

CLASSICAL  
OPERA

MOZART AND EVERYBODY ELSE

# OPERA STYLES

- Opera Seria
- Opera Buffa
- Singspiel

# OPERA SERIA

- As in the Baroque
- Arias and Recitatives
- History and Mythology
- Mozart Examples:
  - Idomeneo
  - La Clemenza di Tito

# OPERA BUFFA

- New to the Classical
  - “Regular” people
  - Choruses, ballets
  - Often contemporary plots
  - Mozart Examples:
    - The Marriage of Figaro
    - Don Giovanni
    - Così fan tutte

# SINGSPIEL

- Exclusive to German-speaking countries
- In German
- Contains spoken dialog
- Similar to modern musical theater
- Mozart Examples:
  - The Abduction from the Seraglio
  - The Magic Flute

# IDOMENEIO (1780)

- Mozart's first mature opera
- Written for the Elector of Bavaria, who had recently moved his court from Mannheim to Munich.
- Lavish spectacle, huge orchestra.

# THE ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO

- Mozart's first Viennese opera
- Premiered July 16, 1782
- Triumphant success

# THE ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO

- Soprano part written for Catharina Cavalieri
- Virtuoso with enormous range and stamina
- Modern performances rare until:
  - Recordings
  - Vocal training caught up to the demands

# LORENZO DA PONTE

- Real name: Emmanuele Conegliano
- Librettist of *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*
- Son of a Jewish leather merchant in Venice.
- Colorful (disreputable) career throughout Europe.
- Landed position as court poet with Joseph II.
- When Joseph II died in 1790, da Ponte had to leave.
- Drifted around for a while--always getting fired or having to leave town for debts or sexual scandals.
- Wound up running a grocery store in New Jersey
- Died 1838

# THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

- Mozart and da Ponte's first collaboration.
- One of the most successful operas ever written.
- Perfect blend of comedy, intrigue, romance, and music.
- A great success at its premiere.

# DON GIOVANNI

- Commissioned for the new opera house in Prague
- Prague premiere October 27, 1787
  - Wildly successful
- Viennese premiere May 7, 1788
  - Not so successful
  - Deemed “too difficult”

# DON GIOVANNI

- Act I, scene iii

# THE CHARACTERS

- Masetto: a peasant man on his wedding day
- Zerlina: Masetto's fiancée
- Leporello: Don Giovanni's manservant
- Don Giovanni: "Don Juan", the notorious seducer of women.

# THE PLOT OF THE SCENE

- Leporello and Don Giovanni visit the celebration of Masetto's and Zerlina's forthcoming wedding.
- Don Giovanni takes a shine to Zerlina and decides to add her to his (very long) list of successful seductions.
- Offers Masetto various favors, and then tells him to get lost.
- Masetto replies in an angry aria -- but he knows he has to leave.
- Don Giovanni invites Zerlina to his villa, promises to marry her and make her into a lady.
- She succumbs...but at the last minute, Donna Anna intervenes...

# METROPOLITAN OPERA

- James Levine conducts the Met Orchestra
- Directed by Franco Zeffereilli
  - Don Giovanni: Bryn Terfel
  - Masetto: John Relyea
  - Zerlina: Hei-Kyung Hong
  - Leporello: Ferruccio Furlanetto



# THE MAGIC FLUTE

- Has inspired any number of fanciful performances.
- There isn't any standard physical setting; it takes place in a mythical place that isn't described in the libretto.
- The nonsensical nature of the plot, together with the wonderful music, allow for tremendous leeway in production.

# THE MAGIC FLUTE

- There have been several fine film versions.
- Ingmar Bergman did one back in the 1960s
- Here is a scene from the newer one by Kenneth Branagh (still to be released in the United States!)
- Papageno, the bird-catcher, sings of his love for women (typically British play on “bird”). At the very end of the scene he first encounters the raucous old lady who eventually turns out to be an enchanted young woman named Papagena.

