

**Boheme Opera NJ Presents *The Magic Flute* – a Breathtaking Musical Journey  
By Jeffrey Stundel**

Boheme Opera NJ, one of the oldest opera companies in New Jersey, providing opera, concerts and outreach in the New Jersey/ Pennsylvania region, will be taking audiences on the magical, musical journey that is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, on April 20 and 22 at The College of New Jersey Center for the Arts in Ewing, NJ.

Boheme Opera NJ entitled this, its 23<sup>rd</sup> season, "Into a Forest of Fantasy": and *The Magic Flute* continues Boheme's mission of making the arts accessible to artists and audiences. Performed in English with English supertitles, the production at Kendall Hall Theatre will be under the artistic and musical direction of Artistic Director and Conductor Joseph Pucciatti. "We are offering a visionary presentation of Mozart's amazing imagination," said Mr. Pucciatti, "through the combination of the latest, state-of-the-art, high-definition (HD) projection technology and the lifelike artistry of J. Matthew Root." Mr. Pucciatti continued, "Boheme promises our audiences a visual experience unlike anything else in our main stage history."

The cast will be making the production an extravaganza for the ear, as well as the eye. The dynamic ensemble of emerging and veteran artists is headed by New York City Opera soprano Lorraine Ernest as the Queen of the Night. Acclaimed by critics for her portrayal of the Queen in opera houses throughout the United States and Europe, her Boheme appearances have included Musetta in *La Boheme*, Adina in *The Elixir of Love*, Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Violetta in *La Traviata*.

The "magical, musical journey" mentioned above is one that ends at important lessons about life – in this, the opera is, at its heart, a fairy tale. And, really, what is a fairy tale? It is a story in which the characters go through trials and tribulations in a fantastic world until, like Dorothy at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, they finally wake up realizing that they have gained a valuable insight into life and themselves. *The Magic Flute* is no different: The music and the spectacle are the "spoonful of sugar" that help the message go down.

But what is the opera's message? *The Magic Flute* has been studied, analyzed and interpreted in numerous ways. Ultimately, though, most agree that it centers on the concept of intellectual and spiritual enlightenment, which was weaving its way through the social consciousness during the time in which the opera was written.

However, predating the 18<sup>th</sup> century Age of Enlightenment was Freemasonry, upon which Mozart heavily drew for *The Magic Flute*. The opera can be enjoyed on the surface as pure fantastical diversion or, more deeply, as an allegory based on the central themes of Masonry: good versus evil, enlightenment versus ignorance and the virtues of wisdom, knowledge, truth and justice. Each character undergoes challenges and changes: through trial and education, they are ultimately initiated into an enlightened state in which reason overcomes superstition, faith overcomes fear, friendship overcomes divisiveness, equality overcomes inequality, and pure love overcomes passion.

With all of that being said, what does *The Magic Flute* mean to us in 2012? Pretty much what it meant in 1791 when it was first performed: If we work to overcome the obstacles that are put in our way by life, society – and, sometimes, the ones we create for ourselves – we can become better people and make the world a better place. Now,

readers of this article may have already run for the exits before even getting to their seats, thinking that they have entered a lecture instead of an opera. To you, Mozart giggles, “Oh, but you aren’t going to *know* you’re getting an education.”

The composer’s impish charm and humor, again, make this an operatic fairy tale, filled with laughter and excitement. There are “good guys and gals” to cheer for – and “bad guys and gals” to root against. Like a story from the Brothers Grimm – or a Bugs Bunny cartoon from Warner Bros. – *The Magic Flute* can be enjoyed by children and adults alike. The tale is set in a fantastical world, filled with and driven by equally fantastical people and events.

*The Magic Flute* offers something for everyone, with that “something” being entirely up to you. And that is how Mozart wanted it. So, whether you come to *The Magic Flute* for the laughter or the lessons, you will definitely leave having learned this: that opera can be fun *in* all ages, *for* all ages.

#### About *The Magic Flute*

*The Magic Flute* will be performed on April 20 at 8:00 p.m. and April 22 at 3:00 p.m. at the Kendall Hall Theatre of The College of New Jersey Center for the Arts. Pre-curtain talks will be given one hour and fifteen minutes before each performance. Directed and conducted by Boheme Opera NJ Artistic Director Joseph Pucciatti. Tickets are \$55, \$45 and \$35. Special “early bird” and group sale ticketing is available. Visit [www.bohemeoperanj.com](http://www.bohemeoperanj.com) for more information on the production and ticketing. To reach The College of New Jersey Center for the Arts box office directly, call (609) 771-2775. Major funding is made possible in part by a grant from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts; The Boheme Opera Guild, Inc.; and Roma Bank.