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1964 Recording of *The Magic Flute**

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Diese Aufnahme ist bezaubernd schön

Deutsche Grammophon's 1964 Recording of
The Magic Flute

Aaron Dalton

Singing speaks most eloquently for itself in real time and doesn't fall into words on paper very easily," writes a former voice teacher of mine. "It is either beautiful or it isn't. If it's beautiful, words aren't adequate. If it isn't, words about it have to be either false or cruel."¹ Why, then, would I offer the following dissection of what I believe to be the greatest recording of arguably the greatest opera? And how, with a glut of *Magic Flute* recordings on the market (I aborted my tally at over forty casts on dozens of labels), can I presume to identify one particular recording as the greatest among them? After all, if you believe my teacher's claim above, would not even the most rapturous hyperbole prove inadequate?

Trusting that what you have read in this publication has piqued in you some trace of musical, cultural, historical, intellectual, or spiritual interest regarding *The Magic Flute*, I want to channel your simmering impulses and ensure that your next step is a good one. Expectedly, opera enthusiasts champion nearly as many "quintessential" *Magic Flute* recordings as there are, well, *Magic Flute* recordings. But as one having familiarity with the opera as both a fan and a performer, I would do you a disservice by recommending anything other than the 1964 Deutsche Grammophon² set as your starting point.

My defense, meaning both my justification for writing this article as well as for the claims made in it, rests primarily on the otherworldly performances of tenor Fritz Wunderlich as Prince Tamino and baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau as the bird catcher Papageno. With these characters dominating the opera's musical score, it would follow that the work's definitive recording would be the one lucky enough to feature in tandem

these two, the definitive recorded interpreters of these roles. And the degree to which each singer's sound complements that of the other—indeed, these two voices are perhaps as mutually well-suited as those of any tenor-baritone duo on record—makes for a delicious aural indulgence.

Yet the success of this particular *Magic Flute* does not depend solely on the merits of Wunderlich and Fischer-Dieskau, for other artists, including those filling the secondary roles, help to bear the standard in mostly outstanding fashion. Admittedly, not every note sung on this recording is of entirely uncompromised beauty (and my words in those rare cases may seem cruel, though I believe them to be true), but my sincere hope is that what follows below will somehow lead you to discover for yourself that, even above its many superb rivals, *diese Aufnahme ist bezaubernd schön*.³

The Supporting Cast and the Orchestra

The secondary roles in and the orchestra of *The Magic Flute* are essential to the development of the opera's plot, symbolism, and principal characters. This recording's supporting parts features both established stars and up-and-coming singers, giving performances that range from admirable to phenomenal. I will touch here on a few of the latter.

Hans Hotter (The Speaker). In a cameo appearance that, if live, might have elicited maniacal ovations from even the most staid of German audiences, bass-baritone Hans Hotter, the foremost Wotan⁴ of the mid-twentieth century, blesses this recording as the Speaker, a role that consumes less than five minutes of stage time yet facilitates the critical watershed in Prince Tamino's quest. With unmatched vocal color and impeccably restrained power, Hotter's Speaker imbues the young prince with light and wisdom in a scene that pairs—in terms of both the plot and the contemporary opera-world—the promising initiate with the sagacious veteran, the hope of the future with the triumphs of the past.

James King and Martti Talvela (Armed Men). As the Armed Men, James King and Martti Talvela add the undeniable strength and quality of voice that would soon make Wagnerian icons of both of them.⁵ Their duet, throughout which the tenor doubles the bass at the octave,⁶ is taken at an unusually slow pace, which emphasizes the weight of the piece's message but requires almost freakish vocal resilience to sustain the long melodic lines, especially in the tenor part (example 1).⁷

Antonia Fahberg, Raili Kostia, and Rosl Schwaiger (Three Boys, or Genii of the Temple). The premiere *Magic Flute* in 1791 cast in the role of First Boy, Anna Schikaneder, niece of the opera's librettist Emanuel Schikaneder, and flanked her with two boy trebles. However, a cursory

EXAMPLE 1. The Armed Men's duet, throughout which the tenor doubles the bass at the octave.

The image shows a musical score for a duet between two Armed Men. The top staff is for the Tenor (1st Armed Man) and the bottom staff is for the Bass (2nd Armed Man). The lyrics are: "1er (Armed Man) wird sein durch Feu - er, Was - ser, Luft und Er - de." and "2ter (Armed Man) wird sein durch Feu - er, Was - ser, Luft und Er - de." Below the vocal parts is a piano accompaniment with treble and bass staves.

review of major recordings and recent stage productions shows no obvious *de facto* convention regarding the gender assigned to these small but important roles.⁸ The casting choice in the case of this Deutsche Grammophon recording results in an unqualified success, most notably in the pivotal and, as sung here, luminescent second-act suicide scene with Pamina, “Bald prangt, den Morgen zu verkünden” (Soon the morning begins to proclaim), discussed in greater detail below.

