

FROM THE DIARY OF WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

7 November, 1791, Vienna

This morning I received a missive from the impresario Emanuel Schikaneder urging me to meet him at his offices on the Margaretenstrasse, at my earliest possible convenience, to discuss a matter of some urgency.

I quickly hailed a carriage and traveled posthaste to the Freihaus-Theater auf der Wieden, ruminating upon what my colleague could possibly deem so pressing as to summon me in such an abrupt and peremptory manner.

Upon my entry into Schikaneder's offices I immediately noted the presence of two strange men. Schikaneder rose to introduce them.

"Ah, Wolfgang," he said, "this is Mr. Harris and Mr. Brewster. They have travelled to Vienna all the way from America to meet you."

"America?" I said, surprised that anyone in the New World was even aware of my existence, let alone interested in making my personal acquaintance.

"Yes," Schikaneder said, "these men have a business proposition for you."

"Herr Mozart," Brewster said. "We've read avidly in our country of the success of your latest opera, *Die Zauberflöte*, and we'd like to offer you an opportunity to further capitalize on it's success."

"You'd like to stage *Die Zauberflöte* in America?" I asked.

"Uh, not exactly," Harris said, "We'd like to use your opera as the basis for a new breakfast cereal."

"Breakfast Cereal?" I found myself, I must admit, a trifle confused at their proposition.

“Yes, Maestro,” Harris replied. “I’m sure you’re already familiar with our cereals based on Salieri’s *La Grotta di Trofonio* and Clementi’s *Sonatina Op. 36.*”

“I’m afraid I’m not.”

“They’re extremely popular, Wolfgang,” Schikaneder offered. “The cereals, I mean.”

“We’d like to do the same thing with *Die Zauberflöte*,” Brewster said.

“Yes, we’re specifically interested in basing it on your opera’s most popular character, the half man, half bird, Papageno,” Harris said. “We’re thinking of calling them ‘Frosted Papageno’s.’”

“They’d be shaped like little Papageno’s,” said Brewster.

“Yes, Harris agreed, “but with a sprinkle of frosted goodness to make them just a little more... fun.”

“Whole grain, of course,” Brewster said.

“But they’d stay crispy in milk,” Harris added.

“I’m flattered, gentlemen,” I said, “but I —“

“You seem resistant, Herr Mozart,” Brewster said. “Let us assure you that, commensurate with your status as one of the most prolific and influential composers of *singspiel* in all of Austria, what we’re proposing here would include a full complement of twelve vitamins and minerals for a healthy start to your day, as part of a complete breakfast.”

“And Riboflavin,” added Harris.

“Yes, Riboflavin, of course,” Brewster agreed.

“Wonderful,” I said, “but —“

“Imagine,” Harris said, “using the medium of whole-grain oats to more fully express *Die Zauberflöte*’s themes of Enlightened Absolutism and the power of Freemasonry!”

“And,” Brewster interjected, “if the Frosted Papageno’s are successful, we could spin off new cereals from other characters from the *Die Zauberflöte* universe.”

“The DZU,” said Harris.

“Yes,” Brewster said. “Your villain — the Queen of the Night? She could be our answer to Count Chocula.”

I must admit; I was flattered by their entreaties. But I needed further consideration of their offer. I quickly excused myself and made my way to the Café Tomaselli to ruminate upon their proposition. But rather than my usual black coffee and almond milk, I ordered a bowl of Honey Nut Grimoaldos, a new breakfast cereal based on George Frideric Handel’s opera *Rodelinda, regina de’ Longobardi*. Not only did the Grimoaldos provide a heart-healthy start to my busy day, but they put a smile on my face with the delicious taste of real honey in every bowlful.

At that moment, I made a solemn promise to myself: Harris and Brewster would have my permission, the world would have their Frosted Papageno’s, and I would try to finish my *Requiem* before dying tragically of Rheumatic Fever at the age of thirty-five.