

MANITOBA
OPERA

2022/23 SEASON

STUDY GUIDE



COSÌ *fan* **TUTTE**

APRIL 22, 25, 28 | 2023

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2022/23 STUDY GUIDE

COSÌ FAN TUTTE

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Daniele Leblanc (Dorabella), John Tessier (Ferrando), James Westman (Guglielmo) and Monica Huisman (Fiordiligi).
Manitoba Opera, *Così fan tutte* (2003). Photo: R. Tinker

THE PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

April 22, 25, 28, 2023

Dress Rehearsal/Student Night at the Opera: April 20, 2023

Centennial Concert Hall

Music composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

Approximately 2 hours and 55 minutes in two acts, including one 20-minute intermission

Premiere Performance: Burgtheatre, Vienna, January 26, 1790

Sung in Italian; projected English translations

PRINCIPAL CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Ferrando	Tenor	JEAN-PHILIPPE LAZURE
Guglielmo	Bass-Baritone	JOHNATHON KIRBY
Don Alfonso	Bass-Baritone	DAVID WATSON
Fiordiligi	Soprano	JAMIE GROOTE
Dorabella	Mezzo-soprano	DANIELLE MACMILLAN
Despina	Soprano	TRACY DAHL

Manitoba Opera Chorus

Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

PRODUCTION

Conductor	TYRONE PATERSON	Lighting Design	SCOTT HENDERSON
Assistant Conductor	GULIANNE GALLANT	Stage Manager	ROBERT PEL
Director	ROB HERRIOT	Assistant Stage Managers	KATHRYN BALL, HEATHER LEE BRERETON
Chorus Master	TADEUSZ BIERNACKI	Apprentice Stage Manager:	TIA MORANN
Production Concept/Design	SHELDON JOHNSON		

FAST FACTS

- The plot of the libretto of *Così fan tutte* may be an original creation of Da Ponte and Mozart, and so may not have exact origins elsewhere in literature. Some sources claim that the story was spun off a marital scandal that occurred in the social circles of Vienna at the time. Despite this, certain parallels have been drawn between themes in *Così fan tutte* and other literary works. Works such as Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and *Cymbeline*, and Ovid's *Metemorphosis* which feature the theme of disguised spouses and 'fiancee swapping', and Boccaccio's *Decameron* which features practical jokes on spouses and the confusion that results from that.
- An early version of *Così fan tutte* was first offered to composer Antonio Salieri who wrote an unfinished draft before giving up on the project.
- Over the course of three centuries, the opera's reception has been varied. The 18th century saw the opera as unserious. Beethoven thought that the opera was beneath the genius of Mozart. The 19th century European sensibilities considered the opera to be immoral, even obscene. By the 20th century the opera regained popularity among audiences. However, 21st century audiences now question whether the theme and title of *Così fan tutte* indicate a sexist view of women.
- Da Ponte titled his libretto *La scuola degli amanti*, ("The school for lovers"). But some scholars suppose that at the suggestion of Mozart himself, the title was changed to *Così fan tutte* (loosely translated as "women are like that").
- The role of Fiordiligi was written for the voice of Adriana Ferrarese del Bene, an Italian soprano who first performed the role when the opera premiered on January 26, 1790 at the Burgtheater in Vienna, Austria. It is said that Mozart played one of his practical jokes on Adriana. Knowing that she tended to tuck in her chin on low notes, and throw her back when singing high notes, he wrote music for one of her big arias with many swings from high to low notes and low notes to high notes so that when she sang, she appeared to bob her head up and down like a chicken in an unflattering manner. However, with a well-honed voice technique, it is unlikely that a opera singer today would be susceptible to such a trick.

INTRODUCTION & SYNOPSIS

COSÌ FAN TUTTE

In creating *Così fan tutte*, it may be that Mozart and Da Ponte were attempting to simply write a fun, buffoonish opera with nothing serious to be made of it, or that they used *opera buffa* as a means of contending with an otherwise serious theme of love and the test of fidelity to one's beloved. Either way, scholars generally agree that whatever flaws the plot and story might or might not have, the music of *Così fan tutte* itself is a triumph and the literary gems that appear every now and then in the action might be enough to redeem the entire opera and secure its place as an artistic masterpiece.

Due to its status as a great operatic work, many productions and interpretations have been performed to various audiences around the world since the opera first premiered in 1790. In 2023, Manitoba Opera presents an altogether new iteration of *Così fan tutte*, a newly imagined version set in the 1930s on the edge of the Canadian wilderness.

SYNOPSIS

Place: An elegant hotel located somewhere on the edge of the Canadian wilderness

Time: Early 1930s

Language: Italian

OVERTURE

Dorabella and her sister, Fiordiligi, are wealthy Italian tourists on a vacation in Canada. Having arrived at the port of Halifax, they board a train and travel across the country to their hotel. It is there that they meet two dashing Mounties, Ferrando and Guglielmo. In true operatic fashion, the two couples are immediately smitten and fall head over heels in love.

SEE STUDENT ACTIVITY #2 (PAGE 22) FOR DISCUSSION TOPICS AND READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE SYLLABUS



Monica Huisman (Fiordiligi), John Tesier (Ferrando), David Watson (Don Alfonso), Nathalie Paulin (Dorabella), James Westman (Guglielmo) and Daniele Leblanc (Dorabella). Manitoba Opera, *Così fan tutte* (2003). Photo: R. Tinker.

SYNOPSIS (CONTINUED)

ACT I

Don Alfonso, a gentleman philosopher, tells the two officers of his doubts in the fidelity of women. He offers them a wager: He will prove that their lovers will be unfaithful. The young men defend their sweethearts and accept the challenge.

Meanwhile, Fiordiligi and Dorabella daydream about their lovers. Alfonso arrives and explains that the officers have been summoned to answer the “call of duty” and must depart immediately. After saying goodbye to their lovers, the sisters are inconsolable.

Despina, the hotel housekeeper, complains about how much work she has to do. When the heartbroken sisters arrive, she encourages them to enjoy their freedom and find new lovers, but Fiordiligi and Dorabella cannot fathom such a betrayal.