Chorus and Orchestra. Although *The Magic Flute* is not usually numbered among the choral monoliths of opera such as Verdi’s *Nabucco* or Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*, the relatively few measures Mozart does devote to the chorus represent some of his finest work for large vocal ensemble. Berlin’s RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) Chamber Choir⁹ is bold and expansive during brief tutti chorus passages, most notably the ecstatic “Triumph!” upon Tamino and Pamina’s successful completion of their trials. Interestingly, and perhaps unintentionally, the occasional lack of absolute vocal homogeneity within the ranks of the male chorus¹⁰ actually enhances the listener’s perception of intimate humanity, suggesting that this is not an enclave of droning eunuchs but, rather, a quorum of individuals: mortal men who have achieved brotherhood only after passing through trials uniquely suited to each initiate.

The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, under Karl Böhm’s baton, executes Mozart’s difficult score with lyricism and depth. On this Deutsche Grammophon recording, the Berlin Philharmonic is not pushed to the paces at which the Vienna Philharmonic often clipped for Böhm on the 1955 Decca *Magic Flute*,¹¹ but the up-tempi here are sufficiently lively and the slower tempi appropriately deliberate—but never too ponderous—to convey the full breadth of meaning and emotion inherent to the partitur.¹²

Particularly noteworthy are the full-bodied overture and the urgent preface to Tamino's exchange with the Speaker at the temple. The Speaker scene is a notorious challenge for conductors because of the balance between impulse and restraint, didacticism and subtlety that it demands of the singers and orchestra, making all the more difficult the task of synchronizing the efforts on the stage with those in the pit. Böhm rallies the musicians to the cause, creating the indisputable touchstone for future attempts at the scene. The opportunity to hear the result is, in my opinion, alone worth the cost of the recording.

Three Principal Performers

As I have suggested, Wunderlich's and Fischer-Dieskau's singing sets an impossibly high standard—not only for Taminos and Papagenos on other recordings, but also for the three other principal characters on this one. The performances of Roberta Peters, Franz Crass, and Evelyn Lear are not without flaw (the most glaring example being Lear's try at Pamina's second-act aria), and they do not sing consistently to the level of their leading tenor and baritone. But collectively they do shine, for the most part, brightly enough so as not to dim the achievements of Wunderlich and Fischer-Dieskau.

Roberta Peters (The Queen of the Night). Like the anguish of Leoncavallo's Canio, the braggadocio of Verdi's Duke, and the endearing egocentricity of Rossini's Figaro,¹³ the wrath of Mozart's *Sternflammende* (Starflaming) Queen spawns some of the form's most recognizable sound bites. She is the one who grants the opera-going initiate safe fodder for après-show chat over drinks and dessert. She is the one who somehow produces noises typically associated with alley cats and the rack. She is the one who above all else, we hope, hits the money notes.

Unless you have the ears of a bat or a piano tuner, Roberta Peters's Queen leaves little to be desired in the vocal pyrotechnics department. It is the less virtuosic portions of her arias, primarily in the first and less famous of the two, that are not as satisfactory as they might be. In her first aria, for example, while her ample middle register gives unusual richness to the lengthy andante introduction, her support of the tone is not energized consistently during some of the legato mezzo forte phrases. This results in a sound that is at times slightly throaty and dampened and a pitch that teases the lower end of perfection more liberally than one would expect from a recording of this scope, especially on sustained notes and slower descending intervals.

Soon after some of these less gratifying phrases, the tempo quickens, additional ledger lines appear above the staff, and Peters takes us to the promised land. As a parting gesture, perhaps in penitence for a few imprecise pitches on the melismas¹⁴ that precede it, she offers the prince and the audience a graceful high F (f³) that actually has life and vibrato—and even a slight tenuto,¹⁵ for good measure, in defiance of the scored staccato¹⁶—rather than the inert squeak mustered by so many who attempt it (example 2).

Do not be disheartened by what sounds to my ears like an editing clip immediately following the high F (f³). Found typically within a few measures—for reasons that do not need elaboration—of particularly difficult vocal or instrumental passages, these “splice scars” are not uncommon in postwar, pre-digital age studio recordings and are often much more conspicuous than this example. If you come across them in this recording (which otherwise boasts a clarity far superior to that which one might expect from a forty-year-old analog recording) or others of the era, give them the benefit of the doubt, bearing in mind the widespread digital doctoring that often overpolishes modern studio recordings and can make millionaire matinee idols out of second-tier talents.

