

AMADEUS - 250 NOT OUT

CINEMATOGRAPHER ROGER LANSER SETS THE SCENE FOR HIS LATEST COLLABORATION WITH DIRECTOR KENNETH BRANAGH — A NEW FILM OF MOZART'S OPERA, *THE MAGIC FLUTE*

“I read three books about the First World War in preparation before reading the script. I was visiting Ken in Atlanta while he was acting in *Warm Springs* for HBO and read this fabulous script that opens with a seven-minute continuous shot (the overture) and goes on in a conventional script form which sets the heightened drama of the opera against the

ever, and that there were only two day scenes in the whole script.

The look we went for was a heightened reality – well, it is an opera! So costumes and sets were designed to fit with this but we did not go over the top with the lighting. However, we did use the MovieBird Crane nearly every day to achieve some eye-boggling shots that caused me to light in a fashion that tested my talent and that of the great team around me. The result is, I truly think, stunning.

We tested Digital Cameras and were going to go down that road but decided to shoot on film as we all loved this rich, some-

image mastering medium around. For example, how stunning is it to read a scene that says, “The Queen of the Night arrives standing on top of her tank rubbing across No Man’s Land crushing all in its path; we see her in silhouette against a huge pillar of flames and smoke”.

I used the 500T as it has the depth and the speed I needed. It behaved beautifully in the studio daylight scenes, which were shot at an exposure of between t4-t8 and worked brilliantly in all the night exteriors (studio) and interiors shot at between t1.9-t2.8.

We built the tank and the NML all on H stage at Shepperton and it’s got to be one of the great intros to a character in a film ever – and she’s singing at the top of her voice. There

In 1756, the catastrophic Seven Years’ War broke out in Europe. To celebrate the 250th Anniversary of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s birth in the same year, Kenneth Branagh has conceived and directed a new \$27 million film version of *The Magic Flute*, set during The Great War.

Featuring a newly-adapted libretto by Stephen Fry, Branagh’s cast is composed of rising young opera stars including Joseph Kaiser as Tamino, Amy Carson as Pamina and Ben Davis as Papageno. Musical director James Conlon conducts the Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

The remaining principals are Silvia Moi as Papagena, together with René Pape as Sarastro, Thomas Randle as Monostatos and Lyubov Petrova as the Queen of the Night. It is being produced by Pierre-Olivier Bardet through his company Idéale Audience, with Stephen Wright as executive producer on behalf of the Peter Moores Foundation.

As well as DP Roger Lanser, Branagh’s filmmaking team includes production designer Tim Harvey, editor Neil Farrell and costume designer Christopher Oram. ■

 *The Magic Flute* was originated on 35mm Fujicolor Eterna 500T 8573



huge struggle and emotional journey of the war (for that, read every war).

He found a brilliant story path within this opera that lent itself to the pain and suffering and great loss on both sides because of the war. There is a little dialogue but where there would be scripted dialogue in a script, the words to the songs and arias sat against Ken’s brilliant scene descriptions. I’m trying not to say “like a musical”, but as the story unfolds through singing it’s hard not to make the comparison.

The other exciting element to this story was that it was to be entirely filmed in the studio [on six stages at Shepperton] with no locations whatso-



times indefinable quality that film has, and I found that the Fuji Eterna stock fitted my requirements perfectly.

As the whole opera is at night the stock gave me all the control I wanted and then some. Trying not to use clichés, the Fuji Eterna is the best

are many scenes like this all through Ken Branagh’s script. It is all sung in English by an international cast and I feel it will have broad appeal to all who get to see it. ■

Photo main: A scene from *The Magic Flute*; inset above: DP Roger Lanser and Director Kenneth Branagh on the set

