

simplicité des manières quotidiennes, refus de se soumettre aisément aux vanités sociales. Le livre aborde également l'arrivée du paysan à la ville et donne une bonne idée de la vie des "néo-citadins". Encore là, la documentation précise fait saisir le rôle qu'ont pu jouer les administrations dans l'évolution, par exemple, des loisirs: création de parcs publics à Montréal, mise en place de compétitions, d'activités régulières, donc de "loisirs organisés". A la ville, par ailleurs, n'existe plus la "corvée", ce système d'entraide entre voisins et villageois où la coopération communautaire répondait à bien des besoins. Leboeuf d'ailleurs fait un point notable de la présentation de ce phénomène de la "corvée", aujourd'hui synonyme de tâche ingrate. Et c'est dans l'évolution de concepts de ce genre, entre autres, que peut se révéler le portrait d'une mentalité.

Enfin le petit livre de Francine Leboeuf, avec son sens du détail, son organisation claire, réunit des informations précieuses sur la vie des Québécois des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles. Chacun(e), sans doute, y fera sa petite découverte. Au fait, saviez-vous tous que les cabanes à sucre, leur culture et leurs petits rituels sont dus aux Amérindiens qui ont enseigné aux Français leurs techniques pour recueillir la sève d'érable?

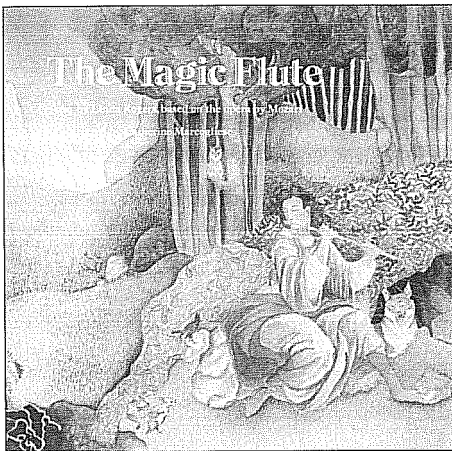
NOTES

1 C'est nous qui soulignons.

Maryel Archambault est professeure à l'Université de Waterloo où elle enseigne les littératures française et québécoise.

A NEW VISION OF MOZART'S MAGIC

The magic flute. Linda Rogers, based on the opera by Mozart. Illus. Catherine Marcogliese. The Porcupine's Quill, 1992. 36 pp., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88984-129-2.



For parents who'd like to introduce their children to Mozart's great fairy-tale opera, *The magic flute*, an attractively written and illustrated picture-book version of the opera is a real boon. While the opera contains some of Mozart's most delightful and readily accessible music and its plot is full of appealingly fantastic characters and adventures, unravelling the story line and keep-

ing a clear sense of what is going on takes some doing, even for adult opera-goers. Happily, Linda Rogers has done it, and her adaptation of the story works beautifully with Catherine Marcogliese's delicately detailed watercolour illustrations to evoke something of the magic of the opera on stage. Having myself made two unsuccessful attempts to keep my young daughter interested in performances of *The magic flute* (the second time she just slept; the first time she arranged to choke on a hard candy so that she could be taken out!), I only wish that this charming picture book had been around ten years ago when I so badly needed it. Familiarity with the complex story certainly makes it easier for both adults and children to follow and enjoy what is happening on the stage, especially if the production is in the original German. Reading projected surtitles or straining to catch the English words of a translated version is difficult when eye and ear are already busy with the action and the music; how much better if the young opera-goer has a chance to pore over Linda Rogers' story first.

Of course, the Rogers/Marcogliese *Magic flute* can and will be read by many children who don't have an opportunity to attend a live performance of the opera, and the book can be enjoyed as a beautifully-illustrated tale of magic quite apart from its musical associations. Nonetheless, the text reads best in the context of the musical passages for which the original libretto provided a pretext. For example, lines such as "'Look,' they rejoice in unison. 'That troublesome serpent has found himself a prince to satisfy his appetite'" clearly refer to Mozart's first-act trio of the Three Ladies—why, otherwise, bother having them "rejoice in unison." Occasionally Rogers gives a direct translation of a snatch of one of the well-known arias, such as Papageno's first description of himself:

Merry I am and I am known
throughout this land by old and young,
lalalalala.

Generally, however, she paraphrases rather than following the opera's dialogue, and makes up her own metaphoric language to put in the mouths of the characters, as in, "That will teach your mouth full of feathers to be still next time it feels the tickle of a lie." Such a passage is a felicitous contribution to a retelling of the story. Since the libretto for the opera, however, is full of a lively and earthy humour, one might wish that Rogers had chosen to preserve and translate a little more of it in her adaptation.

While Rogers' adaptation follows the basic story and includes all the central characters and episodes, she does not simply paraphrase the dialogue of the libretto, but interprets and interpolates a considerable amount. In so doing, she omits some delightful moments from the opera, such as the squabble among the three Ladies over who will stay to look after the handsome wounded Prince while the others go for help (eventually they all leave together, as no one will

yield the privilege of staying). One of the confusing aspects of the libretto is the reversal in our perception of the Queen of the Night and the Ladies; Rogers solves the problem by explaining at the beginning that this Queen is a bad lot, not to be trusted. Thus the charming humour of her Ladies, so attractive in the opera, is omitted from the picture book since the Ladies have always to be seen as servants of evil. Rogers accounts for Pamina's change of allegiance by having Sarastro explain to her that she is really *his* daughter, and no relation to the Queen of the Night; this alteration doesn't seem particularly useful, however, and it involves the loss of the compassionate scene in the opera in which Pamina pleads with Sarastro to forgive her mother, and Sarastro assures the girl that vengeance has no place in his community. A more obviously defensible alteration is Rogers' treatment of the character Monastatos, whose racist treatment in the libretto and whose sexual threats against Pamina are omitted by Rogers, who dismisses him briefly as a teasing fool. In choosing to give her own interpretation of the story rather than simply transcribing the libretto, Rogers has chosen a creative approach which will undoubtedly provoke argument and perhaps some disappointment in readers who know the opera, but which remains a coherent and interesting interpretation.

The many adults who will undoubtedly purchase *The magic flute* for themselves as well as for lucky children will probably do so not only to have a readable story version of the opera, but to keep and pore over Catherine Marcogliese's delectable watercolour illustrations. The book has been beautifully produced, with illuminated capital letters on almost every page, vignettes of vases, fruit and sculptured figures at the end of sections of text, and many full- and half-page illustrations, framed within decorative borders to suggest an eighteenth-century stage set. The colouring is delicate and harmonious, although the figures and composition are arranged to evoke sometimes the turbulent clouds and dramatic gestures of baroque art, sometimes the mysterious landscapes of *Giorgione*, and sometimes a lively row of figures from a medieval manuscript. The blending of sublime feeling and earthy humour which is so characteristic of Mozart's operas, especially this one, is difficult for any artist to encompass, and this picture book version tends to put its emphasis upon creating an atmosphere of mystery and magic—certainly an appropriate way to present this opera to children, as no adaptation could hope to preserve either the symbolic or the tonal complexity of the original. Both Rogers' text and Marcogliese's illustrations celebrate the essentially theatrical nature of their subject, while managing to suggest as well the magical depths of experience evoked by Mozart's music.

Gwyneth Evans is a frequent contributor to CCL. She teaches in the cross-disciplinary Liberal Studies B.A. program at Malaspina College on Vancouver Island, BC; in the holidays, she likes to travel to see opera and theatre.