



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

The Magic Flute

The Magic Flute (Trollflöjten)

Director: Ingmar Bergman

Production Company: Sveriges Radio TV2

Producer: Måns Reuterswärd

Unit Manager: Ann-Mari Jartelius

Assistant Director: Kerstin Forsmark

Script Supervisor: Katinka Faragó

Screenplay: Ingmar Bergman

From the opera (Music): Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

From the opera (Libretto): Emanuel Schikaneder

From the opera (Swedish Libretto): Alf Henriksson

Director of Photography: Sven Nykvist

B-camera: Lasse Karlsson

Editor: Siv Lundgren

Art Director: Henny Noremark

Assistant Art Directors: Emilio Moliner,

Anna-Lena Hansen, Pascual Di Bianco,

Lennart Larsson

Costumes: Karin Erskine

Make-up: Bengt Ottekil, Britt Falkemo, Cecilia Drott

Music: Mozart

Music Performed by:

Sveriges Radios Symfoniorkester

Choir by: Radiokören

Music Director: Eric Ericson

Music Recording: Helmut Mühle

Choreography: Donya Feuer

Dialogue Recordist: Peter Hennix

Sound Mixer: Bengt Törnkrantz

Cast:

Josef Köstlinger (*Tamino*)

Irma Urrila (*Pamina*)

Håkan Hagegård (*Papageno*)

Elisabeth Eriksson (*Papagena*)

Birgit Nordin (*Queen of the Night*)

Britt-Marie Aruhn, Birgitta Smiding, Kirsten Vaupel
(*ladies*)

Ulrik Cold (*Sarastro*)

Ragnar Ulfung (*Monstatos*)

Gösta Prüzelius, Ulf Johansson (*priests*)

Hans Johansson, Jerker Arvidsson (*armed men*)

Urban Malmberg, Ansgar Krook, Erland von Heijne
(*boys*)

Erik Saedén

Sweden 1975

135 mins

Digital

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SIGHT AND SOUND

Ingmar Bergman on 'The Magic Flute'

I was 12 years old when I saw *The Magic Flute* for the first time at the Royal Opera House in Stockholm. It was a lengthy and unwieldy production. [...]

As a boy I loved to roam around. One October day I set out for Drottningholm (in Stockholm) to see its unique court theatre from the 18th century. For some reason the stage door was unlocked. I walked inside and saw for the first time the carefully restored baroque theatre. I remember distinctly what a bewitching experience it was: the effect of chiaroscuro, the silence, the stage. In my imagination I have always seen *The Magic Flute* living inside that old theatre, in that keenly acoustical wooden box, with its slanted stage floor, its backdrops and wings. Here lies the noble, magical illusion of theatre. Nothing is; everything represents. The moment the curtain is raised, an agreement between stage and audience manifest itself. And now, together, we'll create! In other words, it is obvious that the drama of *The Magic Flute* should unfold in a baroque theatre.

During my professional life, I have not done a great many music-drama production. The reason is embarrassing. My love of music is scarcely reciprocated, for I am plagued by a total inability to remember or repeat a sequence of notes. I quickly recognise them, but have difficulty placing them, and I can neither sing nor whistle a tune. For me, learning a musical work more or less by heart is a laborious process. Day after day, I sit with the tape recorder and the score, sometimes paralysed by my lack of skill. My embittered struggle may contain some positive features. I have to spend an inordinate amount of time on the work, as I have to listen to every bar, every beat of the pulse, every single moment. My productions stem from the music. I cannot go in any other direction. My disability prevents me.

With *The Magic Flute* my main goal was to portray as intimately as possible the characters in the fairy tale. The magic and the scenic details happen as if only in passing: suddenly they're in a palace courtyard; suddenly it's snowing; suddenly there is a prison wall; suddenly it's spring.

While we were filming, I noted how much the project benefitted from its long gestation period. Never has a production unfolded with so few hindrances. The solutions lined up and announced themselves one by one. In no case was there even a shadow of forced efforts, nor did any idea arise merely to give me a chance to prove my cleverness as a director. It was a highly creative time, carried along, day and night by Mozart's music.

The Magic Flute was originally intended for an impatient, curious, fun-loving and demanding audience; childish and refined at the same time. Rich people went to the theatre to watch the crowds, but the stalls were full of lower-middle class people and workers. It was for them that Schikaneder wrote his libretto and Mozart his music. They offered their life experience and Mozart his musical wisdom. *The Magic Flute* has a moral that I like: love is the most important thing to man, the most important thing in the world.

The most important thing for me was that the singers had natural voices, not schooled, but the kind of voice that comes straight from the heart. There are synthetic voices that sound wonderful, but you can't see from the singers' faces that they are singing. I want people who sing with their entire being. Outer perfection is not the main thing. As a director, you are faced with a similar choice, you have one shot that is technically imperfect, but it's acted with passion, and then one that is perfect but less artistic. I go for the former. We have not become too corrupted by gramophone perfection. At the end of the day, one's happy when someone plays the wrong note. I'm sick of that bloody media perfection, it drives me mad. Beauty is not that which is perfect but that which is alive.