Don Alfonso convinces Despina to help him introduce the sisters to two “infatuated young friends” of his, who are, in fact, Guglielmo and Ferrando in disguise as waltzing log drivers. When the new suitors make advances toward the sisters, the young women are outraged and refuse to listen. The young men are confident of winning the bet.

The young men pretend to take poison in order to gain the sisters’ sympathy. Despina and Alfonso go off to fetch help, leaving the two women to care for the strangers. Despina reappears disguised as a “doctor” and pretends to heal the men. When Ferrando and Guglielmo request kisses in order to fully recover, the sisters again reject them, but it is clear that they’re beginning to show interest in the strangers.

ACT II

Despina chastises Fiordiligi and Dorabella for not knowing how to deal with men. The sisters decide that perhaps Despina may be right - there can be no harm in amusing themselves with the handsome strangers. They choose which man they’d like, each picking the other’s boyfriend.

On a moonlit walk, Dorabella responds quickly to the disguised Guglielmo’s advances. She accepts a gift and relinquishes her locket with Ferrando’s portrait.

Fiordiligi, however, refuses to yield to Ferrando, although she admits to herself that she is torn between her officer and the handsome stranger.

Ferrando is certain that they have won the wager. Guglielmo is happy to hear that Fiordiligi has been faithful to him, but when he shows his friend the locket he took from Dorabella, Ferrando is furious.

Fiordiligi condemns Dorabella for her betrayal and resolves to remain true to her officer.

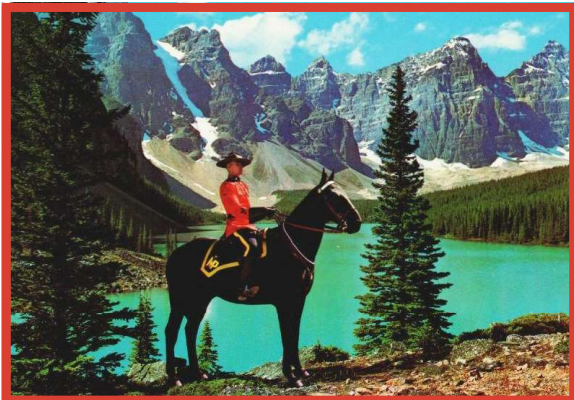
Ferrando suddenly appears and declares his love for Fiordiligi with renewed passion. While Guglielmo watches helplessly, she finally accepts. Guglielmo and Ferrando are distraught at their fiancées’ betrayal. Don Alfonso encourages the boys to forgive the women and marry them. After all, their behavior is only human nature.

The sisters have agreed to marry the young strangers, and Despina, impersonating a notary, does the honors. Alfonso suddenly announces that Guglielmo and Ferrando have returned from duty. In a panic, the sisters hide their intended husbands, who return as their real selves and are horrified to discover the marriage contracts. Finally, the young men reveal the entire charade, and Alfonso bids that the lovers have learned their lesson.

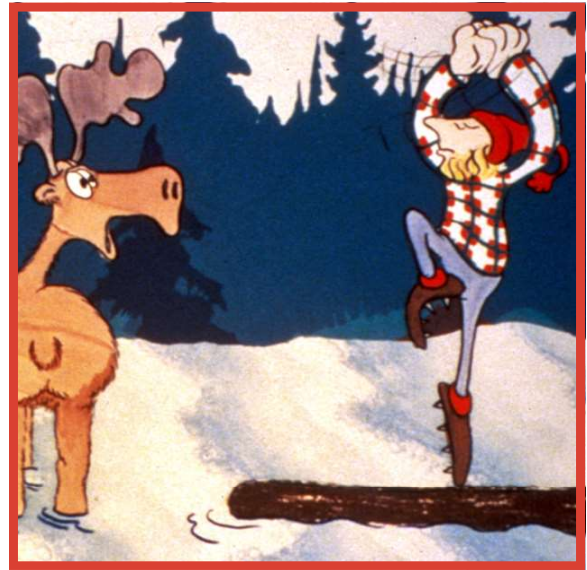
A CANUCK COSÌ

In the original story of *Così fan tutte*, soldiers Guglielmo and Ferrando - as part of their ruse to test the fidelity of the sisters Fiordiligi and Dorabella - briefly depart, only to return disguised as Albanians. The mystique of Albanians might suggest the familiarity and strangeness about Turkey that served to captivate and enchant Europeans at the time of the opera's premiere (1790). Albania, lying just across the Adriatic Sea from Italy and sharing a border with Greece, had since the 1400s and until 1912, been a part of the Ottoman empire, and therefore Islamic. This makes the visitors at once familiar enough to be captivating, but strange enough for the young women to be none-the-wiser about whether or not the men are who they claim to be.

In Manitoba Opera's 2023 interpretation, the young soldiers are reimagined as Mounties, and they return in disguise as log drivers. This presents us with similar comparisons to the original, but in a way that might be more appealing to us "moderns." Rather than the image of noble love and duty that the young Mounties and soldiers represent, do modern lovers tend to want for a partner full of mirth and humour, one who is light on their feet, and can dance 'til their shoes wear off?



Vintage RCMP postcard



The Log Driver's Waltz, John Weldon, 1979.

After all, the log driver, as the lyrics to the Canadian folk song, *Log Driver's Waltz*, relay "pleases the girls completely." And compared to doctors, merchants, and lawyers whose "feet are made of clay", as the song professes, the nimbleness, agility, and style of the log driver presents a very romantic appeal.

