



UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY
OPERA THEATRE

THE MAGIC FLUTE

Magic or Reality?

By **Sylvia Davis and Mary Powell**

Freihaus-Theater auf der Wieden, Vienna. Sept. 30, 1791. Mozart conducts the premiere of *The Magic Flute*, shortly before his untimely death on Dec. 5. A new staple of the operatic repertory is born.

The opera, set in an imaginary Egypt, is a Singspiel (a form of German light opera), a fairy tale, and an allegory. The plot can easily confuse even the most dedicated observer. For example, all kinds of things come in troubling symbolic threes: three trials, three ladies, three doors to Sarastro's palace, etc. Many in Mozart's audiences would have recognized these triads as Masonic references, but modern audiences may be mystified.

The concept of *Sein* (What is) versus *Schein* (What seems to be) is an appropriate way to approach this opera. It has always been difficult to distinguish just what really is as opposed to what seems to be true in this world. For example, the Queen of the Night at first seems to be a loving mother and competent ruler. She behaves maternally toward the foreign Prince Tamino, and her Three Ladies serve her willingly. Then she sings her aria "Der Hölle Rache" ("Hell's Vengeance"), set in a frightening D minor with challenging high Fs, and reveals herself to be angry, irrational, and vindictive. She has given Prince Tamino a

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UKOT PRESENTS **THE MAGIC FLUTE**
Lexington Opera House | 401 West Short Street

DATES

Friday Sept. 30 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday Oct. 1 at 2 p.m.
Saturday Oct. 1 at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday Oct. 2 at 2 p.m.

Ticket sales all go through
the Lexington Opera House via Ticketmaster:
<https://www.lexingtonoperahouse.com/events/detail/uk-opera-presents-the-magic-flute>

The Magic Flute

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knife with which to kill the priest Sarastro and rescue her daughter, Pamina. Yet Sarastro, who embodies the high virtues of knowledge, justice, wisdom, truth, and love, wants only to unite Pamina and Prince Tamino in marriage through a series of trials that will lift their union to a higher level of humanity.

Enter Papageno, a hybrid man/bird, as a foil to Tamino's nobility. (Papageno=der Papagei, German for parrot). Papageno's magic bells are the "folk" counterpart to Tamino's magic flute, gifted to him by the Queen's Three Ladies. Papageno is not what he claims to be (a hero), and the Three Ladies padlock his mouth for his lies. His girlfriend, Papagena, first seems to be an ancient hag, not at all the earthy peasant lass she really is. In their colorful costumes they add an air of bright happiness into the serious story.

Conceptually, the story can seem to be misogynistic. There is that famous line, "A woman does little, chatters a great deal." Yet Pamina develops into a strong, worthy, morally upright character. And what about the wicked Queen? Her late husband gave the source of their power, a sun disk, to Sarastro, and told her "Do not seek to understand matters that are beyond the grasp of the female mind." Is it any wonder she is furious and irrational? All her power is gone. Cruel as she can be, she is not devoid of reasons for her behavior.

Pamina must interact with Monostatos (Greek for

"stands alone") the Moor, the overseer of Sarastro's temple and the only black character in the opera. He has been promised Pamina's hand by the Queen, in return for his help in her plot against Sarastro. His aria "Alles fühlt der Liebe Freuden" ("Everyone feels the joys of love") is at once lighthearted and painful. He wants to love, to kiss the white Pamina but dares not because he is black. He seems to be evil, but perhaps he is just human as he intimates in the words of the aria, reminiscent of Shylock's speech in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Monostatos sings, "...I am to forswear love because a black man is ugly. Do I not then have a heart? Am I not flesh and blood? ... I want to bill and coo and be amorous!" Billing and cooing can seem to be lighthearted references to love, but in reality Monostatos suffers and learns he will be punished. The opera would seem to be deliberately racist, but perhaps it is simply a reflection of Mozart's time and Monostatos is depicted as black just because he is a stock villain.

The opera ends when an earthquake foils the Queen's plan to kill Sarastro. The victory of light over darkness is celebrated.

As directors have discovered, this opera offers them the opportunity to play the story for fun and/or to find deeper, sometimes more nefarious meanings. Perhaps we cannot always know "What is" versus "What seems to be," but the audience will embrace the beautiful music even as they ponder the way in which the characters are portrayed in this work from the Enlightenment.

New Technical Production Manager Working to Ensure 'Best Shows' possible

Admittedly, Aaron Bowling likes to talk – a lot. So much so that that's one of the reasons he's been successful in his nearly 16-year career in theater.

Now, as the new technical production manager for the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre, Bowling is once again putting that "skill" to good use, having started the job during production of *It's a Grand Night for Singing* and starting from Ground Zero on production of *The Magic Flute*, set for Sept. 30-Oct. 2.

