

John Dryden Translation Competition for 2013-2014 Third Prize Winner

‘Die Zauberflöte’ by Emanuel Schikaneder, translated by Judith Woolf

THE MAGIC FLUTE

Act 1, Scene 1

Prologue

Sarastro: *The story whose start you will see is a duel between wisdom and evil,
Wisdom bright as the sun and evil darker than midnight.
The treacherous Queen of the Night, my foe who once was my consort,
The treacherous Queen of the Night had turned my daughter against me,
My beautiful daughter Pamina, as clear and as pure as the moon.
To save her virtue from taint, I seized my innocent darling,
Only for care of my child, to lead her in wisdom’s way.
But the Queen, in her jealous rage, has hatched a plan to defeat me
By trapping a cowardly prince she can send to steal back Pamina,
A puppet she can control, too foolish to see who controls him.
But she herself is a puppet, for evil is weaker than wisdom,
And the plan of darkness she’s nursing will eventually lead to the light.
Meanwhile, heed my advice and don’t take her words at face value,
For crocodiles often shed tears and black can appear to be white,
And all you will see is a dream, conjured up by Mozart’s music
Which is just about to begin. Enter the Prince and the dragon.*

1. Introduction

Tamino: Oh help me! Oh help me! Can nobody hear me?
Oh help me! Oh help me! Can nobody hear me?
A horrible dragon is crawling towards me:
its jaws are wide open!

It's getting so near! I'm shaking with fear!
Oh help me now, oh help me, help me!
Save me now!
Oh save me, save me, help me!
Help me, help me, save me now!

Three Ladies: Die, stupid worm, your part is done.
Hurrah! Hurrah! The dragon's dead and we have won.
We've saved his life, and double quick,
Through our amazing party trick.

First Lady Oh look, he's quite a nice young man.
Second Lady The most attractive boy I've seen.
Third Lady Yes, yes, he's quite a good-looking man.

Three Ladies If I should ever lose my head,
This is the one I'd take to bed.
Let's go and tell the Queen our story.
To hear it she will not be sorry.
It's possible this boy we've found
Can give her back her peace of mind.

First Lady You run and tell her, dear.
I'll stay and guard him here.

Second Lady No, no, you go ahead.
I'll watch him here instead.

Third Lady No, no, be off, you two.
I'll stay instead of you.

First Lady I'll stay and guard him, dear.

Second Lady I'll watch him here, I said.

Third Lady I've said I'm staying here.

First Lady I'll guard him.

Second Lady I'll watch him.

Third Lady I'm staying.

Three Ladies Me! Me! Me!

To each What is her game?

other in Has she no shame?

Pairs Oh ho, it's in the open now.

She wants to be alone with him.

No way! No way! I'm here and I shall stay.

Three Ladies But for these bitches in the manger,

I'd like to stay here with the stranger,

If I could get him on his own.

That pair, of course, will stay, I know,

So what's the point? I'd better go.

Goodbye, goodbye, you nice young man.

I'll hurry back here if I can.

Until we meet again,

Goodbye, auf Wiedersehn.

Ladies exit, leaving Tamino unconscious. The sound of birdsong is heard off-stage, followed by Papageno's voice.

Papageno: Aha! Got you!

Papageno enters with a bird in a cage. During his song, Tamino gradually comes round from his faint.

2. Song

Papageno: I am a fowler with a snare,

I charm the birds from out the air.

My pipes can mimic every note
That issues from a songbird's throat.
My whistle calls them from the trees,
And then I catch them when I please.
This feathered trade has brought me fame,
And Papageno is my name.

If I could only get my way,
I'd catch a pretty girl some day.
I'd lay a trap to make her mine
Of sugar cake and honey wine,
And then I'd tame her tenderly
To make her build her nest with me.
Then like two birds we'd court and sing,
And I'd be happy as a king.

Tamino: *(faintly)* What's happened? Am I dead?

Papageno: *(startled)* I don't think so. You look pretty lively to me. Who are you, anyway?

Tamino: I'm a handsome prince.

Papageno: Bit conceited, aren't you?

Tamino: It's not a personal attribute, it's a job description.

Papageno: *(baffled)* Oh, right.

Tamino: *(helpfully)* You know, like in the fairy tales. Rescuing damsels in distress and all that.

Papageno: Rescued a lot, have you?

Tamino: Well, no, not actually. Not so far. I was just out hunting when... something happened. Something horrible. I can't remember...