Do ladies prefer the light-hearted, physically strong, and agile outdoorsman or the princely poet who professes undying love? Perhaps this Canuck resetting of *Così* creates space for pondering such questions.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

FIORDILIGI	An Italian tourist, Dorabella's sister, Guglielmo's girlfriend
DORABELLA	An Italian tourist, Fiordiligi's sister, Ferrando's girlfriend
GUGLIELMO	A Mountie, Fiordiligi's boyfriend, Ferrando's friend
FERRANDO	A Mountie, Dorabella's boyfriend, Guglielmo's friend
DESPINA	The hotel's housekeeper
DON ALFONSO	A philosopher

THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS



JAMIE GROOTE FIORDILIGI

A lyric soprano lauded for possessing a real, and justified, self-confidence and captivating finesse, Groote is dedicated to her artistry and is creating a reputation as a young singer to watch. Having completed her final year in the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio, Groote's performances have now included Erste Dame (*Die Zauberflöte*), 2nd Wood Nymph (*Rusalka*), La Ciesca (*Gianni Schicchi*), Flora (*La Traviata*), Kate Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), and the lead role of Lea in the world premiere of Ian Cusson's *Fantasma*. Her concert repertoire includes Mahler's Symphonies No. 2 and 4, Strauss' *Vier Letzte Lieder*, *Ein Deutsches Requiem*,

Scherazade, Handel's *Messiah* and Mozart's *Requiem*. Groote brings what has been described as a palpable presence and solid vocalism to the role of Fiordiligi.

Manitoba Opera's *Così fan tutte* will be Groote's debut performance with the company.



DANIELLE MACMILLAN DORABELLA

Italian-Canadian mezzo soprano Danielle MacMillan was a member of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio. MacMillan made her Canadian Opera Company debut as the Second Niece in Britten's *Peter Grimes*. She holds a bachelor of Fine Arts, with honours, in classical vocal performance from York University, with additional training at Istituzione Teatro Lirico Sperimentale di Spoleto in Italy and The Glenn Gould School of The Royal Conservatory of Music.

Her credits include Diana in *La Calisto*, Second Lady in *The Magic Flute*, Véronique in *Le docteur Miracle*, Annio

in *La clemenza di Tito*, Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Siebel in *Faust*. MacMillan also appeared as Dorabella in the COC's Ensemble Studio production of *Così fan tutte*, and covered the role of Garcias in *Don Quichotte*. MacMillan joined Palm Beach Opera's Benenson Young Artist Program in 2015 where she covered the roles of Mercedes in *Carmen*, and Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

Manitoba Opera's *Così fan tutte* will be MacMillan's debut performance with the company.

THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS



JOHNATHON KIRBY
GUGLIELMO

Johnathon Kirby has built a reputation for having a “virility in his sound, and exhaustive energy in his movements” (*Schmopera*). The rich baritone and heroic intensity he has rendered for such a role as Stephen in *The Master and Margarita* may hint at what he brings to Guglielmo. Kirby hails from Newmarket Ontario and is an alumnus of Dalhousie University, the Glenn Gould School, and completed two years in the Calgary Opera Emerging Artist program. He made his professional debut with Opera Scotia, returning for nine seasons as a featured lead, and has performed with opera companies across Canada. He has featured in numerous concerts and recitals including *Messiah* with The Whispering River Orchestra and Haydn’s *The Creation* as Raphael and Adam with The Festival Chorus in Calgary. With Calgary Opera, Kirby has performed such roles as Zaretsky in *Eugene Onegin*, Angelotti in *Tosca* and Don Alphonso in *Così fan tutte*. Ending his 2017-2018 season Johnathon returned to Toronto to perform Figaro in *The Barber of Seville* with Opera Five, receiving critical acclaim for his performance and a DORA nomination for best performance of an individual.

Kirby was most recently featured as Ben in Manitoba Opera’s *The Telephone* (2021).



JEAN-PHILIPPE LAZURE
FERRANDO

Jean-Philippe Lazure is said to sing with “an honest, easy sound” (*Schmopera*). Taking on the role of Ferrando, a heart-on-his-sleeve romantic who sincerely croons his love as a poet would, Lazure’s reputation for having an honest open sound promises to present a compelling Ferrando. Lazure is a proud graduate of the Canadian Opera Company’s elite Ensemble Studio. A native of Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, and currently living in Berlin, Lazure began his formal vocal training at the University of Ottawa and holds a bachelor and master’s degree from the Université de Montréal.

Recent seasons have seen Lazure performing roles such as Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, the title role in *Candide*, Georgie in John Estacio’s moving opera *Ours*, Remendado in *Carmen*, Father André and Cartier in *Louis Riel*, and Conte Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*.

Ferrando is Lazure’s debut role with Manitoba Opera, having previously been cast as Remendado in *Carmen* (2020) which was cancelled due to Covid-19.

THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS



DAVID WATSON
DON ALFONSO

Bass-baritone David Watson, a veteran of operatic and concert stages across Canada, continues to earn praise for the exceptional richness and power of his voice.

During his 18 years of service with the Royal Canadian Air Force, David appeared in 16 Manitoba Opera productions, performing such roles as the King in *Aida*, the Bailiff in *Werther*, the Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*, the Doctor in *La Traviata*, and the dual roles of Benoit and Alcindoro in *La Bohème*. He has also performed with the Canadian Opera Company, Pacific Opera Victoria, Vancouver Opera, Calgary Opera, Edmonton

Opera, Opera Saskatchewan, Rainbow Stage, Opera Hamilton, and Opera Lyra Ottawa.



TRACY DAHL
DESPINA

Canada's premiere coloratura soprano, Tracy Dahl, has appeared throughout her career with such esteemed opera companies as the Metropolitan, San Francisco, Houston Grand, Santa Fe and Calgary operas; the Canadian Opera Company, Pacific Opera Victoria, Teatro alla Scala (Milan) and the Théâtre du Châtelet (Paris). Her past opera successes include Despina in *Così fan tutte* (Canadian Opera Company), Gilda in *Rigoletto* (Edmonton Opera, Manitoba Opera), the title roles in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Maria Stuarda* (Pacific Opera Victoria), the world premieres of Unsuk Chin's *Alice*

in Wonderland and Peter Ash's *The Golden Ticket* (Opera Theatre of St. Louis), Cunegonde in *Candide* and Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance* (Calgary Opera); and Madame Mao in *Nixon in China* (Houston Grand Opera, Opera Colorado, Portland Opera, and Vancouver Opera). Among her many notable debuts are Adele in *Die Fledermaus* at the Metropolitan Opera, where she later returned as Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Florestine in the world premiere of *The Ghosts of Versailles*, and Valencienne in *The Merry Widow*.

