

# Overture to the Magic Flute

Teacher Resources

Activities in this pack:



Information



Activity 3 **Listen**



Activity 1 **Listen**



Activity 4 **Create**



Activity 2 **Create**



Activity 5 **Learn**

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## Introduction

Title of Work: Overture to the Magic Flute

Composer: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Focus Concepts:

Genre: Overture

### Introduction

The Magic Flute is one of the most beloved operas of all time. It was one of the last pieces Mozart wrote during his short life and there are many aspects of the opera that make it stand out amongst all of Mozart's operas. It contains both spoken word and songs, which make it easier to follow the plot and not unlike a musical. Its captivating and whimsical story was written to be enjoyed by a wide audience, and it has not left the opera stages around the world since it was first performed in 1791.

The overture is often performed as a standalone concert piece by orchestras and is always heard before a full opera performance.





## What can you hear?

1. Play the first 3 minutes of the overture of The Magic Flute and have students raise their hands every time there is a musical change (or a new section).

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

2. Listen to the music again, and have students decide what the emotion or attitude of each section (for example: “This music is playful,” “This music is serious,” “This section is more energetic”).

3. Have them listen to it a third time and come up with reasons why the music made them feel a certain way (for example: “This section was serious because it is slow” “This section is exciting because it’s loud”).

4. Based on this simple musical analysis, ask students what they expect to experience or see in The Magic Flute.

5. Now read to the students the synopsis of the opera.

6. Ask the class if the overture prepared them for the themes and emotions that would play out in the opera.

*It is night time, and a young girl is swept away by the power of her imagination into a world where nothing is as it first appears. Here she finds Tamino, a handsome prince who is also lost in this strange land and is being pursued by a monstrous serpent. Three mysterious women appear, who are servants of the Queen of the Night, and slay the monster. Afterwards, they give Tamino a portrait of the Queen’s daughter, Pamina, and he falls instantly in love, vowing to rescue her from the evil Sarastro, Priest of the Sun, in whose faraway Temple she has been imprisoned. The three women give Tamino a magic flute to help in his quest and with the aid of a bird-catcher, Papageno, Tamino journeys to Sarastro’s temple and meets Pamina for the first time.*

*Tamino learns that it is not Sarastro who is evil but the Queen of the Night and that Pamina was only being held to keep her hidden from her mother. Sarastro gives Tamino a new quest; he must now undergo a series of trials to prove himself worthy of Pamina’s love. Using the power of the magic flute, Tamino and Pamina are able to overcome their trials and earn the right to be with each other. At the moment of their success, the Queen of the Night arrives with her servants to storm the temple and destroy it, but Sarastro appears and defeats them, casting them out. The sun rises on a new era for the united heroes.*



## How it is put together

You have been asked to write the program notes for the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra's Concert featuring the Overture to the Magic Flute by Mozart. Write a concise paragraph about this piece that would help the audience to understand what the piece is about and what the audience should listen for in the performance.

Use the Youtube link to follow the score of this piece and see an analysis of it. Think about the mood. It is a setting for a story of fantasy and adventure. Remember that the number 3 plays an important role in this (3 flats, 3 chords to open, the sections or sonata form growing out of only one theme.)

### [The Magic Flute Overture - Score and Analysis](#)

Suggestions to get you started:

- Does the work have a form?
- Anything notable about tempo changes, phrasing, modulations, or other analysis?
- Are there characteristic intervals, pitches, tone clusters, or melodic patterns that recur?
- Is there special use of a specific instrument?
- How many tunes are heard and what are the features of this tune?
- Use language that an audience member who knows very little about music might understand.





## Preparing for an audition

The excerpt here is from the violin 1 part, featuring the first entrance of the fast, scurrying theme heard throughout the overture. It is regularly used as a test piece for professional violin players trying out to join an orchestra.

Follow the part as the start of the overture is played.

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

Why might this be used as a test piece?

What makes it difficult to play as a soloist, and as one of 8 violins in a section all playing the same thing?

The musical score is for the violin 1 part of the Overture to the Magic Flute. It begins at measure 16 with a triplet of eighth notes. The tempo is marked 'Allegro.' and the key signature has two flats. The score includes various dynamic markings: *p* (piano), *f* (forte), *sf* (sforzando), and *tr* (trills). The excerpt concludes at measure 59.



## Composing

Use available technology to create a short piece of music which tells the story of adventure and activity.

Think about the features of Mozart's overture as a model. Before you start, use the planning grid questions below to guide you:

- What music style will you use?
- What key will your piece be in?
- What instruments will you use?
- What tempo and time signature will the piece be in?
- What type of theme will you centre the piece around?
- How will you convey the sense of adventure in the music?
- What will be the plan of the music?





## Cross-Curricular Activity

a) Many believe that to understand this Opera, you need to understand Masonic beliefs and rights. In fact, some go so far as to describe it as an allegory (a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning) for aspects of Freemasonry. What is Freemasonry? Why might Mozart's piece be related to Freemasonry?

b) The Magic Flute is about a quest: the search for truth and reason, love and enlightenment. It follows the adventures of Prince Tamino and the bird-catcher Papageno on their quest to rescue Pamina.

What other stories/films do you know that involve a quest to find something? What characteristics do all these have in common?