Clearly, Peters is more in her acrobatic element with the second aria, “Der Hölle Rache” (The vengeance of hell), which camps out somewhere in the upper stratosphere and lacks taxing, sustained lyrical phrases such as those found in the first aria. Aside from slipping again to the lower realm of the targeted pitch on the series of high Cs (c³) leading to her famous high F (f³) arpeggios,¹⁷ Peters delivers all the agility and nearly ultrasonic

EXAMPLE 2. The Queen of the Night's first aria with high F (f³).

The image shows a musical score for the Queen of the Night's first aria. The top staff is the vocal line, labeled "Queen:". It begins with a series of sixteenth notes, followed by a high F (f³) note. The lyrics "e - - - - wig dein," are written below the notes. The bottom two staves are the piano accompaniment, consisting of a right-hand part with chords and a left-hand part with a steady eighth-note bass line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4.

EXAMPLE 3. The Queen of the Night's second aria, "Der Hölle Rache" [The vengeance of hell], with high F (f^3) arpeggios.

fury that, for over two hundred years, audiences have come to expect from the vengeful Queen (example 3).

As Peters rages through her second aria, she does in fact approach the bounds of technical control. But the Queen's curse hardly makes for compelling drama when sung like a vocalise¹⁸ or, worse yet, "Let the Bright Seraphim."¹⁹ The effect that Peters's ragged aggression produces in the listener is at once discomforting and electrifying. Though of inconsistent vocal beauty, this Queen's singing does not disappoint and is most often engaging, replete with the types of brilliant high notes for which most coloratura sopranos would kill—and probably have.

Franz Crass (Sarastro). Franz Crass ennobles his Sarastro (the Queen's arch-nemesis and her musical antithesis) with one of the most mellifluous recorded offerings the role has received. He exhibits remarkable breath control and caresses the challenging phrases with sensitivity and lyricism, attributes that lean his character appropriately more toward the side of the sympathetic patriarch than that of the tyrannical demagogue who too often bullies his way around *Magic Flute* stages.

While virtually every note Crass sings in the middle and upper portions of his vocal range resonates with wisdom and authority, the then-thirty-six-year-old bass-baritone's lower range does not always rumble with the cavernous potency sufficient to evoke the gods' grandeur and

counterbalance the Queen's shrieks. In his scenes and arias, some notes below low A-flat—of which Mozart scored plenty—seem somewhat restricted, such as the low F in his entrance dialogue when he tells Pamina, “Zur Liebe will ich dich nicht zwingen, doch” (I will not compel you to love, however). Here, Crass struggles with what is admittedly one of the most difficult leaps in the operatic bass repertoire (example 4).

Sarastro's final statement, “Die Strahlen der Sonne vertreiben die Nacht, / Zernichten der Heuchler erschlichene Macht” (The sun's rays drive away the night, destroying the hypocrites' usurped power), which has none of the extremely low notes found elsewhere in the opera, exemplifies the beautiful and powerful singing Crass invests in the role, singing that helps his Sarastro to endure among the best on record.

Evelyn Lear (Pamina). Evelyn Lear's contribution to this recording is that of a perplexingly inconsistent Pamina. The vast majority of her singing is warm and appealing, often breathtakingly so. She sings her first-act duet with Fischer-Dieskau, “Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen” (In men who feel love), in a delicate lilt, with her voice always focused but never forced. Even in the uppermost ranges, she leaves no room for improvement on the many high Gs (g^2) and A-flats ($a\text{-flat}^3$), blending with the baritone in an impressive *sotto voce*.²⁰ Even the precarious pair of ornaments at the duet's end—each one peaking in a high B-flat ($b\text{-flat}^3$) and being sung over light orchestral scoring that leaves the voice nearly as exposed as it would be in a *bona fide* *cappella* cadenza—sounds effortless, with discreet *rubato*²¹ and a lush legato.

Lear excels in the second-act ensembles, such as her trio with Sarastro and Tamino, the riveting suicide scene with the Three Boys, and, above all, the spellbinding trial of water and fire scene with Tamino and the Armed Men. Often lost in the shuffle of the opera's marquee excerpts, the suicide scene is an exquisite piece of composition that marks the turning point in Pamina's resolve. One of this set's many transcendent moments is the repetition of the scene's final phrase: “Verloren ist der Feinde Müh, die Götter

EXAMPLE 4. Sarastro's entrance dialogue with difficult leap to low F.

