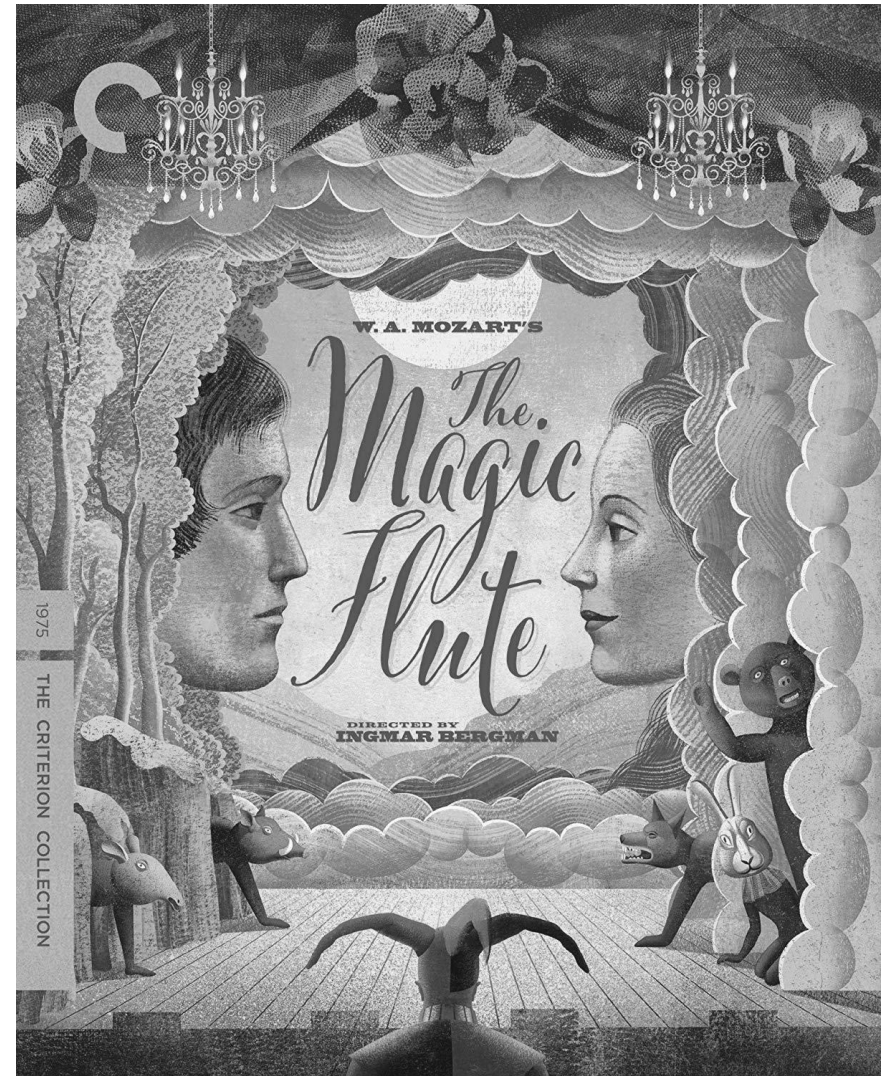


OPERA PRODUCTION

Ingmar **Bergman** (1918–2007, *Swedish film and theater director and screenwriter*), Sir Kenneth **Branagh** (1950– , *British actor and director*), Sir David **McVicar** (1966– , *Scottish opera director*), Wolfgang Amadeus **Mozart** (1756–91, *Austrian composer*), Emanuel **Schikaneder** (1751–1812, *Austrian actor, impresario, and playwright*), Julie **Taymor** (1952– , *American director, designer, and choreographer*)



The class website is www.brunyate.com/RenInstProduction/
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1. FOUR FLUTES

September 15, 2026

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THE EASIEST WAY TO SEE WHAT AN OPERA STAGE DIRECTOR DOES is to compare multiple productions of the same work. Being a fantasy that uses fairytale elements to address real moral points, Mozart's final opera, *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute), is a perfect example. I have selected four of the nine complete videos in my library for brief comparison. Most show stage performances, but the last is a film. The first two use the stage technology of Mozart's era and now; the others explore philosophical issues through radically different choices of period and setting. All four have popular appeal.

First, though, we will investigate terminology and job-descriptions, to establish a background that will apply to the entire course. This opening section will continue to be available online for those who missed the first class or want to revisit it. *rb*.

A. JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Opera productions have two theoretically co-equal bosses: the Music Director, responsible for everything you hear, and the Stage Director, responsible for all you see. For the rest of this course, we will refer to them simply as **Conductor** and **Director**.

B. BERGMAN: OPERA IN THE OLD STYLE

Scenes from the opening of **Ingmar Bergman's** iconic 1975 film, which uses the technology of the court theatre at Drottningholm, built in Mozart's day, in a playful approach to period production.

Bergman: opening sequence; in Swedish. (Josef Köstlinger, *Tamino*; Håkan Hagagård, *Papageno*; Eric Ericson, *conductor*)

Bergman: arrival of the Queen of Night (Birgit Nordin)

Bergman: Act I Quintet

C. TAYMOR: A TOUCH OF KABUKI

We sample many of the same scenes in the 2004 production at the Met by master storyteller and puppeteer **Julie Taymor**, who follows Bergman in her fascination with stage technology, though crossing over to Asia for inspiration, rather than back in time.

Taymor: selections from the opening scenes (Metropolitan Opera, 2006, in German. Charles Castronovo, *Tamino*; Markus Werba, *Papageno*; Kathryn Lewek, *Queen*; James Levine, *conductor*)

D. McVICAR: ENLIGHTENMENT PARABLE

We continue the story with two scenes from the 2003 London staging by **Sir David McVicar**, who places the opera (and its moral implications) firmly within the Enlightenment world that gave it birth.

McVicar: Tamino arrives in the temple. (Royal Opera House, 2019 revival; in German. Mauro Peter, *Tamino*; Darren Jeffery, *Speaker*; Julia Jones, *conductor*)

McVicar: Act II arias (Sabine Develhe, *Queen*; Miko Kares, *Sarastro*; with Siobhan Stagg, *Pamina*, and Peter Bronder, *Monostatos*)

E. BRANAGH: SHIFT OF SETTING

As a kind of summary, we look at how the 2006 film by **Sir Kenneth Branagh** shifts the action to the trenches of WW1, and how this pays off in the dramatic conclusion of the story.

Branagh: excerpts from opening. (In English. Joseph Kaiser, *Tamino*; James Conlon, *conductor*)

Branagh: Sarastro's Act II aria, verse 2 (René Pape)

Branagh: Act II finale, excerpt (as above, with Amy Carson, *Pamina*)