



Così fan tutte

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756 - 1791)

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Above: Preliminary costume sketch by Debra Hanson for the COC's new production of *Così fan tutte*

Welcome

This opera celebrates the common human experience of joyful, innocent love while also exploring deeper, more private complexities. Though full of farce and folly, *Così fan tutte* plumbs the depths of human emotion in its depiction of the honest and intimate struggles of fidelity and temptation. Quite simply it is one of the greatest pieces about relationships ever written. Celebrated director Atom Egoyan returns to the Canadian Opera Company with this new production.

Exploring Mozart's opera allows students to analyze some of the social, political and economic factors that affected the creation of the piece (Music curriculum); discuss how director Atom Egoyan and designer Debra Hanson used Frida Kahlo's painting (see cover) as a framework for their concept (Media Arts); or investigate how Mozart challenged social values and the role of women in pre-industrial society (Canadian and World Studies). Going deeper into the story, design and music will reveal multiple topics that can stimulate rich conversations in the classroom.

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Opera 101

WHAT IS OPERA?

The term “opera” comes from the Italian word for “work” or “piece,” and is usually applied to the European tradition of grand opera. Opera is a form of storytelling which incorporates music, drama and design.

Though its origins date back to ancient Greece, the form of opera we are familiar with today started in the late 16th century in Florence, Italy. Count Giovanni de’ Bardi was a patron and host to a group of intellectuals, poets, artists, scientists and humanists including Giulio Caccini (composer) and Vincenzo Galilei (father to the astronomer and scientist, Galileo Galilei, who was most famous for his improvements to the telescope). These individuals explored trends in the arts, focusing on music and drama in particular. They were unified in their belief that the arts had become over-embellished and that returning to the transparency of the music of the ancient Greeks, which incorporated both speech and song, and a chorus to further the plot and provide commentary on the action, would present a more pure, natural and powerful way to tell stories and express emotions.

The first opera, *Dafne*, about a nymph who fled from Apollo and was subsequently transformed by the gods into a laurel tree, was composed by Jacopo Peri in 1597. From then on, the early operas recreated Greek tragedies with mythological themes. During the 17th and 18th centuries, topics expanded to include stories about royalty, and everyday or common people. Some operas were of a serious nature (called *opera seria*) and some light-hearted (called *opera buffa*). Since then operas have been written on a wide variety of topics such as cultural clashes (*Madama Butterfly*), comedic farce (*The Barber of Seville*), politicians on foreign visits (*Nixon in China*), the celebration of Canadian heroes (*Louis Riel*), and children’s stories (*The Little Prince*), to name a few.

The COC presents works in the western European tradition but musical equivalents to European opera can be found in Japan, at the Peking Opera in China, and in Africa where it is called Epic Storytelling.

What are the differences between operas, musicals and plays?

Traditionally operas are through-sung, meaning they are sung from beginning to end with no dialogue in between. Singers must have powerful voices in order to be heard over the orchestra (the ensemble of instrumental musicians that accompanies the dramatic action on stage during an opera). Remember: opera singers don’t use microphones!

Musicals are a combination of dialogue and sung pieces and often include choreographed numbers. The singers often use microphones and are accompanied by a pit band which includes more modern instruments like a drum kit, guitar and electronic instruments.

Plays are primarily spoken works of theatre with minimal singing or music.

There are always exceptions to the rule: though *Les Misérables* is through-sung it is still classified as a piece of musical theatre because of its style of music. By the same token, some operas, like Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, have spoken dialogue in addition to singing.

What does opera feel like?

Take five minutes out of the school day and instead of using regular voices to converse, ask the class to commit to singing everything. Make an agreement with the students that it’s not about judging people’s voices but about freeing our natural sounds. Make up the melodies on the spot and don’t worry about singing “correctly.” Did the musical lines help express or emphasize certain emotions?

If so, how?

Attending the Opera: Make the most of your experience

WELCOME TO THE FOUR SEASONS CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS



Photo: Sam Javanrouh

So you're headed to the opera, and there are a few questions on your mind. Here are some tips on how to get the most out of your opera experience.

First, there's the question of **what to wear**. People wear all sorts of things to the opera – jeans, dress pants, cocktail dresses, suits, etc. The important thing is to be comfortable. Wear something that makes you feel good, whether it be jeans or your nicest tie. But skip that spritz of perfume or cologne before you go out; the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts is scent-free. Many fellow patrons and performers are allergic to strong scents.

Once you're dressed, it's important to **arrive on time** for the show. Late patrons cannot be admitted to the theatre, and you may have to watch the first act on a television screen in the lobby rather than from your seat. If you don't have your ticket yet, arrive as early as possible – the line-up for the box office can often be quite long prior to a performance! The main doors open one hour before the performance. Line up there and have your ticket ready to present to the usher. If you have any questions about

tonight's performance, drop by the welcome desk (just inside the main doors) to ask a member of the COC staff, who are full of useful information not only about tonight's opera, but also about COC programs in general. A **pre-performance chat** takes place in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre (Ring 3) about 45 minutes before the show. These chats, given by members of our **COC Volunteer Speakers Bureau**, offer valuable insight into the opera and the specific production that you'll be seeing.

Before the opera starts, take the opportunity to **explore the lobby**, known as the Isadore and Rosalie Sharp City Room. Stop by concessions and **order a beverage for intermission or purchase a snack**. Browse the Opera Shop and pick up a memento of your experience at the opera. (Note: the Opera Shop is not open at dress rehearsals.) Walk up the stairs, passing a sculpture as you go, and note the floating glass staircase – the longest free-span glass staircase in the world! On the third floor, you'll see the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, home to our Free Concert Series. You'll also see a mobile by artist Alexander Calder, adding some colour and whimsy to the space.