"I think my most important role is being the master communicator," said Bowling, who joined the UKOT staff in May, following a stint as production manager for the Kentucky Performing Arts Center in Louisville. "I'm making sure everybody is on the same page with where each department is at any given moment. I'm saying, 'Where are you on deadlines,' 'What help do you need,' 'What resources are you lacking' and being able to communicate those across departments."

"It's all about making sure the best shows are happening," he added.

Bowling, who grew up in Lexington and studied theater and Spanish at UK, spent most of his career in Miami, Florida. He worked freelance on more than 175 productions in more than 20 venues across South Florida, including Actors' Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre in Coral Gables, Parker Playhouse in Ft. Lauderdale, and the Wick Theatre in West Palm Beach.

He returned home to Lexington in 2015, where, among other things, he was technical director for AthensWest Theatre Company, Winterfest, and Lexington Children's Theatre. He also worked as a freelancer for

the Singletary Center for the Arts.

"There is that common expression that Lexington is a black hole and no matter how far away you think you can get, you always get sucked back in," he laughed. "I am definitely one of those. ... To be able to make a living doing what I love in my community with some of the people who helped mold me into a professional is really pretty incredible."

As technical production manager, Bowling coordinates all the technical elements of a show. That includes everything from direction, stage management, scenery, and costumes to orchestra, lighting, props, and more.

"Basically, I'm the person to hop in wherever needs the most help," he said. "For instance, on *Grand Night*, I might have spent all day with the costume shop helping with costumes and the next day I would be helping the carpenters put the set together and the next day I would be helping hang lights and the next day working on schedules for the cast."

To complicate things, there's never a time where Bowling is working on just one show. The first production meeting for *The Magic Flute*, for example, happened during the second week of shows for *Grand Night*. And he's already working on UKOT's spring show.

"Usually what happens, one show is in production, the next show is in the design phase, and then the next show is in the planning phase," he said.

As for *The Magic Flute*, Bowling said a great design team is making his life in a new job "spectacular."

"I think it's going to be a pretty remarkable show."



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Aaron Bowling



Key'mon Murrah



Kay'mon Murrah

Double the Talent, Double the Success

Twins Key'mon and Kay'mon Murrah knew early on that they could sing – and sing well. Growing up in a family of singers and singing frequently in church, it was pretty evident that they had a gift.

But it wasn't until they were in high school, between their junior and senior year, that the young brothers themselves realized just how special that gift was. So special that teachers and others began helping them chart career paths that would eventually “take the opera world by storm,” as University of Kentucky Opera Theatre Director Everett McCorvey put it.

“We really didn't take it seriously at first,” said Kay'mon, who graduated from UK with a music performance degree. “We were just singing to sing.”

“It took us a while to figure it all out,” added Key'mon, an arts administration graduate from UK.

The figuring it out part was helped along by the twins attending the Governor's School for the Arts while attending high school at the Youth Performing Arts School in Louisville. Then, when they got to UK – on scholarship – they learned firsthand that they could make a career out of singing, specifically singing opera.

“College was an eye opener itself,” Kay'mon said. “That's where we really kind of got into the groove, and after that it kind of took off and we did our own thing.”

Kay'mon, who is focusing his career on the administration side of things, is currently the artistic coordinator for the Boston Lyric Opera, where he serves as the “front line” of all the artistic and communication endeavors. A lyric tenor, he also recently performed as Kasper in the Kentucky Opera's production of *Amal and the Night Visitors* and understudied an Armed Man in their production of *Die Zauberflöte*. He also is a voice instructor, teaching virtually, with the Centenary School of Music in Lexington.

Key'mon, a countertenor, is concentrating on his singing career for the time being. He's won vocal competitions

around the world and has a busy 2022-23 season ahead of him, set to debut at the Detroit Opera, Bayrische Staatsoper in Munich, Germany, the Komische Oper Berlin in Berlin, Germany, the Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse, France, and Ars Lyrica in Houston, Texas.

Although they attended UK together and have appeared in many productions together, the 32-year-olds have taken different routes of late. Still, they are “very much in synch” and spend as much time together and with their family as possible.

“I guess it was a little scary at first,” Key'mon said, “you know, separating and doing something totally different from each other. But we have supported each other throughout it. If I'm having a bad day, I can always call him and vice versa.”

“My brother provides more of a confidence boost. I have a listener. If I'm not singing well, he will tell me what's going on. I do the same for him,” Kay'mon said.

As for the future, both see themselves continuing to sing but also continuing to take a path that leads them to contentment.