The image shows a musical score for Sarastro's entrance dialogue. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in bass clef and 3/4 time. The lyrics are: "zur Lieb - e will ich dich nicht zwin - gen, doch, doch geb ich dir die Frei - heit nicht,". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand and chords in the right hand. The score is labeled "Sarastro:" at the beginning.

EXAMPLE 5. Repetition of final phrase of Pamina's suicide scene.

The musical score for Example 5 consists of two systems of music. The first system includes vocal lines for Pamina, 1st Boy, and 2nd Boy, and piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are in German and English.

System 1:

- Pamina:** die Göt-ter selbst-sten schütz-en sie, die Göt-ter. Gilt-
- 1st Boy:** Fein-de Müh. die Göt-ter selbst-sten schütz-en sie, die
- 2nd Boy:** ran est der Fein- : : - de Müh, die

System 2:

- Pamina:** ter selbst-sten schütz-en sie.
- 1st Boy:** Göt-ter selbst-sten schütz-en sie.
- 2nd Boy:** Göt-ter selbst-sten schütz-en sie.

The piano accompaniment features dynamic markings such as *mf*, *ff*, *w*, and *fp*.

selbst-*en* schützen sieⁿ (The enemy's effort is wasted, the very gods protect them), during which Lear arches a stunning high B-flat (b-flat³) over the shimmering ensemble (example 5).

This set retains the second-act trio, "Soll ich dich, Teurer, nicht mehr sehn?" (Shall I see you, my beloved, no more?), which is sometimes cut from recordings and, more often, stage productions because of the extra convolution it imposes on the plot. In this case, the trio proves to be a surprising highlight of the recording, featuring some of Lear's best singing, showing further nobility and power from Crass's Sarastro, and presenting Wunderlich's Tamino, matured through trials, sounding even more divine (if that is indeed possible) than previously.

Unfortunately, Lear's legacy in this recording is tarnished, as is, in some listeners' opinions, the set as a whole,²² by her astoundingly feeble effort on Pamina's usually poignant second-act aria, "Ach, ich fühl's" (Alas, I feel it). Her misguided attempts to communicate bleak resignation turn the piece into a dirge, with the spoiled fruits of her laboriousness serving only to baffle and frustrate the listener, by now so accustomed to her superb lyricism.

I do not question whether Lear feels, even deeply, what she is singing. But her vocal output in the aria simply fails to match her emotional commitment to it. The first three words from her lips, "Ach, ich fühl's," are heart wrenching, as intended. There is precious little redeeming value in what follows. The lion's share of the aria's uppermost notes (none of which, as far as I can tell, should be more challenging for a lyric soprano than notes and phrases she sings successfully elsewhere) sound tight and uncomfortable, betraying a vocal toil unlike any other that she—or any other singer, for that matter—reveals in the opera. She reaches the end of certain phrases short of breath, leaving only anemic support for their final words, and her liberal use of portamento²³ creates a sense of general sloppiness.

The puzzling disparity between Lear's singing in this aria and in the rest of the recording is such that one struggles to believe it all to have proceeded from the same set of vocal cords—but, ach, it did. Even the disarming pathos of the high G (g²) on her final "Ruh" (peace) does not salvage this piece as the recording's only utter disappointment (example 6).

In the lone case of this aria, I cannot help but concede a recommendation to the recordings of other singers who better convey its full tragic beauty,

EXAMPLE 6. Pamina's final "Ruh" (peace) on high G (g²) near the end of the aria.

Pamina:

so wird Ruh im To - de sein,

namely Kiri Te Kanawa, Gundula Janowitz,²⁴ and Renée Fleming, notwithstanding the latter's apparent preference for an unusually brisk tempo.

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau as Papageno

It is not difficult for even an average baritone to be vocally adequate as Papageno, a role Mozart tailored for performance in the opera's premiere by Schikaneder himself who, we might infer by comparing this role's musical conservatism to Mozart's more ambitious composition for the leading baritones of his other operas, may not have possessed extraordinary vocal gifts. However, it is difficult for even an excellent baritone to excel in this potentially rich role, given its abundance of pitfalls ranging from melodrama and shallowness of character to vocal complacency and inattention. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's Papageno represents the ideal marriage of comedic flair and vocal expressiveness required for the role's successful execution.

By including extensive spoken dialogue (though it is still edited heavily), this recording breaks with the norm of earlier *Magic Flute* efforts and other *Singspiel*²⁵ recordings, the majority of which tended to allocate precious vinyl to anything other than music only when absolutely necessary. Much of the plot's action is driven by Papageno's dialogue, which Fischer-Dieskau delivers with a lower-German drawl of which few of his adoring *Lieder*²⁶ fans would ever have imagined him capable. He takes ample artistic license with the earthy humor of Schikaneder's clever word plays but never crosses the line to outright hamming, unlike lesser Papagenos who delight the groundlings but offer little to the aficionados.