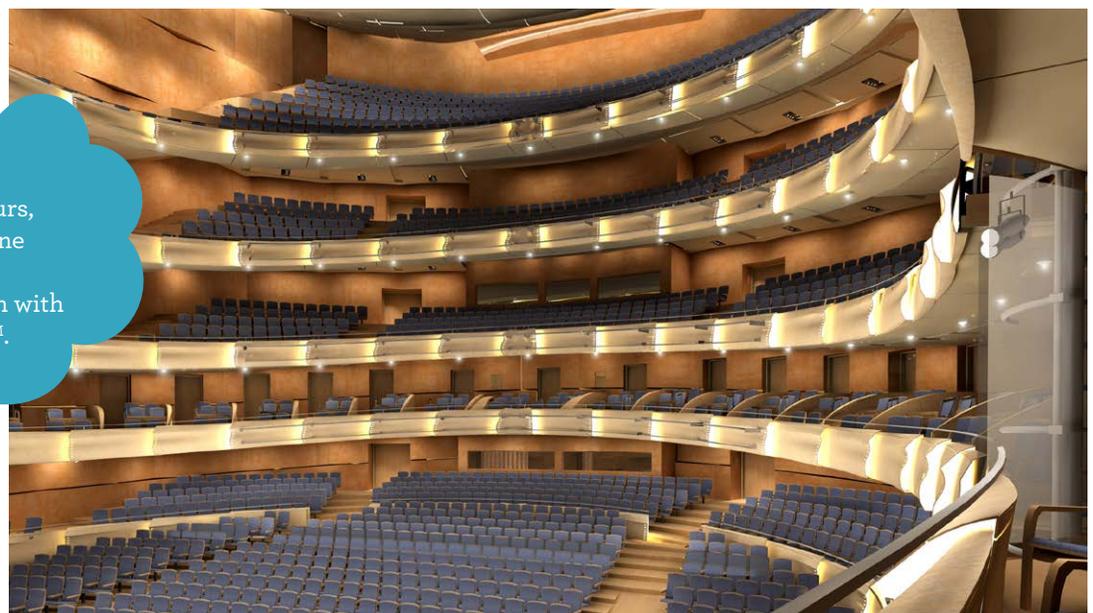
Chimes will ring throughout the lobby **ten minutes** before the performance, reminding everyone to find their seats. Head towards the door noted on your ticket, get a program from the usher, and find your designated seat in R. Fraser Elliott Hall. It's best to use this time to open any candies you might have and turn off your cell phone – the hall is built to carry sound, so small sounds travel further than you may think! Photography is not permitted once the show starts. The design and direction of the show is under intellectual property and only the official COC photographer and/or members of the media can take pictures and even then, only under special circumstances that require prior arrangements.

As the lights go down and the audience quiets, **listen carefully**. Remember all of that traffic you heard in the lobby? And now... not a peep! The auditorium is physically separated from the outside and the ground below, making for the best acoustic experience possible.

Now it's time to sit back and **enjoy the opera!** **SURTITLES™** will be projected on a horizontal screen above the stage. **SURTITLES™** originate from the idea of “subtitles,” which are most commonly used in foreign films to make them more accessible outside of their country of origin. The COC was the first opera company to adapt this concept for the operatic stage. Slides containing the English translation of the *libretto* (text for the opera) are projected in a more visible place for the audience: above the stage. **SURTITLES™** were first used by the COC at the premiere of the opera *Elektra* in 1983. Only the name could be trademarked, as the technology for the projections was already in existence. Opera companies from around the world have adopted this audience initiative under different names, and it has revolutionized opera stages everywhere.

Feel free to show your **appreciation to the performers** by laughing at humorous bits or applauding after a well-performed aria. If a performer has pulled off some particularly impressive vocal fireworks, it's absolutely acceptable to yell out your appreciation in addition to applause. You may hear your fellow audience members shouting “bravo!” for a man, “brava!” for a woman, or “bravi!” for a group of performers. Feel free to join in!

Così fan tutte lasts approximately three hours, 15 minutes including one intermission. The opera is sung in Italian with English **SURTITLES™**.



R. Fraser Elliott Hall.
Photo: Tim Griffith

Director's Notes

For those familiar with *Così fan tutte*, this production will be immediately surprising in two ways. First of all, we are taking the alternative title of the work and using it literally. It takes place in "A School for Lovers," with Don Alfonso the teacher of this school in which he demonstrates to his students the laws of attraction.

The second surprise is that the sisters seem to be in on Don Alfonso's experiment from the beginning. I was curious to explore what might happen to the dynamics of the opera if there were a parallel wager with the two women. While we can't know the specific nature of this wager, we gather it concerns marriage. Perhaps the two women already understand that "everyone does it" (a literal translation of *Così fan tutte*), but that "doing it" won't alter the existing bonds of their marital engagements.



Preliminary costume sketch by Debra Hanson for the COC's new production of *Così fan tutte*

What excites me about this concurrent wager is that it makes the two women fully cognizant of the convolutions of the plot which follow, and allows them to set their own agenda. By having the women in on the plot from the very beginning, it simultaneously empowers them while making the emotional confusions of the second act even more pronounced. They challenge their own rational structure.

