 1785 and April 2, 1785.

Mozart's Music

Although he lived only thirty-five years, Mozart produced over 600 works: 41 symphonies, 15 major church choral works, 23 piano concertos, 130 concertos for other instruments, 23 operas, and some 500 other pieces of music.

A chronological catalog of his music was compiled by Ludwig von Köchel whose K. numbers are used to identify Mozart's works. There have been several revisions of this catalog, including a revision in 1937 by Alfred Einstein, a cousin of the famous scientist Albert. Alfred Einstein has been considered by some as the foremost Mozart scholar of the 20th century.

Mozart's Masonic Music

In Smyth's paper on Mozart there are several lists of what are to be considered Mozart's Masonic music. Some of the works were composed for performance in lodges or were obviously Masonic in nature. Some Mozart scholars include other compositions that were Masonic in spirit, but not written to be performed in a lodge. A conservative estimate yields seven compositions which are Masonic.

On March 26, 1785, Wolfgang composed *Gesellenreise* (Fellow Craft's Journey) K.468 with the text by Bro. Franz Joseph v. Ratschky. It was first performed in Lodge True Concord on April 16, 1785, the date that Leopold was passed to the degree of Fellow Craft. It can be assumed that Wolfgang wrote this composition in honor of his father's being passed to the second degree.

A cantata, *Die Maurerfreude* (Masonic Joy) K.471, with words by Franz Petran, was composed on April 20, 1785 and first performed in Lodge Crowned Hope on April 24, 1785. The cantata was composed for a celebration in honor of Ignaz von Born who was Master of True Concord.

Maurerische Trauermusik (Masonic Funeral Music) K.477 was composed in Vienna on November 10, 1785 for a Lodge of Sorrows held by Lodge Crowned Hope a week later. The occasion was the funerals of Brothers Georg August, Duke of Mecklenburg-Streletz and Franz, Count Esterhazy of Galantha.

In December of 1785, Mozart wrote Opening (K.483) and Closing Odes (K.484) for Lodge Crowned Hope. The texts of both compositions were by Bro. Augustin Veith Edler von Schittlersberg, Senior Warden of Lodge True Concord.

Eine Kleine Freimaurerkantate (Little Masonic Cantata) K.623 was composed by Mozart in Vienna on November 15, 1791 with the text purportedly by Emanuel Schikaneder. The work was written for the dedication of the temple of Lodge New Crowned Hope. The performance was held on November 18, 1791 which was two days before the onset of his fatal illness. This was the last work completed by Mozart.

The Little Masonic Cantata was published after his death and the score stated that the words were the work of a member of Lodge New Crowned Hope of which Schikaneder was not a member.

***Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute)**

Of all of Mozart's works, *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute K.620) is one of the most famous. The libretto was written by Bro. Emanuel Schikaneder who was director of the *Theater auf der Wieden* in Vienna. It was at that theater that The Magic Flute was first performed on September 30, 1791.

The two act opera is a confusing story whose first act starts as fairy tale, continues as a comedy, and ends in philosophic tirades. As Chailley notes, "The second act is occupied

entirely by initiatory trials." These trials, a part of the Entered Apprentice degree of European Freemasonry, evoke the four elements of Earth, Air, Water, and Fire.

The story of The Magic Flute has many sources. Schikaneder apparently drew the basic plot from Liebeskind's *Lulu oder Die Zauberflöte*. Many of the ritual elements were from Jean Terasson's novel *Sethos* which has an ancient Egyptian setting. Another source for the Egyptian setting was Gebler's *Thamos, König in Agypten*.

Schikaneder was a member of Lodge *Karl zu den drei Schüsseln* (Charles of the Three Keys) in Regensburg, Germany. His "free ways" caused him to be suspended for six months on May 4, 1789. He was not listed on any Viennese lodge roll.

In a book on opera published in 1849 in Germany, it was suggested that the libretto was written by Johann Georg Metzler who was known as Giesecke. It was convenient that the book was published long after everyone involved was dead. Most scholars dismiss the idea that someone other than Schikaneder wrote the libretto. However, at least one published copy of the opera cites the libretto having joint authorship of Schikaneder and Giesecke.

According to Sadie in the New Grove Dictionary of Opera, "*Die Zauberflöte* is an allegory set in no real locality or historical period. Ancient Egypt is evoked by the mysteries...The exotic costumes and settings are a mask. Mozart and Schikaneder intended a coded representation of Freemasonry."

The Magic Flute is accepted as a Masonic opera. But to what extent Masonic symbolism is used in the opera depends upon who is interpreting the symbolism of the opera. Also, it should be remembered that the opera is written using the symbolism of European Masonic ritual which is somewhat different from the English rituals from which American rituals are derived. And, if the theories of one French musicologist, Jacques Chailley, are to be accepted, the opera is really about Adoptive Masonry. Adoptive Masonry, which admits both men and women, was popular in France in the 18th century. Chailley's book contains illustrations which demonstrate that five, not three, is the prominent number in Adoptive Masonry. After the abolition of Freemasonry in Austria, some argued that the opera was political, not Masonic.