Mozart's scoring for the lonely bird catcher's texts abounds with strophes and strophic variations, including the introductory aria "Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja" (Yes, I am the bird catcher), the first-act duet with Pamina "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen" (In men who feel love), and the second-act aria "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" (A girl or little woman). Largely absent the triumphant high



Baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (1925–). Photograph taken by Fritz Eschen, o.J.

notes or blistering patter that tend to snap comic baritones to attention in other roles, Papageno's "big sings" can serve as traps to lull even good singers into carelessness. It is precisely by overcoming this predicament that Fischer-Dieskau—his musicianship honed in Schubert's and Schumann's *Lieder* settings of verses by the great German romantic poets—vivifies the Schikaneder strophes that have died on the cords of less diligent artists and thereby sets himself apart from the many other excellent Papagenos on record. For a brief but indicative sample of Fischer-Dieskau's peerless artistry at work in this role, listen to the phrase "Nun plaudert Papageno wieder!" (Now Papageno prattles again!) near the beginning of the first act's "Hm! hm! hm!" quintet, noting the kid-in-a-candy-shop exuberance with which he spins a silky strand of middle Cs (c^1) over the underlying staccati in the strings (example 7).

Fischer-Dieskau demonstrates in this recording an expressive musicality beyond that of his 1954 Papageno for Deutsche Grammophon under Ferenc Fricsay.²⁷ While this progress owes presumably to the vocal and dramatic development that results from additional years on the stage, some of it may be attributable to his emotional development off of it. Given the December 1963 passing of his wife Irmgard after the birth of their third son,²⁸ one can only imagine the personal context in which the devastated Fischer-Dieskau recorded this otherwise comic role in which a lonely soul pines for a mate: Even the celebratory "Pa-Pa-Pa?" duet with Papagena

EXAMPLE 7. Papageno in the first act's "Hm! hm! hm!" quintet: "Now Papageno prattles again!"

The musical score for Example 7 consists of three staves. The top staff is for the *Ist Lady*, with a rest followed by a single note. The middle staff is for *Pamina*, with a rest followed by a series of notes. The bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment, featuring staccato chords and a trill. The lyrics are: "Nun plaudert Pa-pa-ge-no wieder!" and "Ja".

carries a heavy irony in light of the baritone's overwhelming concern for the welfare of his now-motherless children, including one still in infancy at the time of the recording sessions:²⁹

Welche Freude wird das sein,
 Wenn die Götter uns bedenken,
 Unsrer Liebe Kinder schenken,
 So liebe, kleine Kinderlein! . . .
 Es ist das höchste der Gefühle,
 Wenn viele, viele, viele, viele
 Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-pagenos
 Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-pagenas
 Der Eltern Segen werden sein. (2.32)
 [What joy it will be
 If the gods remember us
 And reward our love
 With darling little children.
 It is the noblest of feelings,
 If many, many, many, many
 Papagenos and Papagenas
 Become their parents' blessing.]

Fischer-Dieskau found comfort during this difficult time in the friendship he enjoyed with "the bright and cheerful"³⁰ tenor, Fritz Wunderlich.

Fritz Wunderlich as Prince Tamino

Wunderlich's entire discography is but a brief snapshot of a blossoming career, spanning roughly ten years, with this recording serving as a glowing tribute to his consummate artistry. The tenor died, suddenly and tragically, at age thirty-six, two years after this recording was made, thereby galvanizing his celebrity and perhaps sparing himself the indignities to which aging tenors sometimes subject themselves. Upon Wunderlich's passing, Fischer-Dieskau eulogized his friend and frequent collaborator thus:

A voice has ceased to sing. Its owner was a short-lived master of his art, on the way to the pinnacle of his fame. . . . How incomparable



Tenor Fritz Wunderlich (1930–66).

Used by permission of Fritz Wunderlich Society, Wood County

was this tenor voice, how, with all its sweetness, it still possessed a majestic power. He was the one hope and fulfillment of a vocal genre which, for some time, had been waiting for someone like him. His silence is therefore all the more painful, all the more tangible. . . . There were hardly any technical difficulties for him, his talent had been given the opportunity to mature and had been able to develop over many musical fields. So this was not only a richly-endowed voice, but also one imbued with the sheer love of singing.³¹

This admiration, which comes from one considered by many to be the master of German vocal music in the twentieth century, seems entirely justified by even the briefest of needle drops on any of Tamino's bars in this recording.