This idea is at the core of the work. One of the central tenets of Enlightenment philosophy is that reason can be the only guide in an uncertain moral climate. In *Così*, librettist Lorenzo da Ponte shows us that while reason and clear thinking is to be held above all else, it is often made unreliable because of shifting emotion. Mozart's brilliant music underlines this tension in an exquisite and at times unbearably beautiful way. For the true libertine such as Don Alfonso, the total lack of rationale behind the laws of attraction is a cause for alarm and certainly a subject worth illuminating to his students. While butterflies – the very symbol of freedom – can be caught and pinned down, such is not the case with the human heart. As Frida Kahlo's painting *Two Fridas* makes clear, the heart can be brutally exposed, with surgical scissors in one hand, and the romantic talisman of a beloved brooch in the other.

With *Così fan tutte*, the extraordinary collaboration of Mozart and da Ponte challenges the inherent optimism of the Enlightenment itself, with its battle against the mysteries of religion and superstition. While the libretto lays out one set of ideas, the music often tells us something completely different. This complex alchemy between objective thought and intense piercing emotion creates its own mysterious force, as we experience the human capacity to feel, to hurt, and to love.

Atom Egoyan

Characters and Synopsis

MAIN CHARACTERS (in order of vocal appearance)

Name	Description	Voice Type	Pronunciation
Ferrando	engaged to Dorabella	Tenor	fer-RAN-doh
Guglielmo	engaged to Fiordiligi	Baritone	goo-lee-YEL-moh
Don Alfonso	old Philosopher	Bass	don al-FOHN-zoh
Fiordiligi	Dorabella's sister	Soprano	fee-or-dee-LEE-jee
Dorabella	Fiordiligi's sister	Mezzo-soprano	do-rah-BEL-lah
Despina	Maid	Soprano	deh-SPEE-nah



Preliminary costume sketch by Debra Hanson for the COC's new production of Così fan tutte

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Naples

Don Alfonso goads two young men into a wager regarding their fiancées' fidelity. Ferrando and Guglielmo are convinced their lovers – Dorabella and Fiordiligi, respectively – are true, and agree to test the women's faithfulness through trickery. The men agree to do everything Don Alfonso says to pull off their ruse.

Sisters Dorabella and Fiordiligi are met by Don Alfonso. He tells them that their fiancés have been recalled to military duty. The two soldiers arrive to bid their unhappy fiancées farewell. The sisters are inconsolable. Once the men have departed, their maid Despina suggests that Dorabella and Fiordiligi amuse themselves in the meantime by meeting other men. The women refuse to be unfaithful to their lovers.

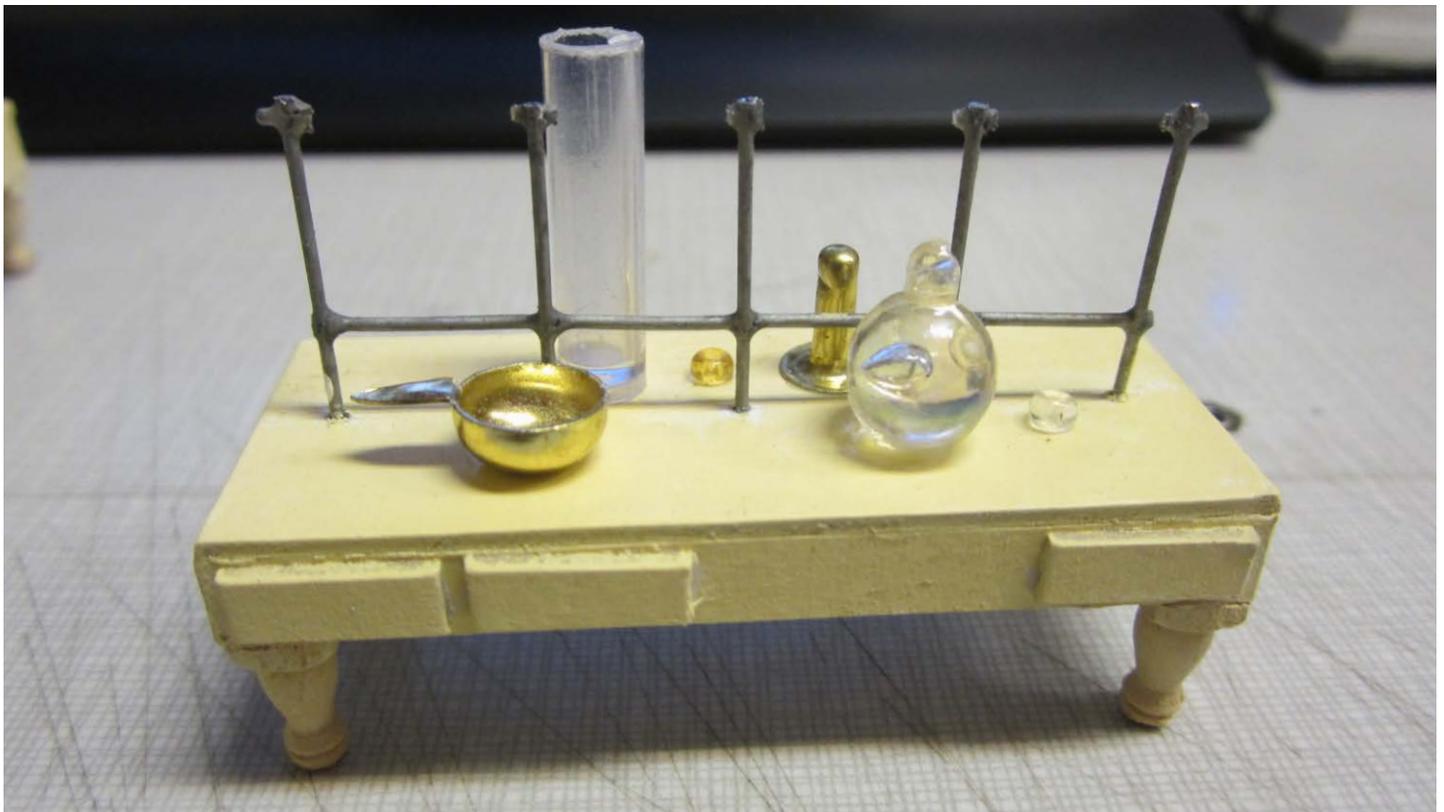
Don Alfonso speaks privately with Despina, enlisting her aid in introducing two prospective lotharios to the

sisters. He then presents to Despina two "Albanians," who are none other than Guglielmo and Ferrando in disguise. When Fiordiligi and Dorabella arrive, the men proclaim their affection. The women demand that the strangers leave their house.

