

THE MAGIC FLUTE: the Characters and the Cast

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1765–1791)

The poster of
The *Magic Flute* first performance



The creation and production of *The Magic Flute*, the last opera by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (27.01.1756–5.12.1791), is bound with the lives of many known mineralogists.

In Europe of Mozart's time, mineralogy, as well as other natural sciences, was on the rise and, if one can say so, in fashion among the enlightened public. True, Mozart himself moved a lot among vivid personalities, including famous scientists. Possibly, an impression remained that, in his childhood, he got from his meeting with F.A. Mesmer, famous for the discovery of “animal magnetism”; but “mesmerism” itself never awoke his interest (Osborne, 1986). Having found himself in Vienna amongst bright enlighteners and intellectuals, Mozart felt the taste of creative freedom and profound sympathy for his new acquaintances.

In the end of the 18th century, the intellectual and creative elite were largely concentrated at Freemasonry lodges. There one could meet writers Lessing, Goethe, Diderot, Voltaire; scientists Newton, Fichte, Bergmann etc. The Freemasonry ideals were close to Mozart and he tried to incorporate them, as well as the Masonry symbolism, in his music. In 1784, he was admitted to the *Viennese lodge Zur Wohltätigkeit* (“Beneficence”) and through the rest of his life he remained a faithful and devoted member of the Craft; he even involved his father Leopold Mozart and his new friend, the composer Joseph Haydn. There was also another reason for Mozart to join the Freemasons: a chronic want of money – such was the price he had to pay for his creative freedom. “He was eager to accept any order that would bring him a gulden” (Hoppler, 2000). Feeling a constant fear of impeding poverty and dogged, in addition, by bodily ailments, Mozart was looking for support and protection. He hoped to find them in the Freemasonry, and, in fact, he obtained there a friendly favor and payable orders for his musical compositions.

It was at the lodge that he met another Freemason, Emmanuel Schikaneder, the owner, enterpriser, and librettist of the Freihaus Theater auf der Wieden, a folk theater in the outskirts of Vienna. Mozart readily accepted Schikaneder's offer to write a “magic opera”. He laid hopes on this composition as on a talisman capable of bringing him success and luck. In the process of writing this opera, Mozart established creative contacts with several prominent personalities who placed themselves on record not so much in the art as in the natural sciences.

The first night of this opera, which was named *Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*, “KV 620” on the List of Mozart's works), took place on September 30, 1791,