“I see myself enjoying myself ... and whatever I do I will feel like I have a good balance between my artistic career and administrative career. I also want to see the world and sing everywhere that I can. I'm taking great strides to make that happen,” Kay'mon said, adding, “I also have a warm spot for education. I do want to come back in some facet and give back to the community.”

Key'mon wants to continue his international career, as well as “have a successful recording career” that will enable him to introduce himself to a wide range of audiences. At some point, he might also go into administration.

And if all works out as planned, the brothers see themselves doing concerts and operas together again. “That's definitely in the plan,” Key'mon said.

Message from the President: Bonnie Mays

A new year for OperaLex has begun, and I am honored to serve as president, along with Stephen LLOYD Webb, vice president; Nancy Wrede, recording secretary; Jan Furst, treasurer; and Ginny Arnett, corresponding secretary. OperaLex is a nonprofit organization whose primary purpose is to support the wonderful students of the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre Program, led by the world renowned Everett McCorvey. Twenty-seven volunteers serve on the Board of Directors.



Last year was a great year for OperaLex. We are grateful for the leadership of W. Harry Clarke, immediate past president, for bringing a new vision and new infrastructure to OperaLex. Thank you, Harry, for all you did for OperaLex last year and for continuing to serve with us this year.

We are thrilled with the community response to our new OperaLex Membership Program, and we thank you! If you have not heard about it, and more importantly, if you have not joined OperaLex, please visit our new website, operalex.org, and join us. We have annual membership levels from \$25 for students and seniors up to any amount that fits your budget. Your contribution goes directly to help with production of the wonderful programs UKOT offers, as well as student scholarships and other support activities.

OperaLex is now on social media, and we invite you to follow us to hear in real time all the wonderful things that are happening with our students.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/operalex859>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/operalex859/>

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When you read something on our social media sites, please “share” so that your friends can read about our program and how we support the community's appreciation of opera and UKOT.

I'm sure you know that Kentucky is the Bourbon Capital of the World. It's true! Kentucky dominates the bourbon industry in distilling the distinctive corn-based, barrel-aged whiskey. And believe it or not, it's because it's in the water! The state sits atop vast deposits of blue limestone, which filters out hard iron and imparts sweet-tasting calcium and magnesium, which is what gives Kentucky bourbon the sweet taste loved by so many. So, let's have a bourbon raffle. OperaLex is raffling a flight of Pappy bourbon; the winning ticket to be drawn on Oct. 1. Watch for details on our website and be sure to purchase your ticket!

After two years of virtual events, we are pleased to announce the return of Encore!, live on Friday evening, Oct. 21, at the beautifully renovated Campbell House. The evening will feature the beneficiaries of our work, the UK Opera Theatre students, and faculty. They will perform a lively program of popular music and opera favorites accompanied by members of the UK Symphony Orchestra, conducted by John Nardolillo. Our theme, Evening in Paris, C'est magnifique!, pays homage to our March production of *La Bohème*, Puccini's classic tale of love and loss set in Bohemian Paris. Cocktails and an elegant dinner, followed by dancing to Big Band music directed by UK Jazz Program Director Miles Osland, make this a party you won't want to miss!

For more details on all the events of OperaLex, please visit our website, www.operalex.org.

We are looking forward to the upcoming performance of *The Magic Flute* Sept. 30, Oct. 1, and Oct. 22. We invite you to our preview luncheon to hear music from this Singspiel. Singspiel means that the story is told with both singing and the spoken word. The luncheon will be on Sept. 22, at 11 a.m. at the Campbell House. You may get your tickets for the event at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/opera-preview-luncheon-tickets-392916613167>.

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SPOTLIGHT ON OPERALEX BOARD MEMBERS

In each issue of BravoLex, we feature three of OperaLex's dedicated board members.



ANN ELIZABETH DELAHANTY

Ann Elizabeth Delahanty is a realtor with United Real Estate in Louisville. In addition to working with realtors and buyers, she enjoys mentoring and coaching agents and teaching weekly tech classes. She serves on the Greater Louisville Association of Realtors Board of Directors and the Kentucky Realtors Board of Directors.

Born and raised in London, Kentucky, Delahanty enjoyed singing and playing the piano, organ, clarinet, and oboe. She is a graduate of the University of Kentucky, where she was a vocal music major and was an active member of Sigma Alpha Iota Music Fraternity.



KEITH KEY

Keith Key is the senior adviser for Key and Associates with Merrill Lynch. His practice focuses on offering a comprehensive approach to managing wealth that starts with beginning to know clients and their families, financial situations, and what matters most to them. As a Certified Financial Planner and a Certified Portfolio Manager, he brings sensitivity to advice and guidance. Before joining Merrill Lynch in 2003, Key spent five years at Prudential Securities.