Later that day, the Albanians burst into the garden where the two sisters still sit, lamenting the absence of their sweethearts. The men drink what they claim is poison, expressing their wish to die for love. A doctor arrives (Despina in disguise) and "revives" the two men.

ACT II

Despina attempts to persuade Dorabella and Fiordiligi that they should be more receptive to the Albanians' advances. The sisters reluctantly agree that a flirtation might prove a welcome distraction in the absence of their fiancés. The men return once more to serenade the sisters, and this



Maquette for set piece for the COC's new production of Così fan tutte. Photo: COC (2013)

time Dorabella exchanges words of love with Guglielmo – to his astonishment. Ferrando has less luck with Fiordiligi.

Ferrando is told of his lover’s betrayal and vows revenge. Don Alfonso reminds the soldiers that the test is not over yet.

Dorabella confesses her new fondness for her Albanian to Despina. Fiordiligi admits that she also has feelings for the Albanian (the disguised Ferrando), but scolds her sister’s lack of control and vows to remain true to her fiancé. But when Ferrando returns, secretly accompanied by Guglielmo and Don Alfonso, Fiordiligi yields to his advances.

Ferrando and Guglielmo lament their lovers’ betrayal and express a desire for revenge. Don Alfonso urges the now bitterly disillusioned soldiers to marry the women.

Wedding preparations are quickly made. Don Alfonso produces a notary – Despina in disguise – who in turn produces a marriage contract. A drum is heard, signaling the return of the soldiers. Having hastily removed their disguises, Ferrando and Guglielmo appear and feign outrage at the incriminating scene. But when they put on their Albanian disguises, the whole truth comes out.

In the final chorus all four lovers, in the spirit of reconciliation, sing hopefully of accepting life as it presents itself and maintaining a sense of humour. But will they be able to when faced with an uncertain future?



Preliminary costume sketches by Debra Hanson for the COC’s new production of Così fan tutte

Genesis of the Opera

By the late 1780s, when Mozart began work on what was to be his final collaboration with librettist Lorenzo da Ponte, he was in financial distress and his health was declining. However, *Così fan tutte* would eventually become one of the most beloved and popular operas of all time. Let's explore the genesis of *Così*!

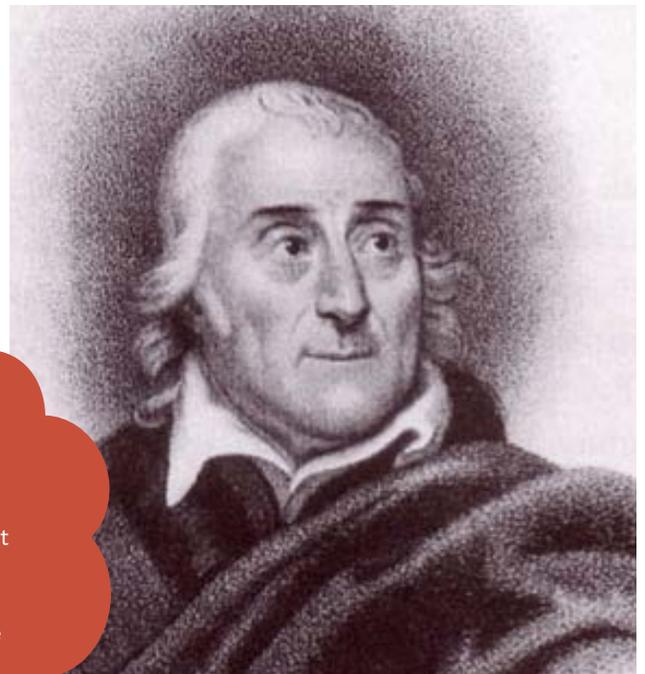
It has been disputed recently whether or not the beginnings of *Così fan tutte* came about in the form of a commission from Emperor Joseph II (ruler of the Habsburg Empire in Austria from 1780 to 1790, and brother of Marie Antoinette). Many believe that the very musical Joseph II wanted another opera to be written by Mozart in light of his two other tremendously successful collaborations with da Ponte, *Le nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*) in 1786 and *Don Giovanni* in 1787. However, recent discoveries have led to the theory that Joseph II's opera court composer (and sometimes thought of as Mozart's primary rival), Antonio Salieri, attempted to set da Ponte's libretto to music, but was unable to finish it.

Mozart began composing *Così* in 1789 and completed the work in January 1790. Very little is known about the origin of the story, but one theory is that it was based on actual events in Vienna at the time. As you will already know by reading the plot synopsis, the story revolves around two couples, in a story of disguise, courtship and (in)fidelity!