In July 2017, Dahl had the high honor of being appointed to the Order of Canada for her accomplishments as an opera singer and for her commitment to mentoring the next generation of Canadian singers. Dahl inspires the next generation of opera artists as an instructor of voice at University of Manitoba's Desautels Faculty of Music (since 1997), Calgary Opera's Young Artist Program (since 2005), and Manitoba Opera's Digital Emerging Artists Program (since 2020).

THE COMPOSER

Of those rare artists who have been both a great composer as well as a child prodigy, none astounds us more than Mozart, who on that list is the only one to have produced his first compositions at the age of five. Even from that young age, the composer proved astounding both in how prolific he was in his offerings and the maturity of form represented in his work, which was diverse and plentiful, and spoke to themes that addressed the most arresting ideas of humanity and life in the world.

Another great composer, Richard Wagner, characterized Mozart's genius as that of "light and love." Mozart himself would opine on, as he put it, the impossibility of genius without heart. "For it is not great understanding alone, or imagination, or both together that make for genius. Love, love, love is the soul of genius," Mozart remarked.

Born in Salzburg in 1756, then part of what was the Holy Roman Empire, Mozart, from a very early age, demonstrated precocity on the keyboard and the violin. These remarkable musical abilities took him on the road with his father Leopold Mozart, to audiences at royal courts around Europe from Paris to Milan and Rome, to Zurich and London. Mozart had written his first symphony by the age of eight, and many other small compositions were made in his early years which were transcribed by his father, himself a composer and teacher of music.

Mozart obtained employment as a musician at the court of Salzburg, but soon grew disillusioned with the position. He sought better fare in Vienna, where the patronage of the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II changed his financial prospects and name recognition considerably, although this newfound fame and financial success was short lived, as Mozart tragically passed at the young age of 35.

Compositions such as Mozart's string quartet *Eine kleine nachtmusik* and the *Rondo alla Turca* (Turkish Rondo, or Turkish March) of his Piano

Sonata No. 11, as well as many other motifs scattered throughout his impressive corpus, represent some of the most recognizable tunes in all of Western music.

However, it is in his symphonies and operas, grand works of high intellectual accomplishment, that we get a full sense of that love to which Wagner referred. From somber meditations like Mozart's *Requiem*, to his *Symphony No. 41* (subtitled 'Jupiter') and his Clarinet Concerto in A-Major (written at the time for a newly invented basset clarinet), Mozart delivers wit and passion through an exhaustive mastery of the forms and styles of 18th century music. His operas range from Singspiel fantasies like *The Magic Flute*, to dark "dramatic comedies" like *Don Giovanni*, to a light-hearted jest like *Così fan tutte* which tackles a serious theme like love and the test of inerrant fidelity to one's beloved. Throughout his works we witness joy and energy, and a high degree of innovation and creative power, coupled with a keen attention to some of the deepest and pressing questions about human existence. His music endures because it demonstrates a love and vitality for humanity. Its appeal reaches across centuries and cultures, and the elements which it incorporates endure. His music may likely be relevant to humanity for all coming time.



Posthumous portrait of Mozart by Barbara Krafft (1819). Oil on canvas.

THE LIBRETTIST

When Lorenzo Da Ponte was born, his family had converted from being Jewish to Catholic in a Venice which, like the rest of Europe, had treated Jews unfavourably for centuries. His family adopted the name of the ruling bishop of their area, Monsignor Lorenzo Da Ponte, who funded education at a seminary for boys in Portogruaro, a few miles north of Venice. In his memoirs, Da Ponte writes with regret about his early education as a minor in a Catholic seminary for boys. It was, he writes, 'a life entirely opposed to my temperament, character, which opened the door to a thousand strange happenings, in the course of which the malice of my enemies made me a pitiable victim for more than twenty years'. Lorenzo would go on to become ordained as a priest. Priestly education at the time emphasized studies in rhetoric, the art of communication, whether through speech, or writing, prose or poetry, and Da Ponte is said to have excelled greatly under a good instructor. He studied philosophy, mathematics and Latin. These laid the groundwork for his poetic writings, and the three great operas which he would go on to produce with Mozart-- *Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Così fan tutte*.

Unable to maintain the sort of decorum expected of a priest, he fell into trouble and was tried in court for having improper relations with a woman and having children with her. He was found guilty and banished from Venice. He moved to Austria and tried to make a living as a writer. With the help of Mozart's friend, the composer Salieri, he obtained a position with the royal theatre translating libretti. This is where he met Mozart and they began working together. *Così fan tutte* was an original libretto that Da Ponte produced when most libretti at the time were adapted from other stories. The emperor, Joseph II, patron of the arts and the mutual benefactor of Mozart and Da Ponte died in the year that *Così fan tutte* premiered. The following year Mozart also died. This changed Da Ponte's prospects and the impact of the little acclaim he had only recently gained. With a letter of recommendation he

had obtained from Emperor Joseph II before his death, Da Ponte made for Versailles, the French royal court of Marie Antoinette, queen of France, and sister of Emperor Joseph II. However, as Da Ponte journeyed to France, the French revolution was already underway, and Marie Antoinette and King Louis XVI had been arrested and put on trial, later to be beheaded. Da Ponte changed his plans and instead journeyed north to London, England, with his family. Not finding much luck in England, he emigrated to the United States, and became a professor of Italian at Columbia University. He would later help found an opera theatre which over the centuries would develop into New York's Metropolitan Opera, one of the most prestigious opera stages in the world. Da Ponte died in August of 1838.

WHAT IS A LIBRETTO?

Libretto means "little book" in Italian. It refers to the written text of an opera set to music by the composer. Today, we commonly refer to an opera as being "by" the composer of the music, but the text is a vital component and is normally written first. In earlier times it was often regarded as more important than the music, and it was common for audience members to purchase the libretto to read.

Early composers of opera were usually contracted to set music to a pre-existing text. Only later did composers (such as Mozart and Verdi) work in close collaboration with their librettists. A few composers - notably Richard Wagner and Carlisle Floyd - wrote their own texts. Da Ponte wrote *Così fan tutte* as an original work. However, certain aspects are drawn as a pastiche from older literary works.



MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS

'COME SCOGLIO'

Immediately after the “log drivers” first profess their love for the sisters, Fiordiligi makes true on her earlier metaphor when she compares love to war. She sings ‘come scoglio immoto resta’: as a warrior of love, she stands firm and declares that, like a rock which doesn’t move even in the midst of the storm, her soul will remain true in faithfulness and love. A marvelous aria! Watch for certain contrasts to begin to appear between the strength of Fiordiligi’s character and that of her sister Dorabella’s.



Nathalie Paulin (Despina), John Tesier (Ferrando), Monica Huisman (Fiordiligi), Daniele Leblanc (Dorabella), and James Westman (Guglielmo). Manitoba Opera, *Così fan tutte* (2003). Photo: R. Tinker.

DESPINA AS COLORATURA

Così fan tutte is said to be a comic opera, although there are many moments of seriousness. But in Despina’s character we get a lot of fun. In her hilarious rhyming about the origins of the strange men, she states: “che sembianze, che vestiti! Che figure, che mustacchi! Lo non so se son Valacchi, o se Turchi son costor! Valacchi, Turchi! Turchi, Valacchi!” (Try saying the words out in Italian to see why it is so funny) then try it in a quick tempo in this English translation:



Monica Huisman (Fiordiligi), Nathalie Paulin (Despina), and Daniele Leblanc (Dorabella). Manitoba Opera, *Così fan tutte* (2003). Photo: R. Tinker.

What looks, (pause pause) what clothes! (pause pause) What appearance, (pause pause) what mustaches! I don't know if they're Valackish or they're Turkish or they're what! (pause) Turkish, Valackish, Valackish, Turkish!

The role of Despina is typically a sung by a *coloratura soprano* which is the highest, most agile and flexible of the classical voice types. In *Così fan tutte*, this makes for very playful and hilarious singing as in when Despina comes ridiculously disguised as the doctor to help heal the dying men with her equally ridiculous medical contraption and awful spoonerisms. She sings: “salvete, amabile bones puellas!” Watch in this scene for reasons why *Così fan tutte* is considered to be in the category of *opera buffa*.

'SOAVE SIA IL VENTO'

As Fiordiligi and Dorabella watch Guglielmo and Ferrando paddle into the distance, with Don Alfonso they sing a farewell trio - ‘*Soave sia il vento*’ (‘gentle be the wind’). Here we may remember that the departure is all a ruse to trick the sisters. The song is nevertheless touching and genuine, and makes for some of the most beautiful and heartfelt moments in the opera.

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

'UN'AURA AMAROSA'

This is one of the most beloved tenor arias in all of opera. It is a delightful air of love, admiration, and deep affection. Ferrando gushes with pride that his Dorabella does not give in to Guglielmo's first attempt to woo her by displaying all his great physical qualities. He declares to Don Alfonso: 'a battaglia finita' ('the battle is over'). Because the ladies didn't fall in love with their "log drivers," the game need not go any further. Ferrando sings in response '*un'aura amarosa del nostro tesoro*' ('an aura of loveliness our treasures are').

'DONNE MIE LA FATE A TANTI'

When Guglielmo becomes the first to succeed in winning one of the sisters, Dorabella, Ferrando is understandably terribly upset. Of course he had only earlier sung adoringly of his faithful love Dorabella. Guglielmo, with that bold and brash attitude then sings the boisterous baritone aria: '*Donne mie la fate tanti*' ('My ladies, you do this to so many men'). The music moves at a rapid tempo and the lines are repeated and rhymes are compounded, giving a sense that Guglielmo has new realization and wants to make that single point abundantly clear. Meanwhile, he might be holding some delight over the fact that his Fiordiligi has not given in to Ferrando's wooing.

'PER PIETA BEN MIO PERDONA'

Fiordiligi begins to feel her heart slip and she enters into a crisis of the soul. She struggles in a deeply heartfelt moment with the choices she has to make. She prays for strength.

'COSÌ FAN TUTTE'

Don Alfonso, unlike the other characters, does not have many moments where he sings solo. He is almost always in dialogue

with someone, or is interrupted in a conversation, singing in a trio, quartet, quintet or sextet. In rare moments, he has an extended moment song, speech, or recitative. One such important moment is when the line "*così fan tutte*"



John Tessier (Ferrando) and Monica Huisman (Fiordiligi). Manitoba Opera, *Così fan tutte* (2003). Photo: R. Tinker.

appears in the opera in Act 2 Scene 3. The two ladies have finally fallen in love with the two log drivers and Don Alfonso's point is proven. Guglielmo and Ferrando are both very upset. At this time Don Alfonso takes a moment to impart the overall lesson that he had hoped to convey to the young men:

"In ogni cosa ci vuol filosofia . . . l'amanti che si trove alfin deluso non condanni l'altrui ma il proprio errore; gia che giovani, vecchie, e belle, e brutte, ripetete con me: 'così fan tutte.'"

Translation: *in all things there is a need for philosophy . . . the lover which finds himself has fooled should condemn not another, but his own error; for young, old, beautiful, or ugly, repeat with me: 'so are all women.'*

SUGGESTED RECORDINGS

(Italian with English subtitles)

John Eliot Gardiner conducts Monteverdi Choir with English Baroque Soloists (Paris, 1992)
<https://youtu.be/MXCeUYL1pBU>

Daniel Barenboim conducts Staatsoper Berlin (2022)
<https://youtu.be/2lmA9tdMlok>

LITERARY ROOTS OF COSÌ FAN TUTTE

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE 1598

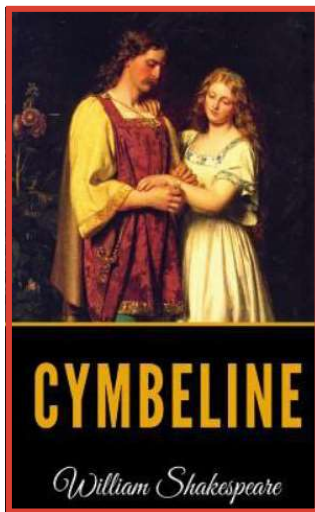


Aspects of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* can be seen as possible source for *Così fan tutte*. Specifically the part that has to do with romantic partners in disguise. The main plot of *Merchant of Venice* is about enmity between a christian merchant Antonio, who borrows money from a Jewish money-lender Shylock. Antonio had abused Shylock in the past.

