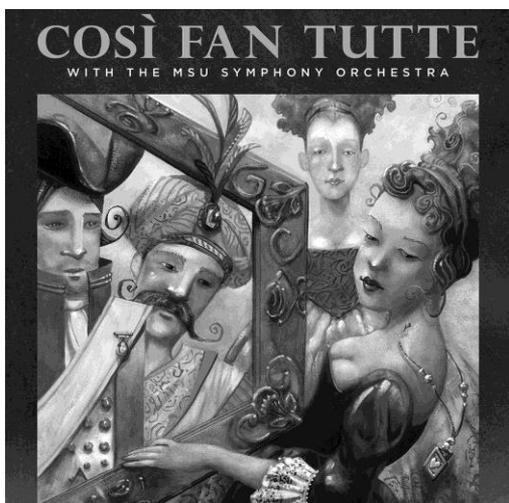


MSU Music

Opera Theatre

PRESENTS:



7:30 pm, Wednesday, November 19, 2014

8:00 pm, Friday, November 21, 2014

8:00 pm, Saturday, November 22, 2014

3:00 pm, Sunday, November 23, 2014

Fairchild Theatre, MSU Auditorium Building

The 2014-2015 MSU Opera Theatre season
is generously supported by

The Worthington Family Foundation.

Così fan tutte is generously sponsored by
Kurt and Cheryl Burmeister

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A Note from the Director

Mozart's 1790 comic opera, *Così fan tutte*, is currently one of the most performed operas worldwide. But its beginnings were not so auspicious. There were only five performances in its first outing at the Burgtheater in Vienna, with the run being cut short by the death of Emperor Joseph II. Sadly, it was never performed in Vienna again during Mozart's lifetime.

Così is filled with some of Mozart's loveliest music and most complex ensembles. Indeed, it is a marathon for all six singers, who are all onstage for the majority of the two acts. Mozart did not specify the voice types other than to say that the three women are all sopranos, and that the Guglielmo and Don Alfonso are basses, with Ferrando a tenor. However, current performance practice is to have a mezzo-soprano sing Dorabella, and either a soubrette soprano or mezzo sing Despina. Both baritones and basses have sung the lower men's roles. Interestingly, Guglielmo's music often lies lower than Alfonso's, which is surprising given that Guglielmo is the more youthful character.

Mozart wrote the role of Fiordiligi, who was the lover of the librettist Lorenzo da Ponte, for soprano Adriana Ferrarese di Bene. A rumor of the day stated that Mozart wrote the great aria "*Come scoglio*" to make fun of Ferrarese's habit of tilting her chin up for high notes and down for low notes. It delighted Mozart to see her bobbing like a chicken in all of the extreme leaps of the piece. Mozart obviously enjoyed her technical singing, but was less enamored of her acting. She had sung performances of Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Mozart wrote new pieces for her two arias that showcased her virtuosity and minimized her apparent lack of charm.

Così is a bit of a puzzlement when it comes to interpretation. Mozart and da Ponte never answer the question of which lady is the right love for which gentleman. Even though the title states "all women are like that," the men are as unfaithful as their fiancées. Our production takes its clues from the music. Fiordiligi and Ferrando's arias and duet are all directly out of the *opera seria* (serious opera) tradition of the 18th century.

Their emotions are deep and heartfelt, and they struggle more with fidelity than their counterparts. On the other hand, Dorabella and Guglielmo's arias and duets are sometimes in triple meter, usually indicative of more earthy, peasant music. So, it seems to me that the girls are with the wrong men from the beginning, and once they find someone whose music matches theirs, happiness ensues.

Some audience members may wonder why the orchestra pit is in a higher position than in previous productions. This is much more the arrangement that one would see in 18th century opera houses, and we are trying to get that same acoustic feeling in our production. This summer, I had the pleasure of touring the opera house in Prague where *Don Giovanni* was premiered, and I marveled at what it must have been like to see Mozart himself conduct.

We welcome with delight Maestro Marcello Cormio to our MSU Opera Theatre family. He brings great musicality, charm and Italian *brio* to the podium. For our students, working with a native speaker in this piece has been a brilliant course in all things Italian. He has instilled a love of the language in them, and they have worked extremely hard on diction and inflection, as well as a deep understanding of the text and the subtext. We'd also like to welcome our new faculty member, Dr. Elden Little, who is serving as our first full-time vocal coach. He comes to MSU after many years working in professional opera houses and as a fine recital accompanist.