For an extended period of time in the 19th century, *Così*, or the full title, *Così fan tutte, ossia La scuola degli amanti* (*Thus Do They All, or The School for*



Emperor Joseph II, painter unknown



Portrait of Lorenzo da Ponte engraving by Michele Pekenino after Nathaniel Rogers

Joseph II's court composer Antonio Salieri was initially approached to score Ponte's libretto, but Salieri dismissed the subject matter, calling it "unworthy of musical invention." Mozart needed the money, and also recognized the plot as more than a trivial comedy.

Lovers) was considered trivial, sexist, and immoral. When it premiered in Vienna at the Burgtheater on January 26, 1790, audiences were shocked at its content. *Così* was performed only five times in its first run since the court was plunged into a period of mourning immediately following the sudden death of Emperor Joseph II. The opera was presented again later that year, but only for another five performances, and was never performed again during Mozart's lifetime. Throughout much of the 19th and early 20th century, *Così's* subject matter was considered inappropriate and scandalous, and it wasn't until the mid-1900s that it finally entered the standard repertoire. Today, it is one of the most frequently performed operas.

What is it about *Così* that audiences are drawn to? As you will learn in the Listening Guide (page 13), a great deal of what makes *Così* so popular is the music. Cultural critic Edward Said argued that “of the three Ponte operas, *Così fan tutte* is not only the last and the most complex and eccentric, but also the most internally well organized, the most full of echoes and references, and the most difficult to unlock, precisely because it goes further towards the limits of acceptable, ordinary experiences of love, life, and ideas than either of its two immediate predecessors. What affects us most about *Così* is of course the music.”

Advertisement for the first performance of *Così fan tutte* in 1790



Unlike Mozart's prior collaborations with da Ponte (*Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*), *Così* was not adapted from an existing literary source, but was newly written.

The Age of Enlightenment was at its peak throughout the latter half of the 1700s, but, towards the end of the century, concerns grew about an excessive elevation of reason above religion; both Mozart and da Ponte (following French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's views) believed that reason coupled with moral/spiritual guidance was a superior way to understanding human nature.

Aside from Mozart's gorgeous arias, duets, and ensemble pieces, the universal relevance of *Così*'s storyline should not be underestimated. Though the plot may seem trivial at first glance, with seemingly very little happening in the story (especially if you compare it to the dramatic and fantastical storylines of some of Mozart's other works, like *The Magic Flute*), the emotions that the characters experience are very real, and very relatable. Perhaps this is why audiences initially shunned the work; it struck too familiar a chord with people and held up a mirror to their own dealings with temptation, fidelity, and deception; audiences were not able to view the opera as an escapist work.

According to Operabase, *Così fan tutte* is the 11th-most popular opera performed today. That's quite an accomplishment for a piece that received only a handful of performances during Mozart's lifetime and was considered "immoral, frivolous [and] utterly unworthy of Mozart's genius" (Holden 613) when it was first heard in Vienna more than 200 years ago!



A scene from the COC's Ensemble Studio production of *Così fan tutte* in 2009. Photo: Michael Cooper

Listening Guide

INTRODUCTION

Like *Don Giovanni* which came before it, Mozart's *Così fan tutte* is identified in its libretto as a *dramma giocoso*, an Italian term for operas that contain both comic and tragic elements. Conventionally thought of as light, frothy and joyful, *Così* is also shot through with a decidedly poignant, sad and cynical edge. Our responses are always being played with: the two sisters are clearly devastated when their fiancés must go off to war and the men join in on their sorrow... and yet, we know the latter two are just play-acting. This constant state of ambivalence might partly explain the opera's difficult critical history. Unlike *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro* – Mozart's two previous successes with the librettist Lorenzo da Ponte – *Così fan tutte* does not follow the normal pattern we expect in a play or an opera: there is no hero nor any one character who grabs the audience's immediate attention the way, say, the scandalous *Don Giovanni* does. The other stumbling block which plagued this opera for the first 100 years of its existence is the manner in which audiences reacted to what they perceived to be its scandalous subject matter (two sisters falling in love with each other's fiancés). Even

once *Così* had finally re-entered the standard repertoire in the 1930s it was treated with little respect, suffering brutal cuts, including Dorabella's short Act I aria "Smanie implacabili" ("implacable restlessness"), one of only two arias she gets to sing in the entire opera!

Mozart uses an astonishing variety of instrumentation in *Così*, resulting in a sound-world particular to its Italian setting in a villa just outside the coastal city of Naples. For example, the extensive use of the clarinet creates a languid, voluptuous atmosphere meant to evoke the sunny southern landscape with its bracing sea air, precipitous sea vistas and lazy afternoons on the beach.

The tracks listed below are excerpted from *Così fan tutte*, Decca 478 3050. Chamber Orchestra of Europe; London Voices, Sir Georg Solti, conductor. Renée Fleming, Anne Sofie von Otter, Olaf Bär, Frank Lopardo, Adelina Scarabelli, Michele Pertusi. You can also experience the Listening Guide online at coc.ca/COCRADIO.



Props for the COC's new production of *Così fan tutte*. Photo: COC (2013)

**1****MUSICAL EXCERPT**

Act I, *terzettino* (diminutive of *terzet*, meaning “trio”): “Soave sia il vento” (“May the wind blow softly”)

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

Fiordiligi, Dorabella and Don Alfonso wish Ferrando and Guglielmo a safe voyage.

MUSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Mozart achieves a startlingly realistic effect at the start of this trio by using the upper string section of the orchestra to imitate the sound of the rippling sea – very appropriate as Fiordiligi and Dorabella send their fiancés off to war on a boat! The harmonious union of the voices at 00:07 produces a sweet effect which telegraphs their sincere, heartfelt wishes that Ferrando and Guglielmo be blessed with good weather on their journey. However at 1:24, Mozart introduces a dissonance within all this tonal gorgeousness, specifically on the word “*desir*” (“desires”), as if to say “be careful what you wish for.” The girls want their fiancés to return but the mild discord in the harmony indicates perhaps the men will come back changed or that the women will be terribly deceived in their wishes. The beauty of this trio is further soured by its underlying sense of irony: its scintillating strings and heart-tugging harmonies are powerful enough to make us believe that even the cynical Don Alfonso (the mastermind of the plot to test the two girls’ constancy) is emotionally affected by this “heartfelt” farewell. However, listen at 1:51 as his vocal line snakes up and down, hinting at a repressed deviousness, even though he expresses the same “calm sea and prosperous voyage” sentiment as the women.

FURTHER REFLECTION

Why would Mozart have three people sing the same words at the same time?

What other types of instruments would be good at suggesting the sounds of the sea?

**2****MUSICAL EXCERPT**

Act I, *aria**: “In uomini, in soldati” (“In men, in soldiers”)

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

Despina pours scorn on the notion that men can remain faithful.

MUSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Generally, it’s possible to divide the type of music Mozart wrote for *Così* into two categories: there is the sublime, grand music of the ensembles (excerpt #1) and virtuoso arias (excerpt #3). But between these two general types we can find *buffa* (comic) elements, embodied in the character of the servant, Despina. Her role fits into a category of soprano characters collectively known as the “soubrette,” usually sung by lighter, lyric voices. Other soubrette characters written by Mozart include Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*. The orchestration for Despina’s music tends to be a little thinner than in other parts of the opera: in this aria we hear Mozart using just one flute, one oboe and one bassoon (rather than the expected two). The aria starts out with a frank reflection: “You look for fidelity in men, in soldiers? Don’t tell me that, for pity’s sake!” and continues on in this expository manner until 1:34. At this point, Despina’s playful nature comes to the fore with a more jaunty melody, and then some appropriately coy interplay with the orchestra as she sings “Let’s love them to suit our convenience and our vanity!” (2:02 – 2:08).



*Italian for “air,”
an *aria* is a song for
one singer, performed with
the orchestra, that provides
an opportunity for the singer to
express his or her artistic skill.
It allows a character to express
emotions and reflect on the
events of the drama
or comedy.

3

FURTHER REFLECTION

Despina is the servant, and seems to know more about life than her two mistresses. Why do you think this is so?

Operatic roles are often slotted into voice (or vocal) categories like *soubrette*, lyric, dramatic, *buffo*, and others. Why do you think this might be a useful practice?

MUSICAL EXCERPT

Act I, *aria*: “Come scoglio immoto resta” (“Steady as a rock”)

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

After being introduced by Don Alfonso to his two “Albanian” friends (really Ferrando and Guglielmo in disguise), Fiordiligi dismisses their advances, declaring that her constancy is as firm as a rock.

MUSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

This is decidedly the biggest solo *aria* in the opera and probably one of the most challenging in the history of the genre, barring some arias in later *bel canto** works and the stamina-testing, heavily orchestrated music of German composer Richard Wagner (1813 – 1883).

From a technical point of view, this *aria* makes huge demands: the singer must be able to encompass the extreme highs and lows of her range, often with very little time in between (0:19 – 0:40); there are several passages that are difficult to negotiate, full of scales, trills and leaps (1:46 – 2:06) and, the piece also demands plenty of spitfire temperament!

It’s generally agreed that in “Come scoglio,” Mozart was taking on the tradition of the grand showpiece *aria*, which would have been treated with dead seriousness in the earlier period of *opera seria*** . Here though, it’s almost as if Fiordiligi is being mocked: just as she is saying “I’m like a rock that remains unmoved,” musically the rock has already fallen and we, the audience, know she is doomed. Listen from 3:03 where the vocal line becomes extremely unstable with the singer having to sing scale after scale, never really settling into any kind of melody – all the while protesting her absolute steadfast commitment to Ferrando!

**Bel canto* means “beautiful singing” in Italian, a term usually applied to the period of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti, when a highly exhibitionist style of singing was practiced.

***Opera seria:* an Italian musical term which refers to the noble and “serious” style of Italian opera that predominated in Europe from the 1710s to circa 1770. Stories were based on mythology and followed a very rigid musical structure of repeated themes.

FURTHER REFLECTION

Why do you think Fiordiligi puts on such a big show in this *aria* to prove she will remain faithful to Guglielmo?

What types of vocal techniques would you use to express extreme emotions?

4

MUSICAL EXCERPT

Act II, *duetto* (“duet”): “Il core vi dono” (“I give my heart to you”)

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

Guglielmo pursues Dorabella, giving her a heart-shaped locket. He asks for hers in return.

MUSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

This is the only true love duet in the opera (which perhaps speaks to a cynical strain running through this opera, given that it’s supposed to be entirely about amorous relationships.)

Even though they have yet to discover their love, the piece begins with such a lovely melody for Guglielmo that there is little doubt where their relationship is headed. Again, as in the excerpt #1 trio, Mozart laces this duet with a bit of irony: it is traditional to view Dorabella as the light-hearted sister, and Guglielmo as the frivolous ladies’ man, but here they sound very serious in their expressions of love. As we heard in Despina’s *aria* (excerpt #2), the vocal lines are given the simplest orchestral support until we come to the long *coda* (that is, the end piece, starting at 3:10) when we hear delicious frissons from the violins and some tremulous flutterings from the woodwinds which are entirely appropriate to the couple’s burgeoning feelings. There are also onomatopoeic elements in the orchestration: listen at 1:24 for the detached figures in the strings which mimic heartbeats just at the point they sing the words, “ei batte così” (“and that’s what’s beating so”).