Wunderlich creates a robust and dazzling Prince Tamino with his full and focused lyric tenor voice, infusing the coming-of-age character with a singular balance of passion and compassion, boyish innocence and masculine virility. His dramatic conviction and purity of tone are evident at the opera's outset, the moment he cries out under the serpent's hot pursuit:

Zu Hilfe! Zu Hilfe! sonst bin ich verloren,
Der listigen Schlange zum Opfer erkoren.—
Barmherzige Götter!

[Help! Help! Or I am lost,
Chosen as an offering to the cunning serpent!
Merciful gods!]

These lines merely hint at the talent that becomes even more superbly pronounced as the opera continues.

Surveying operatic recordings several decades in either direction, one would be hard-pressed to find a tenor making more listenable sounds than does Wunderlich in Tamino's first-act aria, "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön" (This image is enchantingly beautiful). But this aria's sublimity is not the result of Wunderlich's vocal timbre alone. Here, as throughout the recording, he reveals an intense personal commitment to the prince's plight, thereby facilitating ease of communion between listener and character. The aching *Sehnsucht* (longing) he conveys in "O, wenn ich sie nur finden könnte! / O, wenn sie doch schon vor mir stände!" (Oh, if I could just find her! Oh, if she but stood before me!) resonates immediately and deeply with any who have experienced the same (example 8).

Then Tamino hesitates, "Ich würde, würde, warm und rein/ Was würde ich?" (I would, I would, ardent and pure, what would I do?). Unlike many tenor-conductor pairs who grow restless during Mozart's deliberate silence and scramble to the next phrase, Wunderlich and Böhm exploit each beat of the ensuing full-measure rest, allowing Tamino to envision what it would mean to have his heart's desire (example 9). This important rest

EXAMPLE 8. Pair of phrases beginning "O, wenn," from Tamino's first-act aria, "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön" (This image is enchantingly beautiful).

Tamino

kann! O, wenn ich sie nur fin - den

kann - to! O, wenn sie doch schoen - vor mir stan - de!

EXAMPLE 9. Tamino's full rest in his first-act aria.

Tamino

Ich wär - de, wär - de, wann und rein, was wär - de ich?

Ich wär - de sie voll Ere - er - ken zu die - sen

extends to the listeners an invitation to participate in this moment of translucence, either by sharing in the prince's vision or by creating our own.

The legato of the aria's final phrase, "Und ewig wäre sie dann mein" (And forever would she be mine), is "a minor miracle" in its own right,³² and the tenor's phrasing throughout the remainder of the opera, even as his emotions intensify and his character matures, remains immaculate. Wunderlich's breadth of expression is heard in Tamino's testosterone-fueled determination leading to the scene with the Speaker, firmness that turns quickly to simple sweetness in the scene with the flute and animals. His dramatic range is shown again in the manly boldness of "Schließt mir des Schreckens Pforte auf!" (Unlock for me the gates of terror!) as he anticipates the trials, which contrasts almost immediately with exhilaration and tenderness when, upon hearing Pamina, he asks, "Was hör ich? Paminens Stimme?" (What do I hear? Pamina's voice?). This same tenderness continues through the subsequent reunion scene, to which I will refer shortly.

In my opinion, perhaps the only tenor in recent memory to match Wunderlich's combination of vocal potency, sensitivity, and beauty is the beloved Swede Jussi Björling, another glorious voice silenced prematurely by death. But while the latter did perform Tamino on stage, the apparent absence of a complete Björling *Flute*³³ set makes a head-to-head comparison of the tenors' recorded achievements in this role impossible, leaving me no choice but to insist that Fritz Wunderlich's Tamino on this Deutsche Grammophon set is rivaled by one other Tamino on record: his own, recorded live, just a few weeks after these sessions, on the Golden Melodram label with the Munich Philharmonic under Fritz Rieger.³⁴ In the Melodram set, Wunderlich demonstrates at times even more tastefully effusive passion than on the Deutsche Grammophon recording. But, Hermann Prey's excellent Papageno and Anneliese Rothenberger's fine Pamina notwithstanding, the Munich cast and orchestra fall short of what the Berlin musicians achieve.

Final Notes

It seems that I have exhausted my supply of superlatives—and, yes, you may find as you listen to the recording that even the loftiest of them are indeed inadequate to describe what you hear. But I beg, in parting, your indulgence for brief mention of one of the most beautiful moments in all of opera: the reunion of Pamina and Tamino, preceding the trials of water and fire in the second act.