Enjoy!

Mark your calendars for
MSU Opera Theatre's
Spring Production of
Georg Frideric Handel's
Xerxes
March 25-29, 2015

Cast of Characters (In order of appearance)

Ferrando, a soldier	Isaac Frishman* Jon Oakley**
Guglielmo, a soldier	Nicholas Kreider* Andrew Breuninger**
Don Alfonso, a nobleman	Daniel Ewart* Aaron Petrovich**
Fiordiligi, a young noblewoman	Heather Benson* Schyler Sheltroun**
Dorabella, her sister	Jenna Washburn* Anne Todey**
Despina, their maid	Leah Brzyski* Alina Tamborini**

Ensemble:

Kalli Allen	David Anderson
Anna Doering	Cody Davis
Caite Lenahan	Quentin Fettig
Sydney Rostar	David Moul
Quinn Rulison	Kyle White

Conductor
Marcello Cormio***

Stage Director
Melanie Helton

**Friday, November 21 & Sunday, November 23;*

***Wednesday, November 19 & Saturday, November 22*

****Guest Artist*

Staff for MSU Opera Theatre

Music Director	Marcello Cormio
Producer	Melanie Helton
Scenic Design	Tina M. Newhauser
Associate Scenic Design	Mark R. Willoughby
Set Construction	Mark R. Willoughby
Lighting Design	Brent Wrobel*
Projection Design	Peter Johnston
Costume Design	A.T. Jones, Inc.
Production Stage Manager	Mary Garner
Technical Director	Mark Willoughby
Musical Preparation	Marcello Cormio*, Elden Little
Assistant to the Music Director	Weimar Arancibia
Italian Diction Coach	Marcello Cormio*
Poster Illustrator	Barbara Hranilovich
Costume Mistress	Cathy McKenzie
Chorus Master	Holly Lewis
Assistant Stage Manager	Sarah Reed
Head Electrician/Light Board Operator	Michael Wright
Head Carpenter	Dave Barnum
Flyman/Carpenter	Dustin Peiffer
Fairchild Theatre Stage Manager	Ron Fenger
Recording Services	Jennifer Shangraw, Jon Whiting, Steve Boughton
Publicity, MSU College of Music	Michael Sundermann, Kathleen Adams
Budget Officer	Debra Galehouse
Rehearsal Accompanists	Neill Campbell, Chia-Ying Huang, Kisun Lee, Yiyang Wu

**Guest artist*

Grateful Acknowledgments

James Forger, Dean, College of Music

MSU Vocal Arts Area Faculty:

Richard Fracker (chair), Melanie Helton, Harlan Jennings, Peter Lightfoot,
Elden Little, Anne Nispel, David Rayl, Jonathan Reed, Sandra Snow

Kevin Noe, Director of Orchestral Activities, College of Music

Deborah Moriarty, Chair, Piano Area

MSU Department of Theatre, Kirk Domer (Chair)

Wharton Center, Sandy Thomley, Production Manager

Rebecca Surian, Director of Development, College of Music

Christine Babiak-Smith, Lori Garza, Shawn Mahorney, Michael Morgan,

Amy Rivard, College of Music

Dean Trailways

Bell's Pizza

The Story

Location: A Seaside Villa near Lago di Garda, Italy

Act I

Two young soldiers, Ferrando and Guglielmo, are dining with an older friend, Don Alfonso. Alfonso has stated that he doesn't believe that women can be faithful, and the two young men leap to the defense of their girlfriends. Alfonso proposes a bet. He will set up a scenario in which the girls' fidelity will be tested. The young men agree heartily, each singing praises to their respective future spouses. Meanwhile, their girlfriends, sisters Fiordiligi (engaged to Guglielmo) and Dorabella (engaged to Ferrando), are mooning romantically over the portraits of their suitors. Don Alfonso suddenly appears, seemingly heartbroken. He tells them that their young men have been recalled to the army and will be sent off to battle. The girls nearly swoon as their lovers appear, also seemingly heartbroken, although already in on the secret plot. The pair of lovers bid each other a sad farewell, and Alfonso and the ladies watch as the ship supposedly bearing their lovers off to war departs.