FURTHER REFLECTION

After listening to this duet, do you think Guglielmo is being sincere with Dorabella? Why/why not?

Search YouTube for other love duets in any musical genre – what vocal or instrumental elements make the music sound “romantic”?

The title of this opera has been an endless source of trouble for translators. In England the opera became popular in 1821 as *Tit for Tat* or *The Tables Turned*, “altered and adapted from *Così fan tutte*.”

From the start, *Così* faced resistance to its racy subject matter. Beethoven loved the music but was shocked by the immorality of the plot. For over a hundred years after its premiere, this “shocking and licentious work” pretty much disappeared from view.



Construction of wig ship for the COC’s new production of *Così fan tutte*.
Photo: COC (2013)

What to Look for

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS

Celebrated Canadian stage and film director Atom Egoyan has brought his signature style to Mozart's final collaboration with librettist Lorenzo da Ponte to create a production that emphasizes the playful sensuality of *Così fan tutte*.

Egoyan's production pays particular attention to the subtitle of the libretto: *La scuola degli amanti* ("The School For Lovers"), a phrase which suggests that the premise of the opera can be understood as an educational experiment. For Egoyan, this reading resonates with the main concerns of Mozart's own historical period, the Age of Enlightenment.*

Egoyan sets the action in a kind of academy, outfitted with laboratorial elements. There are set pieces like curio cabinets, pinned butterflies, and other scientific instruments in keeping with the concept of the "School for Lovers."

Don Alfonso and Despina are construed as professors, instructing their students in the parameters of fidelity. The chorus becomes the student body observing the action, much like a medical class in the 1700s might be observing a surgical procedure from the upper galleries of a classroom.

In Egoyan's rendering, the school is also an overtly theatrical space, where personalities are taken on and sampled, attitudes are actively adopted and dropped, and the results are on display for everyone.

**The Enlightenment* refers to a Western European intellectual movement in the 17th and 18th centuries that prized reason over tradition, skepticism over faith, and sought to explain all manner of human and natural phenomena with the tools of a burgeoning scientific community – i.e. collecting evidence, measuring, observing, categorizing, proceeding by rules of logic and reasoning, etc.

EVERYONE PLAYS THE GAME

The explicit wager in the opera is that Guglielmo and Ferrando are going to test the faithfulness of their fiancées. In most productions, the women, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, know nothing about this arrangement. In Egoyan's production, however, the women are not only aware of the scheme, but devise a counter-scheme of their own.

During the overture (the orchestral part at the beginning of the opera), Egoyan's direction hints that the two sisters, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, are aware of the game being played, and make a parallel bet: though they understand that their men might become unfaithful when tempted, the sisters are willing to wager that Guglielmo and Ferrando would never go so far as to actually marry someone else.

Making all four parties into knowing actors, who have committed themselves to the premise of the "experiment," effectively rehabilitates some of the plot's implausible devices – the audience doesn't have to be incredulous that Dorabella fails to recognize Guglielmo, for example, because in this production both of them are actually submitting to a theatrical situation in which love as such is being examined. They are test subjects in a supposedly controlled environment.

What the characters discover is that despite their professed convictions of faithfulness, they are affected by the emotional circumstances they find themselves in, and feel an attraction they were not expecting to feel.



Construction of props for the COC's new production of *Così fan tutte*.
Photo: COC (2013)

COSTUMES

Egoyan has made this production basically contemporary. Although many period costumes are used for various scenes in the opera, Egoyan creates a sense of the surreal and timeless, pointing to many historical periods without being rooted in any single one.

The costumes and sets were designed by Canadian designer Debra Hanson, who drew inspiration directly from the action of the opera, and tied *Così*'s themes to costuming that is at once period-specific and historically fluid.

DIVERSE ART FORMS, SHARED THEMES

Framing the concept of the production is a painting by renowned Mexican painter Frida Kahlo entitled "Las Dos Fridas."

Egoyan recalls, "I was in Los Angeles and saw the canvas and I was struck by this image of the two Fridas and the parallel in *Così* of the two sisters. What I was really struck with was Kahlo's use of the brooch; the brooch is a really important prop in the opera. It's what the two sisters use to reveal their loved ones. Ultimately it is removed or replaced when the experiment comes to fruition, and when the infidelity is actually consummated it's by the switching of the brooch. This painting had the image of a heart, which is at once contained and then completely vulnerable and open, and these two figures are connected by these very precarious veins which can be switched and clipped and tied. In one hand she's holding a scissor which is used to sever feeling or emotional connection, and in the other hand there is a brooch. It just seemed eerily appropriate in terms of what the opera is proposing."



Above: Preliminary costume sketch by Debra Hanson for the COC's new production of Così fan tutte

Below and left: Construction of props for the COC's new production of Così fan tutte. Photos: COC (2013)



COC Spotlight: Joe Waldherr

Not everyone at the COC is an opera singer... take a peek behind the scenes and learn about the many diverse careers available in the arts!

Overseeing the smooth operation of any large building can be busy at the best of times, but imagine managing three! Meet Joe Waldherr, COC Associate Director, Facilities Management. Joe keeps the Four Seasons Centre for the

Performing Arts, as well as the COC's administrative building (also used for some of our rehearsals), and our scene shop (where many of our sets are built) in tip-top condition so that artists, COC staff, and visitors are all kept safe and comfortable. Joe knows the incredibly complex details that come with supervising a theatre intimately, and he does it all with a smile.