Antonio then unable to repay his debt, must afford Shylock a pound of his flesh according to their contract. Portia and Nerissa, spouses of the friends of Antonio, come disguised as male lawyers and successfully defend Antonio, but trick their husbands into breaking a vow.

SHAKESPEARE'S CYMBELINE 1611

Based on a tale of Cunobeline, an Ancient Celtic king of Britain, *Cymbeline* tells a romantic tragic-comedy of jealousy, innocence and disguises. The king disapproving that his daughter Imogen has secretly married her lover Posthumus, he banishes him.



Imogen's wicked step-mother the Queen plots to have her arrogant son Cloten marry Imogen after which she intends to murder her so that Cloten may become king upon the death of Cymbeline.

Imogen refuses Cloten's aggressive advances. The queen and son plot to frame Imogen as adulterous and reveal the details to Posthumous now living in Italy, who in his rage tries to murder Imogen. He sends two letters to Britain. One to Imogen to meet him at a secret rendezvous, and another to Pisanio with instructions to murder Imogen at this secret rendezvous. Pisanio does not kill Imogen but reveals to her the details and helps her escape disguised as a boy and adopts the name "Fidele," which is latin for faithful. Later, Posthumous also returns to Britain in disguise and neither recognizes the other until all is at last revealed.



BOCCACCIO'S DECAMERON

Decameron is a collection of short stories written in the 14th century by Giovanni Boccaccio. It is an allegorical work about three young men, and seven young women who retreat to a country villa outside of Florence to escape the black plague. Literally sheltering in place during a pandemic! They are 100 stories on various themes about love, virtue, tricks that women play on men, tricks that people play on each other and such. The stories represent philosophical and theological virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude, then faith, hope and charity, many of the same themes which *Così fan tutte* muses about.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Curriculum Connections to the Manitoba Curriculum Frameworks for Grade 9 - 12 are provided below each activity. For a more in-depth look at the connections, view our Manitoba Curriculum Connections documents at <http://mbopera.ca/school-programs/study-guides/>

ACTIVITY #1 USING THE FIVE C'S

Have Your Students Analyze the Opera as Drama

CHARACTERS

Are they interesting? Believable? Are their actions, words, thoughts consistent?

CONCLUSION

How well does the conclusion work? Is it consistent? Satisfying? Believable?

CONFLICT

What conflicts are established? How are they resolved?

CONTEXT

What are the historical, physical, and emotional settings? Sets and costumes?

CLIMAX

To what climax does the conflict lead?

DIRECTIONS

- Give students the synopsis to read and have them re-tell the story after they have read it.
- Ask comprehensive questions.
- Present and discuss the composer and librettist.
- Listen to excerpts from the opera. Watch a DVD of the opera (available to borrow from Manitoba Opera). Have students identify and recognize recurring themes.
- Discuss the historical background, emphasizing the visual and performing arts and history-social science frameworks. Discuss the results of certain events. Whom did they affect? How? Why? Did any changes occur as a result?
- Review the glossary of terms.
- Have the students watch for references to themes in the opera in their everyday lives. The internet, radio, TV, magazines, and movies often refer back to classics.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.2.1; 2.1.2; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M2; DR-C1; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-M2; M-C2; M-R1

ACTIVITY #2 SYLLABUS - DISCUSSION TOPICS

Act 1 Sc. 2 – A Duetto. 1 Recitative

The sisters Fiordiligi and Dorabella, enter singing their affections for their lovers Guglielmo and Ferrando respectively. Fiordiligi compares love to war: “There is a semblance to be seen between the warrior and the lover” she sings. Both then sing: If this heart of mine never changes, I am happy and still, though love may make me live in pain. Her words can be seen as foreshadowing the events in the story that are yet to occur.

1. Is the simile between love and war apt? Is love like war as Fiordiligi claims?
2. What does it say about Fiordiligi’s character that she would make draw such a comparison between the lover and the warrior?
3. Given what transpired between the three men in the previous scene, How does the sister’s attitude towards love further deepen the plot? Does it create tension or does it simply ease the story along?

Act 1 Scene 3 – Sisters and Don Alfonso

Don Alfonso suddenly rushes in and frantically delivers the news to the sisters. Ferrando and Guglielmo have been called to duty. “At the martial field the royal orders have been called.” The sisters struggle to let their loves depart, but ultimately accept.

Act 1 Scene 6 – Don Alfonso, Fiordiligi and Dorabella sing a sad goodbye as their lovers depart.

--Soave sia il vento – (Soft be the wind).

1. Although the departure of the lovers Guglielmo and Ferrando is all part of a ruse, what can we say of the effect that the heartfelt the trio ‘Soave sia il vento’ not only both sisters but on the audience as well? The audience is aware of the scheme to trick the sisters, but how does such a musically emotional goodbye affect their feelings nonetheless?

Act 2, Scene 7

Despina makes the case to the ladies as to why they should entertain the log drivers’ advances. She encourages them to have fun in the absence of their betrotheds. Young women of 15, she says, are expected to know everything about married life. But how are they to do this without an education? A girl of 15 should know how to flirt successfully. This she sings in the aria ‘Una donna a quindici anni.’

ACTIVITY #2 (CONTINUED)

1. Judging from what Despina has said about the expectations of a young woman of 15 years, what difference in social customs can we draw between the time and place that *Così fan tutte* – 18th century Vienna -- and our own 21st century Canada?

‘Eccovi il medico!

Twice the men try woo the sisters. On the first attempt the sisters run away. On the second try, the men pretend to ingest poison --arsenic! The sisters have to nurse them until the doctor arrives. The doctor, of course, is Despina in disguise, armed with a strange healing contraption that appears to make the men convulse as if they’re being shocked by electricity.

It is said that the use of Despina’s convulsive contraption was Mozart’s parodying a friend, the German physician Franz Mesmer who theorized that there exists an animal magnetism between objects via which energy can be transferred for healing purposes. This is known as Mesmerism.

