

A Magical Evening at Opera San Jose

By [Cynthia Corral](#)

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Well, I was at the afternoon matinee, but still. It was one of the best times I've had at the opera, and I'm so happy that there is still time for you to see it. *The Magic Flute* is a show for adults and children, oldies and newbies, opera and theatre lovers. And it includes a majestic dragon!!



The dragon attacks Tamino in The Magic Flute. Photo credit Pat Kirk

This may not be the best show I've ever seen at [Opera San Jose](#), but I still enjoyed it so much and it is a great show for other Opera Novices and Newbies. As always, the performances were incredible, the story was great, the music was beautiful, the costumes were gorgeous, ...but there are some stand-outs that make this a show you should not miss.

1. This is a great opera for Newbies and families with children. *The Magic Flute* is sung in German but has spoken words in English. It always throws me off when an opera is not entirely sung, which is probably the only issue I had with this show, but for newbies and children this is a great plus and makes for an easy introduction to opera. As always, the lyrics (and spoken lines) are projected in super titles above the stage so you can follow along. The show has children involved, though they are not the stars, and there were many children in the audience. Although I wasn't sure they would be able to follow the story entirely, there was not a peep from any of them during the entire three hours.
2. **Chris Salinas**, **Daniel Ostrom** and **Winter Felton-Priestner** are three very young men who can now add "Soprano, Opera San Jose" to their resumes and I don't think they've even hit middle school yet. This certainly trumps my own resume and I might be a tiny bit jealous.
3. There are a couple scenes with children silently wearing beautifully painted animal masks, and the animal-like choreography was riveting. Kudos to both the choreographer and the kids for nailing each of their parts and creating a magical tableau whenever they were on stage.
4. The show is often very funny, usually thanks to **Matthew Hanscom** as hapless Papageno. Papageno just wants a wife to love him, but how will he find a woman who wants to marry a poor bird trainer?
5. **Isabella Ivy** (soprano) is breathtaking as the Queen of the Night. Two of the songs she sang were so intricate and complicated that any Newbie could see these must be some of the most difficult pieces in opera. Even more amazing, she sang one of these very complicated pieces in the upper ranges of the scale, while kneeling down, and as she stood her foot got tangled in her skirts. She not only calmly untangled herself, but she never missed a beat or a note in one of the most amazing sections of music I have ever heard. Every jaw in the theater was hanging open. She was incredible.



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6. THE DRAGON. The dragon was simply the most beautiful prop I have ever seen. It was huge and graceful and gorgeous and majestic. Its wings moved, it spouted smoke from its mouth (the kids in the audience LOVED this), and for me it was the star of the show. During intermission I voiced my hopes that the dragon would make another appearance, and it did when everyone came out for a bow. That dragon earned its ovation, and so have the operators, the designers and creators of that piece. More dragons like that need to be in opera!!

When the entire thing was over I realized that I had had a *really* fun time. I haven't always enjoyed every opera I've attended, and it has taken me a while to appreciate some parts of opera. But ever since *Madama Butterfly*, Opera SJ has been drawing me in. I may still be the Opera Novice in most aspects, but I am also quite certainly becoming an Opera Lover.

Recently I have noticed the shows have not had two casts, and are instead having one cast do a shorter run of each show. I don't know if this is a financial decision (or just a coincidence), but I can say that the performers have upped their game, and the performances are tighter than I've ever seen. Try if you can to make one of the last performances (I have heard they are close to selling out all shows) but if you don't make this one, mark your calendars quickly to get seats for next season. It starts with Puccini's *Tosca*, and after that come *The Marriage of Figaro* (YAY!), *Carmen* (YAY!), and then *A Streetcar Named Desire*. That is going to be one amazing season and this Opera Novice is looking forward to it more than ever.

The Magic Flute
Opera San Jose
Thru May 3

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