

**Between the Court and the Suburbs:  
*Die Zauberflöte*'s Aesthetic Background and Early Viennese Reception  
in View of the Opera's 1801 Hoftheater Production**

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In 1801, the Viennese Hoftheater prepared the first production of *Die Zauberflöte* in Vienna outside of Schikaneder's Wiednertheater. Most pre-existing operas performed by the Hoftheater Singspiel troupe throughout the late 1700s and early 1800s were altered to fit the company's intense preoccupation with moral education and "good taste." However, as the archival materials associated with the 1801 production show, the alterations to *Die Zauberflöte* were minimal compared to Hoftheater adaptations of other pre-existing works (e.g., *Achmet und Almenzine*). Unlike these imported works, and unlike most suburban operas, *Die Zauberflöte* avoided sexual humor and depictions of adultery, thus resembling the German-language works originally written for the imperial stage (e.g., *Das unterbrochene Opferfest*).

This paper argues that *Die Zauberflöte*'s approach to public morality resulted from Mozart's own aesthetic preferences and his earlier cooperation with the Hoftheater's German company on *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. Since adjusting *Die Zauberflöte* to the Hoftheater's morality standards was unnecessary, the few alterations executed in 1801 instead reflected the fierce competition between the court and suburban companies; by ostentatiously changing the text in a few famous arias, the Hoftheater personnel stressed the purportedly low quality of Schikaneder's libretto and the superiority of their own production. The 1801 production therefore illustrates that although *Die Zauberflöte* was originally produced at a suburban stage, it had close ties to the German-language repertoire of the high-minded Hoftheater.