Papageno: Out hunting, eh? You seem to have mislaid your arrows.

Tamino: *(hastily changing the subject)* Let's not go into that. Allow me to introduce myself. Prince Tamino at your service.

Papageno: Charmed, I'm sure. Papageno. At *your* service. Bird-catcher to the Queen of the Night.

Tamino: The Queen of the Night! Have I strayed into *her* country ? I say, have you ever seen her? What's she really like?

Papageno: (*angrily*) Are you crazy? Do you think the Queen of the Night shows herself to every Tom, Dick and Harry. I just catch birds for her – I don't hobnob with her.

Tamino: (*curious*) What does she do with the birds?

Papageno: I've never dared to ask. What night always does to the birds, I suppose.

Tamino: And what's that?

Papageno: (*shortly*) Shuts them up and stops them singing. Anyhow, what's it got to do with you? And why are you staring at me like that?

Tamino: I'm terribly sorry. I couldn't help noticing...

Papageno: Noticing what? Just because I have a feather in my hat, it doesn't mean I'm a parrot! You'd better watch your step, prince or no prince. I may look harmless enough but I have the strength of a giant.

Tamino: Of a giant? Oh my God, I've just remembered! The dragon! It must have been you that saved me!

Papageno: The what? (*looks round and sees dragon*) Aaagh! Is it dead? (*reassured*) Yes, it seems to be. I must have finished it off.

Tamino: But how? You don't have any weapons.

Papageno: I have a very strong handshake, though.

Papageno and Tamino make as if to shake hands, but freeze on the entrance of the three Ladies.

First Lady: Papageno!

Second Lady: Papageno!

Third Lady: Papageno!

Papageno gives a strangled yelp.

Tamino: Who are these mature but still utterly charming ladies?

Papageno: *(with an attempt at bravado)* Oh they are the attendants of the Queen of the Night. I see *them* all the time. They bring me nice things to eat and drink in exchange for my birds.

Third Lady: Papageno!

Second Lady: Papageno!

First Lady: Papageno! Do you want to know what we've brought you today?
Instead of sweet wine, some nice cold water.

Second Lady: And instead of sugar cake, a stone.

Third Lady: And instead of sticky toffee pudding, a padlock which will *really* clamp your teeth together.

They padlock Papageno's mouth.

Third Lady: I expect you'd like to know why you've been punished?

Papageno mimes 'Yes'.

First Lady: To teach you not to go round telling outrageous lies to strangers. Did *you* kill that dragon?

Papageno mimes 'No'.

Second Lady: And who did?

Papageno mimes 'No idea'.

Three Ladies: That heroic deed was down to *us*! So be off with you! And think on!

Exit Papageno.

First Lady: *(sugar sweet)* Prince Tamino, don't be afraid.
Second Lady: The way to honour, fame and happiness lies open.
Third Lady: Our Queen has sent you this picture of her daughter.
Three Ladies: Look into her eyes.

3. Aria

Tamino: The portrait of a face so fair,
 Its beauty shines beyond compare!
 I feel it, how her loveliness
 Consumes my heart with strange distress.
 I can't explain this sudden yearning,
 But in my heart I feel it burning.
 Can such a flame be love indeed?
 Ah yes, her love is all I need.
 Oh, if I only could locate her,
 And if I had the chance to date her,
 Then I would – warm and true – what would I do?
 I'd be too shy to address her,
 But to my burning breast I'd press her,
 And then she'd be forever mine,
 Forever and for always mine.

First Lady: The Queen has overheard every word you've said.
Second Lady: She has seen into the secrets of your heart.
Third Lady: She wants you to rescue her daughter.
Tamino: Rescue! From what?
Third Lady: She has been stolen away by an evil wizard.
First Lady: One fine May morning, while she lay sleeping in the shade of a cypress
 grove, the wicked Sarastro crept up to her like a serpent.
Second Lady: He knows how to change his shape at will, which is how he was able
 to lure Pamina away.
Tamino: Pamina! I shall rescue her, I swear it by my love!

Sound of owls hooting.

Three Ladies: Listen! The Queen! She's coming!

Ladies cover themselves with black veils. Enter Queen.

