

VOICES OF HISTORY SERIES

1815: (*Magic Flute* - Mozart)

Music 2'00" Script 1'45"

Magic Flute Chorus

S OK, let's work on the finale of Mozart's *Magic Flute*. [S briefly sets the scene.]

[S conducts as ATB sing (with music). The tempo slows down, someone jumps an entrance, misses a rhythm, etc. - a solid performance, but rhythm is awry. It sounds bad. S interrupts . . .]

S OK, Tamino, you're slowing down in bar seven. Mozart wanted an up-beat finale, not a funeral march. Let's try it again.

[Worse rhythmic problems.]

S Wait, wait. This isn't working. Let's try something new. This [taking out a metronome] was just invented - the metronome!

[All gather around it, amazed!]

A Don't get too close to that! It may explode, like Robert Fulton's new steamboat thing. I wouldn't ride on one of those new-fangled contraptions if you paid me!

T Don't be silly! This isn't like a steamboat or steam locomotive. It's like a clock without a face. But what do we do with it?

S Listen to this. [S speeds up the tempo on the metronome.]

B Incredible!

S Now, let's try it again, with a metronome mark of quarter note equals 112. [tick-tick-tick-tick]

Magic Flute Chorus - [Let metronome continue. This time, the music is perfect.]

SATBP [Everybody congratulates everyone else. "Much better!" etc. etc.]

P Do you realize that this piano now has 88 keys, instead of the 60 that old Joe Haydn's piano had?

[More amazement. "No! Amazing!" etc.]

S I've heard that trumpets can now play all of the notes of the scale, not just fanfares, because of a new invention called a valve! Imagine what Mozart would have written if he knew that!

A Well, I, for one, don't think any of this modern stuff will help. Steam engines, gas lights in the streets . . . Nothing really changes: the Turks are invading Vienna again. Halley's Comet is coming back in 1835. We're fighting the French again, this time under Napoleon. What difference does it all make?

B Well, France and America are not ruled by a king any more, after their revolutions!

A Political revolutions! Planetary revolutions! [pause] Even Industrial Revolutions! Next thing you know, we'll be flying through the air in machines! [All laugh.] [Reprise Mozart final bars.]