Joe Waldherr
*(Associate Director,
Facilities Management)*

Position: Associate Director, Facilities Management

Name: Joe Waldherr

Role in the Company: I oversee various departments to keep the buildings running safely and efficiently for the company. These departments maintain the plumbing, lighting, electrical power, air conditioning, heating, office cleaning, landscaping and security services.

Hometown: I was born in Scarborough, but grew up in Stouffville.

Education: I went to college and obtained my Business Administration Diploma, and I have a Facilities Management designation from the Building, Owners and Management Institute.

First became interested in opera: I grew up listening to classical music because of my father, but it wasn't until I joined the COC that I gained a true appreciation and respect for the art of opera.

What made you decide to pursue this career path? I kind of fell into it, actually, like a lot of people in the industry. I come from a technical background, construction, and tool and die. I had a small contracting company in which I started to do a lot of work for Magna International

when, out of the blue, I was asked if I was interested in applying for a facilities position with them. I eventually was offered the job as Assistant Facilities Manager and have been in facilities management ever since.

What is a typical day/shift like for you? My day-to-day duties and responsibilities can vary depending on the day. A normal day may include overseeing subcontractors, vendor contract management, mechanical equipment repair, scheduling/maintenance, acting as an advisor on building-related issues and topics for different departments, managing facility departmental finances, and the like.

What things are you responsible for? Responsibilities include providing janitorial and maintenance services, security, heating, ventilation, air conditioning maintenance and electrical services. It is also important to create an environment that encourages productivity, is safe, efficient, pleasing to clients and customers, and meets building regulations.

If someone was interested in facilities management, what would you recommend they have in terms of skills or experience? Having a technical background is always helpful, but there are many skill sets that are needed in facilities management: project co-ordination, team building,

The largest building that Joe oversees is the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, which is 35,716 m².

fiscal management, and attention to details are some crucial skills.

What do you love most about this career? The industry is continually evolving, especially over the last decade. Before we were looked upon as simply the gatekeepers and now we play a larger role in keeping up with legislative changes at the local, provincial and federal levels. The field has become highly specialized with constant technological advancements, and the need to keep abreast with these new innovations can be challenging, but very rewarding.

What do you enjoy the least about this career? To earn your stripes, you are on-call 24/7, so being called in the middle of the night for an emergency is not the most pleasant experience!

What surprises you most about this career? That every organization and/or building you manage is different and requires customized solutions to attain a required result.

What do you enjoy outside of opera? I enjoy staying active in various all-season sports.

When Joe isn't busy managing the Four Seasons Centre, COC scene shop, or administrative offices, he plays a mean game of beach volleyball. And when the weather gets frosty, he grabs his snowboard and hits the slopes to master his frontside ollie!



Active Learning

One of the best parts of taking your students to the opera is the discussion and further exploration that live theatre can inspire. Take a deeper look into the themes and story of *Così fan tutte* with these discussion questions and ideas for further exploration.

DISCUSSION

- ♦ Is the story of *Così fan tutte* misogynistic? Why or why not?
- ♦ Is there a feminist way to view this opera?
- ♦ How would your reaction to this story differ if the genders were swapped?

EXTENSION THEMES

- ♦ Have students write a sequel to *Così fan tutte* which takes place five years after the end of the opera. What has transpired in that time? Are the characters still pleased with the spouse they ended up with?

Did viewing the opera spark some scintillating debates or discussions? Would your students like to share examples of their work with the COC? E-mail us at education@coc.ca. We'd love to hear from you!

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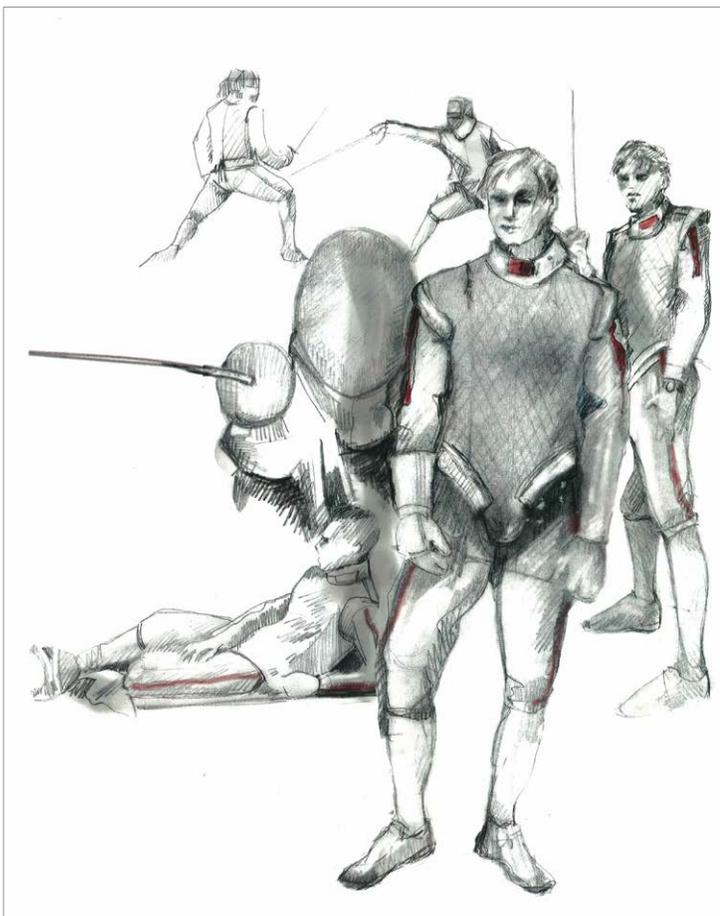
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Preliminary costume sketches by Debra Hanson for the COC's new production of *Cosi fan tutte*



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