4. Recitative and Aria

**Queen of
the Night:** Don't be afraid, my dearest son;
I know you're steadfast, valiant, strong.
A fine young man like you is what I'm seeking,
To save a mother's tender heart from breaking.
Now sorrow is my one companion,
I miss my daughter night and day.
With her has all my joy been stolen.
An evil beast snatched her away.
I still see her cowering
From force overpowering,
Her faint struggles failing,
Her tears unavailing.
I can't forget her cries of terror:
"Oh help!" was all I heard her speak.
I could not use my art to save her,
For my enchantments were too weak.
You will bravely go and find her!
You'll bring her back, and when you do –
Yes, you'll bring her back, and when you do
I swear you shan't be empty handed,
For I will give her heart to you.
Yes, I will give her heart to you.

Exit Queen and Ladies.

Tamino: *(as if hypnotized)* Was it a vision or a waking dream?
Fled is that music. Do I wake or sleep?

Enter Papageno.

5. Quintet

Papageno: Hm, hm, hm...

Tamino: Now he could really say he's punished,
Except he's gagged, as you can see.

Papageno: Hm, hm, hm...

Tamino: I really wish I could unlock him
But don't know where to find the key.

First Lady: Our Queen has kindly pardoned you.
You've learned your lesson, is that true?

Papageno: Now Papageno's free to chatter.

Second Lady: Yes, chatter, but with no more lying.

Papageno: I'll never tell a lie again.

Three Ladies: You'd better not, I hope that's plain.

Papageno: Because that padlock was a pain.

Three Ladies: No, no, you'd better not, I hope that's plain.

All: If lying lips were locked together,
And liars shut their mouths for good,
Instead of gossip, spite and slander
There would be peace and brotherhood.

First Lady: Oh Prince, here is a gift to help you.
Our gracious Queen sends it to you.
This magic flute in times of danger
Will make a friend of every stranger.

Three Ladies: It casts a spell on all who hear it.
Despair and harm cannot come near it.
The saddest heart it fills with joy,
Makes boy love girl and girl love boy.

All: Oh it is a troll flute,
A magic flute of virtue rare,
Playing high and playing low,
Charming music from the air,
Sweet music from the air.

Papageno: I'll be on my bike then, ladies.
Bye now. I'll be seeing you.

Three Ladies: You'll be setting off directly,
With the Prince to lead the way.
He must storm Sarastro's castle.
With your help he'll have less hassle.

Papageno: Are you mad? I'm out of here!
For you've told me loud and clear
That Sarastro is a brute.
He would have me plucked and roasted,
Stuffed and trussed and grilled and toasted,
Then his dogs would have a treat.

Three Ladies: There is no need for all this fright.
Just trust the Prince to see you right.

Papageno: Just trust the Prince? You must be joking!
I'd rather save my skin.
He'll run away when I'm not looking
From the mess he's left me in.

Three Ladies: Cheer up, we've got a gift for you.

Papageno: A box? And what's inside of it?

Three Ladies: A what's his name, how do you say it?

Papageno: A glockenspiel! I'd love to play it.
Three Ladies: Of course you can. Just have a go.
All: Flute melodic, chime bars ringing,
Lift our hearts and set them singing.
Off you go, you fearless men/ Wish us luck in our campaign.
Ciao, goodbye, auf Wiedersehn.

Tamino: But lovely ladies, wait a mo.
Papageno: You haven't told us where to go.
Both: You haven't told us where to go.

Three Ladies: Three children from a higher sphere
Will chart your path and make it clear.
'Tis they will guard you on your way.
Only pay heed to what they say.

Tamino: Three children from a higher sphere
Papageno: Will chart our path and make it clear.

Three Ladies: 'Tis they will guard you on your way
Only pay heed to what they say.

All: So wish us luck in our campaign./ The best of luck, you fearless men.
Goodbye, goodbye, auf Wiedersehn.

Epilogue

Sarastro: *So off our heroes go, unaware of what lies before them,
For life is hard, and the getting of wisdom is harder,
And in Wisdom's very Temple Tamino will find himself tested;
But through the fire and the flood Pamina will walk by his side,
And the notes of the magic flute will bring them safe through the ordeal.
Papageno, meanwhile, though too bird-brained to learn true wisdom,
With the help of the marvellous boys and the magical glockenspiel,
Will find his true mate, Papagena – for love is a kind of wisdom,
As even the birds well know. And as for the evil Queen,*

*She and her ladies will fall, defeated at last, into Hades.
And then I shall give up my power to Tamino and Pamina,
For self-abnegation is wisdom, and wisdom's a kind of love.
But this you will learn elsewhere, and on another occasion,
For these our actors, as I foretold you, are spirits,
And are melted into air. Into thin air.*