Oscar Wilde, in his Preface to *Dorian Gray*, commented that "All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril." Perhaps the best comment about the interpreting the symbolism of The Magic Flute is from William Mann, a music critic for *The Times* of London. Mann states that he is not a Mason, but that his father was a Mason. Mann's father said that The Magic Flute had special relevance for him but not as much as people have suggested.

The symbolism of the opera, which is limited to the first degree, starts with the overture. According to Sadie "The overture is in the 'masonic key' of E flat major (with three flats). The introduction sounds three chords, two of them twice. This signifies the number three

(or possibly the masonic feminine number five)." The Magic Flute is loaded with threes: three ladies, three boys, three knocks at the door, three priests, three temples (named Wisdom, Nature, and Reason), etc. The frontispiece of the original printed libretto of 1791 shows a blazing star and what looks like a compass and a trowel in an Egyptian setting.

The first act's Masonic symbolism is limited. Besides the repetition of the number three, there is serpent which is considered a symbol of brotherhood. There is also a reference to a Starblazing Queen.

It is in the second act that Masonic symbolism becomes pronounced. In Scene One, priests are questioning Sarastro about the youth who is accompanying him. The questions are similar to those asked of the Senior Steward in the First Degree. In the same scene Sarastro notes "...the greatness of our arduous craft."

It is in Scene Two that the trials begin. Of the four trials, only Water and Fire are readily visible. The first trial is a trial by Earth in a room resembling a Chamber of Reflection. According to MacNulty, "European Masons provide an opportunity for thought before joining the Order." The prospective candidate sits alone in a small room and writes his reasons for wanting to become a Freemason. His reasons for wanting to join the order are reviewed by the Brethren and, if acceptable, then the individual accepted as a candidate.

The next trial is Air which is announced by the arrival of the Three Boys in a flying chariot who present Tamino with a "wind" instrument, the flute, which Chailley says is a sign of Air.

Scene Three clearly shows the trials by Water and by Fire. Much later in Act Two there are two mountains, one with a waterfall and one that spits fire.

In an aria in Scene Twelve, Sarastro sings "...our holy masonry..."

It has been suggested that the primary characters in The Magic Flute represented people in the history of Austrian Freemasonry. Sarastro is Ignaz von Born, the Queen of the Night is Empress Maria Theresa, Tamino is Joseph II, and Pamina represents the people of Austria. These are speculations as Mozart did not leave any information as to whom the characters in the opera may have represented.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the German poet and novelist, was also a Freemason. He started writing a sequel with the title of *Der Zauberflöte 2. Theil* (The Magic Flute, Part Two). Only a fragment of this work was ever completed.

William K. Bissey is a member of North Park Lodge No. 646 and a Dual Member of St. Johns Lodge No. 20. The author would like to thank Brother James E. Granneman, Librarian of the Valley of Indianapolis, AASR for his assistance.

References

Abbot, Scott. *Fictions of Freemasonry: Freemasonry and the German Novel*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991.

Brophy, Brigid. *Mozart the Dramatist*. Revised ed. New York: Da Capo Press, 1990.

Chailley, Jacques. *The Magic Flute: Masonic Opera*. Translated by Herbert Weinstock. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.

Coil, Henry Wilson. *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*. Revised by Allen E. Roberts. Richmond, Virginia: Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., Inc., 1995.

Köchel, Dr. Ludwig Ritter von. *Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichris sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amade Mozart*. Revised by Alfred Einstein. Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1937.

Denslow, William R. *10,000 Famous Freemasons*. Vol. 3 and 4. Trenton, Missouri: Missouri Lodge of Research, 1959.

Landon, H. C. Robbins. *Mozart and the Masons: New Light on the Lodge Crowned Hope*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1983.

_____. *Mozart: The Golden Years 1781-1791*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1989.

MacNulty, W. Kirk. *Freemasonry: A Journey through Ritual and Symbol*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991.

McLeod, Wallace. "Masonic Symbols-Their Use and Abuse." *The Philalethes* 48 (June, 1995): 52-55.

Main, Lewis L., Jr. *Brother Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*. Buena Park, California.: Southern California Research Lodge F& AM, n. d.

Mann, William. *The Operas of Mozart*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *The Magic Flute*. Libretto by Emanuel Schikaneder, English version by Andrew Porter. London: Faber Music, Ltd., 1984.

_____. *The Complete Masonic Music*. Choir and Orchestra of the Vienna *Volksoper*. VoxBox CDX 5055, 1991.

Nettl, Paul. *Mozart and Masonry*. New York: Dorset Press, 1957.

Pick, Fred L. and G. Norman Knight. *The Freemason's Pocket Reference Book*. 3d ed. Revised by Frederick Smyth. London: Frederick Muller, Ltd., 1983.

Pott P. H. "Working the Craft in The Netherlands." On-line. Internet. Available:

www.porta.com/vrijmetselarij/workingcraft

Sadie, Stanley. *The New Grove Mozart*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1983.

_____, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. New York: Macmillian, 1992.

S. v. "Die Zauberflöte," by Julian Rushton.

Smyth, Frederick, "Brother Mozart of Vienna." *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*

(Transactions of Quator Coronati Lodge No. 2076 London). 87(1974): 37-73.

William K. Bissey
8305 Sobax Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46268-1731