In the villa of Fiordiligi and Dorabella, their maid Despina is complaining about her daily chores. Why does she have to work hard to make the chocolate and not get to taste it? The two girls enter, moaning and seemingly in pain. When Despina questions them as to what has happened, Dorabella throws a tantrum of epic proportions. Despina discovers the reason, and laughs, asking the girls if they expect the soldiers to be faithful to them. She tells them that men are all alike, and that women would do well to be as unfaithful as the men. The girls leave in a huff, and Alfonso enters, proposing a plan to Despina. He tells her that there are two exotic, rich men from afar who want to meet the girls, and that there will be some money for Despina if she can facilitate this. At this, Ferrando and Guglielmo, disguised as "Albanians," enter the room and begin to seduce Despina. She finds them amusing and is going along with the plan, not recognizing the two Albanians as the suitors of her mistresses. Fiordiligi and Dorabella enter, finding two strange men in their house, and are appropriately shocked. Fiordiligi says that their fidelity is like a rock ("Come scoglio") and that the men must leave immediately. Guglielmo replies, wondering how the girls cannot be astonished and

attracted to their mustaches. The girls leave and the men break out in laughter. Guglielmo declares the bet is won, but Alfonso has more in store. Ferrando is entranced by the fidelity of his Dorabella and sings a song to the virtues of love.

The girls are mourning their departed fiancés when the Albanians burst in, each carrying a bottle of supposed arsenic. They collapse in fits and shudders, seemingly almost dead. The girls are panicked and call for Despina (who is in on the plan). She tells Alfonso that they must go and get a doctor. The girls are left with the comatose bodies of the Albanians, confused and yet somehow excited. Alfonso returns with Despina, now disguised as a doctor. The “doctor” cures the Albanians with a magnet, and they come slowly to life. Seeing the girls, they wonder if they are in heaven. Recovering quickly, they demand a kiss. Despina and Alfonso encourage the kiss, saying it will aid in the healing process. The girls again are confused and shocked, and the Albanians completely enjoy themselves as the curtain falls on Act I.

Act II

In the morning after the Albanians’ arrival, the girls are exhausted and confused. Despina suggests that the strangers are the perfect opportunity for the girls to have a diversion during their lovers’ absence. Despina declares that any girl over the age of 15 needs to be an expert at managing men, and that it is obvious that the sisters could use some practice. When Despina leaves, the sisters gingerly discuss the possibility. Finally deciding that it would do no harm, Dorabella asks Fiordiligi which one she wants. Dorabella chooses the brunette (Guglielmo in disguise, and NOT her fiancé but Fiordiligi’s). Fiordiligi is thrilled, because she wanted the blond one (Ferrando). The Albanians serenade the girls and are surprised and happy to see that the sisters have dressed in their version of “Albanian” clothing. They converse awkwardly and Ferrando and Fiordiligi take a stroll, leaving Guglielmo and Dorabella alone. He seduces her by giving her a heart on a chain, and then by taking away the portrait of Ferrando that she wears around her neck. Dorabella gives in eagerly and they disappear into the garden. Fiordiligi appears, distressed, followed by Ferrando, who has been reading poetry to her. Something in the poetry has reminded her of her vow to Guglielmo, and she begs Ferrando to leave. As he leaves, Fiordiligi begs for help with her

fidelity, as she is strongly attracted to Ferrando, finding in him a kindred spirit. She exits, and Ferrando boasts to Guglielmo that Fiordiligi is a paragon of virtue. Ferrando assumes that Dorabella has been equally constant, but Guglielmo not so subtly lets him know that Dorabella has indeed caved in and has been seduced. Guglielmo tries to console his friend, but Ferrando will have nothing of it. Guglielmo then turns on women in general, saying that women are beautiful, sweet and loving, but that they are also tricky, deceitful and impossible to understand. Ferrando lashes out at his image of Dorabella, calling her a traitor. In the meantime, back in the villa, Dorabella enters having been out all night with Guglielmo. Despina is delighted but Fiordiligi is shocked. Dorabella laughs at her sister, telling her that she now knows all about love and Cupid's deceiving ways. Fiordiligi, left alone, decides to put on a uniform and join Guglielmo at the battlefield. Ferrando enters, telling Fiordiligi he would rather die rather than not love her. She tries to resist but it is hopeless. She loves him and responds to his embraces. Guglielmo eavesdrops and is furious, but Alfonso reiterates his initial premise: "all women are alike."