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Rope

Wed 1 May 18:10 (+ intro by Bryony Dixon, BFI National Archive Curator); Fri 3 May 21:00; Tue 14 May 12:30; Sun 26 May 13:00

Henry V

Thu 2 May 14:40; Thu 9 May 20:15; Thu 30 May 14:30

The Magic Flute Trollflöjten

Fri 3 May 12:00; Fri 24 May 20:25; Tue 28 May 14:30

Pandora's Box Die Büchse der Pandora

Sat 4 May 15:10; Fri 17 May 18:00; Sat 25 May 13:10; Fri 31 May 14:30

West Side Story

Sun 5 May 19:30; Thu 16 May 14:30

Cabaret

Mon 6 May 20:20; Sat 11 May 14:45; Tue 21 May 14:30

A Streetcar Named Desire

Tue 7 May 12:10; Sat 18 May 20:30; Fri 24 May 14:50; Sun 26 May 17:40

Camille

Wed 8 May 18:10 (+ intro by Ruby McGuigan, BFI Programme and Acquisitions); Sun 12 May 20:40; Mon 27 May 12:30

His Girl Friday

Fri 10 May 18:10; Sun 19 May 20:30; Thu 23 May 18:30; Wed 29 May 18:00 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large)

Beautiful Thing

Mon 13 May 20:40; Wed 22 May 18:20 (+ intro by Simon McCallum, BFI National Archive Curator); Thu 30 May 12:10

Bluebeard's Castle Herzog Blaubarts Burg

Wed 15 May 18:10 (+ intro by Alex Prideaux, Marketing and Events Manager – Our Screen Heritage); Fri 31 May 18:10

Chi-Raq

Mon 20 May 18:05; Thu 30 May 20:30

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Music is the framework of opera and it's not very flexible. Does this work promote or get in the way when you stage an opera that also does other things?

It's an incredible stimulus. Not to change one bar, note or pause, to always compose your work using this as your starting point – I can't imagine anything more fascinating. In *The Magic Flute* you can see how carefully Mozart has analysed the dramatic action. Every single scene setting is noted in the score. You can figure out that the stage at Schikaneder's theatre was seven metres wide – that's how far you get if you follow the music when Tamino crosses the stage in front of the temple gates.

A director's most important task is to use his ears, to listen and to understand. He must realise that nothing in the great writers – Ibsen, Mozart, Wagner, Goethe, anyone – is invented, but born out of a melting point, a creative process. The director should ask himself: why is it like this? And then this thing about listening to these big men – it's unique.

In an interview in Newsweek about a year ago you said that you were at a stage when you wanted to entertain. The TV version of The Magic Flute seems to reflect such an ambition.

I have been chastised for this statement in *Newsweek* several times. What was not clear was what I really mean by entertaining, which is to entertain in the broadest and most positive sense of the word: to capture and retain people's attention, to make them reflect.

I don't think that you can get these people to reflect during the performance. It's a matter of distributing as many spectacular and inspiring stimuli as possible – it is after all an instrument of suggestion you're working with. But you must have a purpose to the effect that the people who are submitted to this emotional influence afterwards will be set into motion, emotionally and intellectually. I imagine that they will start to reflect once they have become emotionally aware.

This doesn't prevent me from thinking that I also believe that film and theatre have a completely legitimate pure entertainment value in that they make people forget and escape from everyday life for a moment. I mean: provided that you use fair, not dirty, methods. It's completely legitimate. What Hitchcock does, for example, is immensely legitimate.

Sven Nykvist on shooting 'The Magic Flute'

The Magic Flute was made as a conventional film, but not conventional to me who had been working with natural light for years. We were now about to shoot an 18th century opera, Mozart's most powerful one, with fantasy creatures and mythological characters. That was why Ingmar also wanted us to play with colour, to work with tinted light and various filters – almost the complete reverse of everything we had done before.

It was a new challenge for us, but he was incredibly interested in the lighting. He wanted the colour changes to appear in tune with the music, which was prerecorded. This is what you always do when you film an opera. The music is the base. Sometimes we did not have more than a few seconds for radically changing the lighting in one and the same take. There was no question of using a light meter. I had to depend on my intuition.

One of the most exciting and inspiring things about Ingmar is that he has never been afraid to experiment and that he has always wanted to develop the language of film. An immense amount has been written about his films – of which it is perhaps easier for a critic to have an opinion – but it seems to me that you then miss something important, the way in which Ingmar narrates, how he delivers his message. Part of his greatness is that he is constantly developing the language of film.

Paul Duncan and Bengt Wanselius (eds.), *The Ingmar Bergman Archives* (Taschen, 2008)