Key earned a bachelor's degree in theology from Florida Baptist Theological College and a master's of divinity from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.



FRANK C. MILLER

Frank C. Miller is a retired gynecologist, serving in both private practice and in the military and is professor emeritus of the University of Kentucky College of Medicine. He is a graduate of Murray High School, Murray State University, and the University of Louisville School of Medicine. Miller's military career as a doctor, both in full-time service and in the active Army Reserve, covered 26 years, taking him to Hawaii, Germany, Texas, California, Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C., and Kentucky.

He served as an associate professor at the University of Southern California, as professor and chair of the Departments of OB/GYN at the University of Arkansas, and at UK.

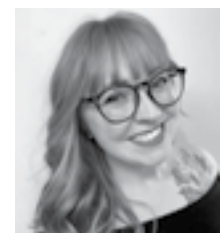


Thank You, Zack! Welcome, Megh!

Zackery Morris, who served as interim program coordinator for the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre since October of 2021, has accepted a position as academic adviser with the UK College of Fine Arts. He is advising undergraduate music majors in his new role.

As interim program coordinator, Morris facilitated building operations, oversaw UKOT production purchases and budget management, coordinated with other community arts organizations on collaborative events, performed administrative duties for the UK School of Music, and assisted the director of opera in scheduling, protocol, and general needs.

Filling the program coordinator's position is Megh Jennings-Posner. The Lexington native comes to UKOT from the UK Office of Student Organizations and Activities, where she worked as a budget officer. She previously worked as a freelance ballet and opera stage manager. Jennings-Posner has a bachelor's degree in theater design and production from the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music.



TalkingwithTedrin

Tedrin's Recording Corner #45

By Tedrin Blair Lindsay

With the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre's production of Mozart's delightful fantasy *Die Zauberflöte* (equally well-known in this country as *The Magic Flute*) just around the corner, I thought recommending a few fabulous recordings would enhance your enjoyment of our show. This perennial favorite is a Singspiel (literally "sing play"), so there is spoken dialogue between the musical numbers, like an operetta. In our production, the dialogue will be in English and sung arias and lines in German. All German portions will have subtitles. In the recommended recordings the dialogues are also in the original language.

When compact discs came out commercially in the mid-1980s, the very first one I bought was Herbert von Karajan's handsome boxed set on Deutsche Grammophon (410 967-2), recorded in 1980. I was so excited, and couldn't believe the clarity of sound the new technology offered! I adored the performance of tenor Francisco Araiza as the hero Tamino, and have been a huge fan ever since. Even more, the stupendous Queen of the Night offered up by Karin Ott astounded and inspired me. Edith Mathis sounded lovely as Pamina and Gottfried Hornik made a charming Papageno. All the other parts were also cast from strength, and the Berlin Philharmonic played the score with uncommon mastery. Because of its personal history, this set is still one of my prized possessions, and for many decades it was my preferred rendition of this opera.

But I got tired eventually of hearing the very same performance of this work over and over, so I branched out. Otto Klemperer's 1964 traversal of the score with the Philharmonia Orchestra is extremely attractive with Gundula Janowitz and Nicolai Gedda as the protagonists, Walter Berry a vivid Papageno, and a silvery, scary, stupendous Queen of the Night in Lucia Popp. I now turn more frequently to this one (EMI Classics 5 55173 2) than the Karajan.

However, I am also greatly enamored of another Berlin Philharmonic performance, this one under Karl Böhm in 1965. It's fun that this recording would have been in direct competition with the Klemperer for purchase by opera lovers in the mid-1960s. It might be my new favorite. American soprano Roberta Peters renders a glamorous, vocally



stunning Queen of the Night, while Evelyn Lear presents a sympathetic and gorgeously sung Pamina. The legendary Fritz Wunderlich gives the most sumptuous Tamino I've ever heard, and Papageno proves to be the ideal operatic role for the slender-voiced master of lieder, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. (Originally released by Deutsche Grammophon, the re-release I own is from the Musical Heritage Society 524639K.)

If you need help deciding on one of the above, consider the casting of the best roles of all in *The Magic Flute* – the Three Ladies, the Queen of the Night's comic henchwomen who sing twice as much throughout the opera as she does. In the Böhm, the Three Ladies are perfectly serviceable German singers, little known on the international stages. However, the Klemperer offers absolutely stellar *Drei Damen* in Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Christa Ludwig, and Marga Höffgen, and Karajan's stars outshine even Klemperer's: Anna Tomowa-Sintow, Agnes Baltsa, and Hanna Schwarz, who sing with luscious tone and lusty passion.

Any of these recordings will provide you with enjoyment over many hearings, as they have me!



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