A wedding is prepared for the two couples (each sister with the other's fiancé, unknowingly). After a toast (in which Guglielmo expresses his anger in an aside), Alfonso produces a notary, who is Despina once again in disguise. Just as the nuptial contract is signed, military music is heard in the background, announcing the return of the soldiers. The girls panic and send their now husbands into the villa to hide. Alfonso tells the girls he sees the soldiers (Ferrando and Guglielmo, now back in their uniforms and without mustaches) coming up the hill. Guglielmo discovers first Despina as the notary, to the girls' amazement and dismay, then the nuptial contract, signed and sealed. The girls attempt to apologize, but are soon confused by the quandary of which man they really want. The couples switch, again and again.

Who will end up with whom? We shall see...

MSU Symphony Orchestra
Kevin Noe, Director of Orchestras

Violin

Jalen Adams
Samvel Arakelyan
Andrew Hatfield
Tsung-Yu Lee
Ji Eun Lee
*I-Pei Lin
Diana Moisejenkaite
Andrea Rohr
Megan Wixom
**Tatiana Zueva

Viola

Stefanie Bilidas
Howard Jones
*Yury Ozhegov
Matthew Pickart
Isaac Sarver

Cello

Go Eun Choi
*Seunghyun Kang
Elliot Mliakoff
Eun Kyung Noh

Bass

*Matt Gibson
Duncan Petersen-Jones
Zachary Suttner
Max Verhagen

Flute

Nicholas Buonanni
Kathryne Salo

Oboe

Amelia Van Howe
Alana Rosen

Clarinet

Sarah Korneisel
Evelyn Moria Tunison

Bassoon

Adam Farmer
Kaylee Whitfield

Horn

Joseph L'Esperance
Holly Thornton

Trumpet

Carlot Dorve
Emily Northrop

Timpani

Daniel Gerhardt

Harpsichord

Chia-Ying Huang

Assistant Conductor

Weimar Arancibia

***Concertmaster*

**Principal*

Guest Conductor

Conductor **Marcello Cormio** recently made “a notable conducting debut” at the 2014 Sarasota Opera Festival, with performances of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. He was praised for a “lovely, light touch with the music:” “the young Italian drew vital and spirited playing, with the fizzing ensemble exciting yet with a fine balancing of solo voices, chorus and orchestra.”

His upcoming engagements include *Le nozze di Figaro* at the 2015 Sarasota Opera Festival. In the 2013-14 season, he was music director and conductor of the Opera Scenes production at the Manhattan School of Music, and as cover and assistant conductor for a new production of *Turandot* at the Opéra National de Lorraine in Nancy, France.

Cormio has appeared with orchestras around the U.S. and Europe, including the San Antonio Symphony, the Orchestra della Società dei Concerti di Bari, the Bacau Symphony, the Orchestra Sinfonica del Conservatorio di Bari, and the Bay View Festival. He recently had his conducting debut in China, performing at the head of the University of Kentucky Symphony in concert halls in Hangzhou, Tianjin, and at the National Centre for Performing Arts in Beijing.

He has led productions of *Die Zauberflöte* at the Bay View Music Festival, and of Gounod's *Romèo et Juliette* with the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre. He has been regularly invited as guest lecturer and conductor for opera workshops at prestigious academic institutions. Mr. Cormio has served on the music staff of the Indiana University Opera Theatre and of the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre as opera coach, chorus master, and assistant conductor. He is currently Director of Opera at West Virginia University.

Cormio earned a Master of Music in Instrumental Conducting at Indiana University. He has worked with conductors Leonard Slatkin, Jorge Mester, Herbert Blomstedt, Larry Rachleff, Donato Renzetti, Alexander Mickelthwate, and Carl Topilow. His previous musical studies in Italy had earned him diplomas in Piano, Instrumental Conducting, Composition, as well as a Master's Degree and a PhD in History and Critical Study of the Musical Heritage.

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MSU Opera Society is the community support organization of the MSU Opera Theatre. We are grateful to our members for their generous contributions.

*The 2014-15 MSU Opera Theatre season is generously supported by the **Worthington Family Foundation***

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For information about the MSU Opera Society or sponsoring Xerxes the spring 2015 opera, please contact the College of Music Advancement Office at (517) 353-9872 or e-mail Rebecca Surian at surian@msu.edu.