This scene represents, for me, the pinnacle of marital unity. The phrases exchanged in the nine measures beginning with Pamina's "Tamino

mein!" (My Tamino!) embody a mutual devotion that has yet to be surpassed in any opera with which I am familiar, and has surely but a handful of peers in all of art. In their interpretation, Wunderlich and Lear consecrate this moment with a gratitude, desire, and wonderment stripped of all theatrical pretense. And could we hope for a more radiant high A (a²) than Evelyn Lear offers us here (example 10)?

We can truly share the couple's joy, both *because* they are expressing it and because of the *way* in which they express it. This joy may seem at first to be one of pure agape love,³⁵ especially when contrasted, for example, with the overt erotic impulse of both music and lyrics in the famous second-act reunion of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. And yet Tamino and Pamina's reunion contains, albeit discreetly restrained, every bit of the visceral charge flaunted by Wagner's lovers. In fact, the ultimate message of this scene—and, I believe, a meaning central to *The Magic Flute* itself—is that a

EXAMPLE 10. Greetings exchanged by Pamina and Tamino at the beginning of their reunion scene.

The musical score for Example 10 is presented in three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the scene with a piano introduction. The tempo is marked "Andante" and the mood is "Pianissimo". The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The vocal line for Pamina begins with the word "Ta".

The second system shows the vocal line for Tamino, marked "Allegretto". He sings: "mi - an mein! o welch ein Glück! Pa - mi - na mein!". The piano accompaniment continues with a steady rhythm.

The third system shows the vocal line for Pamina, who sings: "o welch ein Glück!". The piano accompaniment continues with a steady rhythm.

divinely appointed and trial-tested union of equals not only can, but *must*, feature both agape and eros, as well as storge and philia.

Listeners will be pleased to know that Wunderlich and Fischer-Dieskau collaborated on many recordings during roughly this same period.³⁶ But do yourself the favor of getting to know this magical *Flute* as a first step in approaching the many excellent recordings of these artists or this work. You might choose to experience this set in a lounge chair with a view of the garden, hoping to be washed over by a wave of inspired sounds. Or you might sit dutifully at your bureau, poised to pore over the score and libretto, invoking a blitz of premeditated inspiration. In either case, I do hope you will come to regard this recording as you would a dear friend: not perfect, but admired and beloved. And you may then understand why I felt compelled to share my feelings about the singing you will hear, especially that which is *bezaubernd schön*.

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I have used this musical notation system in this article: middle C and up are noted as $c^1, d^1, \dots, c^2, d^2$, and so on. Notes in the octave below middle C are noted simply as c, d, and so on. Notes in the second octave below middle C are noted in capital letters: C, D, and so on.

1. Clayne W. Robison, *Beautiful Singing: Mind Warp Moments* (Provo, Utah: By the author, 2001), xi.

2. Karl Böhm (conductor), *Die Zauberflöte*, written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, recorded in Berlin, 1964, digitally remastered compact disc, "Legendary Recordings," released January 1997, Deutsche Grammophon, DG449749-2.

3. German for "This recording is enchantingly beautiful," adapted from Prince Tamino's first-act aria "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön," or "This image is enchantingly beautiful." All translations in this article are either my own or are from the liner notes to the highlight compact disc (released May 1990, DG/Polygram Records, 429825) of the 1964 Deutsche Grammophon *Die Zauberflöte* recording.

4. One of the most vocally demanding of all roles in the bass-baritone repertoire, Wotan is the chief god in the first three operas of Richard Wagner's four-opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

5. King had just begun making his name as the various heroic tenors of Wagner and Richard Strauss, roles with which he would be identified internationally for the next quarter century. In addition to his subsequent triumphs in leading

Wagnerian roles, Talvela would soon become one of the most sought-after Saras-tros of his era, recording the role five years later with the Vienna Philharmonic under Sir Georg Solti on a Decca set (Decca catalogue number 458213-2) that would also feature Fischer-Dieskau as the Speaker. For more information on King and Talvela, see James Anderson, *The Complete Dictionary of Opera and Operetta* (New York: Wings Books, 1993), 306, 559.

6. The duet's melody is based on the Lutheran chorale, "Ach Gott vom Him-mel sieh darein." See Donald Jay Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera*, 3d ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 642; and "Projekt Gutenberg-DL," <http://www.gutenberg2000.de/luther/lieder/achgott.htm>.

7. Piano-vocal musical score excerpts prepared by Wholenote Music, Inc., Pleasant Grove, Utah, 2002.

8. While it seems probable that producers acknowledge the ideal of casting prepubescent boys for reasons both dramatic and musical, in the absence of young talent of Vienna Boys' Choir caliber, productions using boys as the Boys often risk sacrificing quality to novelty, and many side with caution and sopranos.