1. Given mesmerism, can we say that Despina’s doctor is a parodic character? Does this embody the idea of Opera Buffa?

Act Two

Dorabella sings the aria ‘Prendo quel brunettino’ (‘I’ll take that brown-haired one’) when she becomes somewhat persuaded by Despina’s urging to give the men a chance. With Fiordiligi, the two have fun role playing the characteristics of the two men. This indicates some sort of easing of the tension between the sisters and the men. But soon Dorabella appears to be falling in love with the disguised Guglielmo. Fiordiligi on the other hand continues to hold strong.

1. Are there contrasts throughout the entire opera that can be drawn between Fiordiligi and Dorabella? Given their character traits, which sister could be said to be older than the other? Which sister is wiser or more discerning? Are both very similar to each other?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.2.1; 2.1.2; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M2; DR-C1; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-M2; M-C2; M-R1

ACTIVITY #3 A REVIEW

STEP 1 THINK-GROUP-SHARE

Individually, students will write, in point-form, the answers to the following questions:

- What did you like about the opera?
What did you dislike?
- What did you think about the sets,
props, and costumes?
- If you were the stage director, would
you have done something differently?
Why?
- What were you expecting? Did it live
up to your expectations?
- What did you think of the singers'
portrayal of their characters?

Break the students into groups to discuss their feelings and reactions to the production. Have the students write on poster papers their answers or important points of their discussion. Encourage the students to go beyond the questions posed.

STEP 2 CLASS DISCUSSION

Have the whole class examine the poster papers and discuss the different ideas from each group.

STEP 3 OUTLINING YOUR REVIEW

Go over the essential aspects of a review including a clearly stated purpose, a coherent comparison/contrast organizational pattern, a summary paragraph capturing the interest of the reader, precise nouns, and revision for consistency of ideas. You might give your students a few samples of reviews for arts events – or ask them to bring in some reviews they find themselves. Have the students fill out the review outline, then complete a rough draft.

- Purpose (why are you writing this and
who is your audience?)
- Plot Synopsis (including who sang
what role, etc.)
- Paragraph 1 (compare and contrast
things you liked or didn't like)
- Paragraph 2 (compare and contrast
things you liked or didn't like)
- Paragraph 3 (compare and contrast
things you liked or didn't like)
- Summary/Closing Paragraph

STEP 4 PEER CONFERENCING

The opera contains what in our time may or may not be interpreted as sexism towards women. Scholars suggest that the title of *Così fan tutte* (loosely translated as “Women are like that”) may have intensified a sexist understanding of the play. Judging from their own

ACTIVITY #3 (CONTINUED)

understanding of the plot, have students discuss their views as to whether the details of the opera demonstrate that the opera is about lessons on love, or whether the story is sexist.

STEP 5 CREATING THE FINAL DRAFT

Have students make the appropriate adjustments to their reviews. You could also have the students type the pieces and organize them into a newspaper.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.2.2; 3.1.3; 3.3.1; 4.1.3; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.4.1; 4.2.2; 5.2.1; 5.1.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R1; DR-R2; DR-R3; DR-R4

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R1; M-R2; M-R3; M-R4

ACTIVITY #4 ACT OUT THE STORY

Have students consider the characters and the role they play in the story. Choose one of the following:

**FIORDILIGI / DORABELLA / GUGLIELMO / FERRANDO / DON ALFONSO /
DESPINA**

If you were going to play this character, you would have to discover, create, and imagine background, personality, and physical qualities. Some clues are provided in the story and the music and some you need to make up yourself.

PRETEND YOU ARE THAT CHARACTER AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What motivates you? How does this affect your actions? What obstacles stand in your way?
- What steps in the opera do you take to achieve your objectives? What are the results?
- What obstacles are beyond your control (laws, social status, others' actions)?
- What are your (character's) greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
- What is your relationship to the other characters?
- How is your character's personality expressed through the music of the opera?
- Can you think of a modern-day character who has similar characteristics and traits?
- If your character were alive today, how would s/he be more or less successful?
- What different steps would s/he take to achieve an objective?

ACTIVITY #5 WRITE A LETTER

Have students write a letter in the role of Fiordiligi or Dorabella, or Guglielmo and Ferrando at the war. Of course we know that Guglielmo and Ferrando are disguised as Albanians. Keeping true to the events of the opera up to the end of Act One, and based on what the characters know, letters can be written to reflect the events of the plot.

ACTIVITY #6 RESEARCH AND REPORT

Have students study the history of the relations between the Turkish Ottoman Empire and Western Europe, and how does this history feature into the writing of *Così fan tutte*. Were relations between the two worlds friendly or strained? How did Turkey feature in the Italian or European imagination? Based on what their findings, what are the possible reasons for which Mozart and Da Ponte would have chosen Albanians as disguises for Guglielmo and Ferrando?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.2.1; 2.2.2; 3.3.1; 3.3.3; 3.2.2; 3.2.3; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.2.2; 4.2.3; 5.2.2

ACTIVITY #7 *COSÌ FAN TUTTE* MOOD BOARD

Often before artists and designers create their work, they make a mood board to set the tone for the piece. Considering the roles of the characters and props in *Così fan tutte*, have students create a mood board for such characters as the log drivers and their overexaggerated comic characteristics, Despina's buffoonish doctor, Guglielmo and Ferrando's soldiers, Don Alfonso's philosopher, Despina's clownish notary, Despina as chambermaid, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, Fiordiligi in one of the men's disguises, Guglielmo and Ferrando's tokens of love, Despina's ridiculous medical contraption, the wedding party, and other elements of the plot.

Have your students go through a stack of old magazines and newspapers to create a mood board for *Così fan tutte*. They may create each item individually, or work together on a large one for the class. Those who are visual artists may incorporate their skills to great effect. Consider elements like colours, textures, faces, patterns, settings, cultural influences and other images that represent the opera.

