

The Mozartian Chemistry

This is how I do it: I get lost in the forest, I listen to the recordings of *The Magic Flute* countless times.

The goal is to confuse myself, to disorient myself, to question myself—radically—on what I know, what I have read and learned from my readings, the Egyptian symbolism and the commonplaces, what I have experienced from this opera at the cinema, on the stage. I strip myself of all the familiar verbiage.

I need to question this *Flute*, to see and hear it as if it were for the first time, and, ultimately, to believe in it. Faced with a masterpiece such as this, I must surrender, give myself to it entirely. Forget, abandon myself, expose myself to the sting that Mozart dissimulates among the scent of his flowers, confess myself to this masterpiece.

So, I have meandered, and the first revelation appears: I believe in her, in the Mother.

She's the one that I want to listen to:
The Queen of the Night.
I believe in Clytemnestra's revolt,
whose echo extends through her voice.
The scoffed creature.

I want to completely assume the Mozartian potion and bring it to its maximum effect. Here, in the gardens, is the artificial grotto, the feathers of the bird fowler, the white lead make-up with the artificial fly, the symmetry. The agitation of an 18th century palace. Here is the citizens' celebration '*fête du peuple*'. The ornament, the popular entertainment. Here lives this grandiose kitsch of Sarastro who denies death and defecation, inventing worlds of light so implausible that they become radioactive. The test of fire consumes the experience while the test of water washes its threshold by ridding it of the ash. This purity is terror. Listen carefully to Sarastro's lyrics: his syrupy discourses numb the spirit.

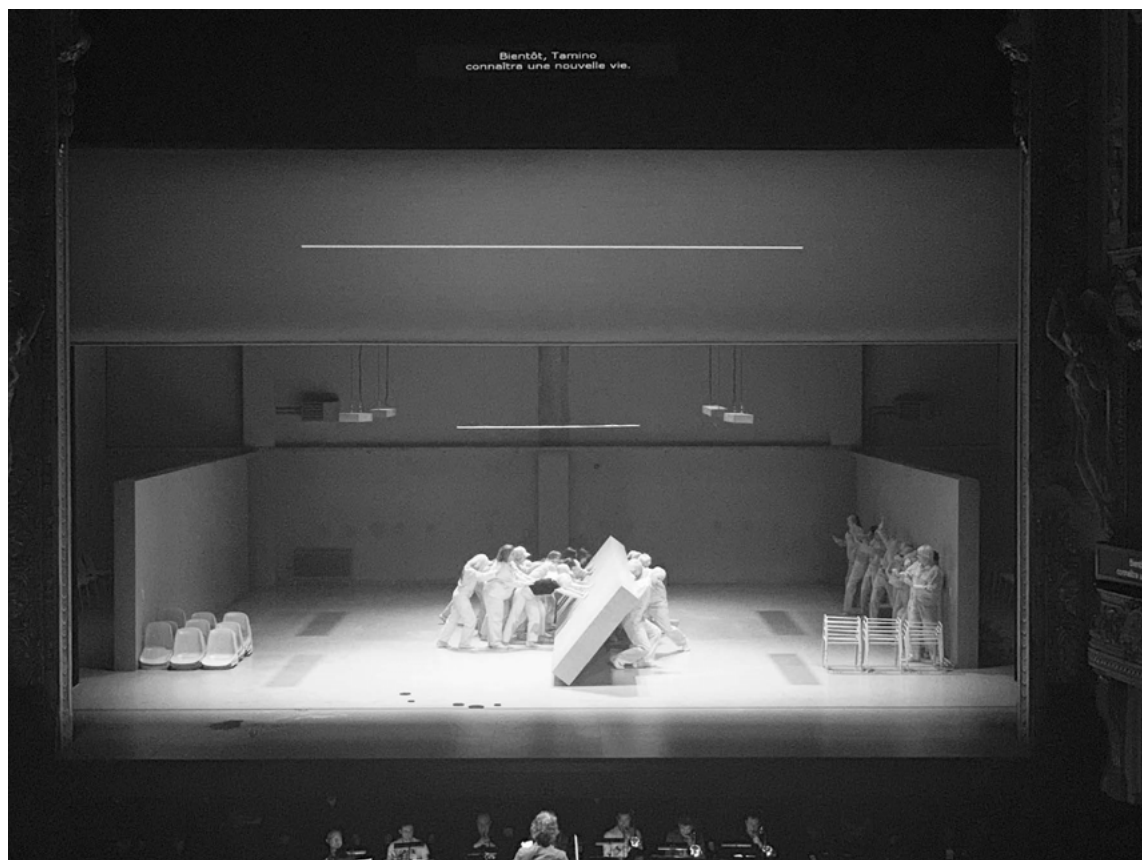


Le mieux qu'il nous reste à fa



ire est de vouloir cet abandon





The first act opens as a gesture of challenge to light. Everything appears divided by a virtual mirror that extends over the objects and the characters. Already redoubled and mimetic in the libretto, these seem to dissolve into 'types', reduced to their cultural function. The double devours identity. A morphogenetic structure seems to emerge; developing according to the absolute symmetry of microbiology. There is a minimalism that deconstructs the narrative in favour of the great 'tapestry' of nature, of ornament. I, therefore, asked Michael Hansmeyer for permission to use his architectural forms generated by algorithms.

For the second act, I asked for the participation of ten people of courage, whose biographies disavow the ideological fabric of *The Flute* where the proselytism of Sarastro announces the New Man. Real lives erupt in his moral palace and suspend his power: the backbone of the story undergoes a palingenesis.

Five blind women—Dorien Cornelis, Joyce de Ceulaerde, Monique van den Abbeel, Lorena Dürnholz, Katty Kloek—represent the court of the Queen of the Night and proclaim the principle of Darkness. Five severe burn victims—Michiel Buseyne, Johnny Imbrechts, Yann Nuyts, Brecht Staut, Jan Van Bastelaere—represent the court of Sarastro. They have all suffered the devastation of the light of fire.

The spoken passages from these ten witnesses—enhanced by the poetic inspiration of Claudia Castellucci, who faithfully re-transcribed their life testimonies—takes the place, like the hollow of a mould, of Schikaneder's recitative. Their life stories seem to speak about us, today.

It's my turn now, a face in the crowd, who questions Mozart about the meaning of my persona—me, spectator—in his castle. What is my significance within *The Magic Flute*? What signifies the presence of a woman born blind confronting the voice of the Night Queen?

And what does it mean, for a severe burn victim, to be in the presence of Sarastro, whose principle of Light has torn off his own skin, while being enveloped in the sphere of fire that has burnt his house? What is the value of Sarastro's promise of a new world—a new world which we are still waiting for?

And what is the meaning of these young mothers squeezing milk from their breasts to fill a glass tube hanging in the middle of the space? Perhaps they are preparing an uncrossable boundary? To pour the food emanating from the body, perhaps this scene is one of libation to affirm the primacy of the mother? The fragile little glass tube filled with maternal milk is a barrier that, simultaneously, affirms and denies. It is forbidden to cross this boundary, it is here, the territory of mothers.

Sarastro repudiates Image in favour of Law to protect himself from the adoration of the Mother. Law must stop there. Imagination exists only in the Mother. The maternal feminine opens the doors to imagination. We imagine ourselves.

Translation by Yael Ifrah