9. For more information on the RIAS, see "History and Purpose of RIAS Berlin and the RIAS Berlin Commission," <http://www.riasberlinkommission.de/us-rias-hist-history.html>.

10. For example, listen closely to the tenors and second basses in "O Isis und Osiris, welche Wonne!" (O Isis and Osiris, such delight!).

11. Karl Böhm (conductor), *Die Zauberflöte*, written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, recorded in Vienna, Austria, 1955, compact disc, released January 1998, Decca, 448734.

12. The musical score (German).

13. These characters' respective calling-card arias ("Vesti la giubba" from *I Pagliacci*, "La donna è mobile" from *Rigoletto*, and "Largo al factotum" from *The Barber of Seville*) should be recognized easily by even the most casual listeners of opera the world over.

14. A series of different notes sung on one syllable.

15. A note held through its fully notated time value, giving the effect of a slight pause without slowing the overall tempo.

16. "Detached" (Italian), a note that is sung or played only briefly, then released suddenly.

17. From the Italian for "harp," meaning to sing or play the notes of a chord individually, in succession.

18. A vocal exercise without text, typically sung on open vowels.

19. Famous coloratura soprano aria from G. F. Händel's oratorio *Samson*.

20. "Under the voice" (Italian), it means to sing quietly, with restraint.

21. Applying flexible tempo to a phrase, by abbreviating some of its notes and applying their "stolen" (Italian) time value to other prolonged notes.

22. This vocal debacle in part prompted one contributor to an online listeners' forum to title his assault of this recording, "Why I will never forgive Roberta Peters and Evelyn Lear." Michael Nyby, Ithaca, N.Y., January 26, 2002, review of 1964 Deutsche Grammophon *Magic Flute* recording, http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/B000001GXI/qid=1065410290/sr=1-4/ref=sr_1_4/102-1157639-2936902?v=glance&s=classical.

23. "Carrying" (Italian) a tone over intervals between notes, more deliberately than through the use of legato ("tying" the tone between the notes), in that the notes between the departure note and arrival note are actually resonated.

24. Janovitz's "Ach, ich fühl's" on EMI's widely acclaimed 1964 *Flute* under Otto Klemperer (EMI catalogue number 67388-2) may in fact be the finest rendition of this aria on a full recording of the opera. Lucia Popp's Queen on the same set is equally outstanding.

25. Since the mid-eighteenth century, the term *Singspiel* has referred to a type of Germanic light opera that uses unaccompanied spoken dialogue between discrete musical numbers (as in *The Magic Flute*), similar in this regard to most modern Broadway musicals. See Grout, *Short History of Opera*, 3d ed., 131.

26. Of all his accomplishments, Fischer-Dieskau is most closely associated with the *Lied* (German for "song"), a term used in English primarily in reference to German art songs of the nineteenth century.

27. Deutsche Grammophon catalogue number 435741. Soprano Lisa Otto plays Papagena to Fischer-Dieskau's Papageno in both the 1954 and the 1964 DG recordings.

28. Kenneth S. Whitton, *Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Mastersinger: A Documented Study* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1981), 53.

29. Hans A. Neunzig, *Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: A Biography*, trans. Kenneth S. Whitton (Portland, Ore.: Amadeus, 1998), 111–12.

30. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, *Reverberations: The Memoirs of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau*, trans. Ruth Hein (New York: Fromm International Publishing, 1987), 165.

31. Whitton, *Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Mastersinger*, 72.

32. Whitton, *Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Mastersinger*, 71.

33. Björling's Swedish version of Tamino's Portrait Aria, recorded live in recital, is available on the Bluebell label. Jussi Björling and Harry Ebert, *Gröna Lund Recordings*, vol. 1, recorded June 1959, Stockholm, Sweden, released August 1993, Bluebell, 42.

34. See Fritz Rieger (conductor), *Die Zauberflöte*, written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, live broadcast recording from Nationaltheater Munich, July 1964, released June 2001, Golden Melodram, GM50027-3.

35. The four types of love identified by the Greeks are agape (selfless, sacrificial or saving love), eros (emotional, sensual or physical love), storge (affectionate familial love), and philia (friendship or companionship love).

36. Their shared discography includes, among other works, Mahler's *The Song of the Earth* (*Das Lied von der Erde*) on Classica d'Oro, Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* (*Yevgeny Onyegin*) on Gala, a widely acclaimed *Flying Dutchman* (*Der Fliegende Holländer*) by Wagner on Berlin Classics, as well as Berg's *Wozzeck*, Haydn's *The Creation* (*Die Schöpfung*), and Verdi's *La Traviata* on Deutsche Grammophon.