ACTIVITY #8 ACTIVE LISTENING

Play select short scenes from *Così fan tutte* (CD and DVD available to borrow from Manitoba Opera, full recordings also accessible on YouTube). Ask your students to listen closely three fun scenes in *Così fan tutte* where the use of poetic elements are present and used to convey certain impressions that help to tell the story. First, in Act one when the men enter in disguise and meet Despina: *'Alla bella despinetta'* ('The beautiful little Despina') [51:11]. Second, when the sisters enter to find two male strangers in their home: *'Ragazzaccia tracontante, che fai li con simil gente'* ('You insolent and careless girl! What are you doing with such people?') [52:25], up to the moment when Don Alfonso comes out of hiding and says: *'Che sussurro! Che strepito! Che sompiglio e mai questo?'* ('What's this mumbling? What's this noise? What a mess this ever was?') feigning innocence even though he had actually set the whole thing up? Third, Despina's ridiculous doctor enters: *'eccovi il medico'* ('Here is the doctor!') [1:25]. As an example, in 'che sussurro,' we find a familiar mother goose rhyme scheme such as: Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack jump over the candlestick. And Despina's playful take on Walacchi, Turki, Turki, Walacchi can be closely considered. Let students try out the rhymes in Italian to help spot them in the show.

- What are the instruments used to make the music?
- How does this music make me feel?
- What is the mood of each piece?
-
- What type of emotions do the singers bring forth
- What do the singing voices tell us about those characters?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.2.2; 2.3.1; 2.2.3; 4.4.3; 5.2.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R1

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R2

SOURCE CITED: [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=EG17FXTEUCQ&T=8057S](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EG17FXTEUCQ&t=8057s)

Production: Theatre an der Wien, 1996. Cast: Barbara Fritolli (Fiordiligi), Angelika Kirchschlager (Dorabella), Bo Skovhus (Guglielmo), Micheal Schade (Ferrando), Monica Bacelli (Despina), Alessandro Corbelli (Don Alfonso).

ACTIVITY #9 OPERA POP QUIZ

(refer to “what is opera” study guide, available online at mbopera.ca)

- 1 _____ A theatrical production incorporating both vocal and instrumental music, drama, and sometimes dance.
- 2 _____ The lowest male vocal range.
- 3 _____ An instrumental introduction to an opera.
- 4 _____ The area where the orchestra is seated.
- 5 _____ Said to be the first opera ever produced.
- 6 _____ A song for solo voice in an opera.
- 7 _____ The highest female vocal range.
- 8 _____ A song for three voices.
- 9 _____ A part of the opera sung in a speechlike manner.
- 10 _____ The Italian word meaning “little book.”
- 11 _____ The middle male vocal range.
- 12 _____ The person who is in charge of all the action on stage.

ACTIVITY #10 *COSÌ FAN TUTTE* POP QUIZ

- 1 Who is the composer? _____
- 2 Who wrote the libretto? _____
- 3 In what year did the premiere performance take place? _____
- 4 In what language is the opera performed? _____
- 5 Where did the opera first premiere? _____
- 6 Which character pretends to be the doctor or 'medico'? _____
- 7 The role of Despina is sung by what voice type? _____
- 8 The role of Dorabella is sung by what voice type? _____
- 9 To what creature do the men compare their loves? _____
- 10 What does Guglielmo give Dorabella as a token of his love? _____
- 11 Guglielmo and Ferrando disguise themselves as what? _____
- 12 Don Alfonso's final lesson to the men in three words: _____

ANSWER KEY POP QUIZ #9 & #10

OPERA

1. Opera
2. Bass
3. Overture
4. Orchestra Pit or “The Pit”
5. Daphne
6. Aria
7. Soprano
8. Trio
9. Recitative
10. Libretto
11. Baritone
12. Stage Director

COSÌ FAN TUTTE

1. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
2. Lorenzo Da Ponte
3. 1790
4. Italian
5. Burgtheatre, Vienna
6. Despina
7. Coloratura soprano
8. Mezzo-soprano
9. A pheonix
10. A pendant
11. Log drivers
12. Così fan tutte

Manitoba Opera would be pleased to receive a copy of any work related to this opera produced by your students. Please forward to:

Scott Miller

Education and Community Engagement Coordinator
Manitoba Opera, 1060-555 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R3B 1C3

or
smiller@mbopera.ca

WHERE TO FIND COSÌ FAN TUTTE

BOOK

Music at the Limits
Said, Edward W.
New York : Columbia University Press, [2008]©2008
Call Number: 780.9 SAI
2008

CD

Così fan tutte
Mozart, Amadeus Wolfgang
[Place of publication not identified] : London/Decca, [1993] 1993
Call Number CD OPERA
ROSSINI CEN

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Così fan tutte
Ferro, Gabriele.
[United States] : Fonit Cetra WMI : Made available through hoopla, 1982.
Call Number: STREAMING

Così fan tutte
Rossi, Mario.
[United States] : Fonit Cetra WMI : Made available through hoopla, 1951.
Call Number: STREAMING

Così fan tutte
Corbelli, Alessandro.
[United States] : Decca : Made available through hoopla, 2012.
Call Number: STREAMING

Mozart: *Così fan tutte*
London Symphony Orchestra.
[United States] : Universal Classics & Jazz : Made available through hoopla, 2006.
Call Number: STREAMING

Rossini: *La cenerentola*
Bartoli, Cecilia.
[United States] : Decca : Made available through hoopla, 1993.
Call Number: STREAMING

MANITOBA OPERA

BOOK

Mozart in Vienna: 1781-1791
by Volkmar Braunbehrens

Famous Mozart Operas
by Spike Hughes

Amadeus: a Mozart Mosaic
by Herbert Kupferberg

Mozart On The Stage
by Christopher Benn

Three Mozart Libretti
Translated by Robert Pack
and Majorie Lelash

Daily Life in the Vienna of
Mozart and Schubert
by Marcel Brion

Mozart
by Marcia Davenport

Lorenzo Da Ponte
by Sheila Hodges

DVD

Così fan tutte
The Monteverdi Choir and
The English Baroque Soloists
John Eliot Gardiner
Paris, 1992
2 discs

Mozart on Tour: Vienna &
Prague
PBS, hosted by André Previn
1991

If you need recommendations for additional resources, please contact:
Scott Miller, Education & Community Engagement Coordinator - smiller@mbopera.ca

STUDENT NIGHT

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Tickets must be ordered by the educational institutions.

Individual tickets

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Students pose for a fun photo at Student Night at the Opera for *La Cenerentola* (2022)

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Recommended for grades K-6



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Bizet

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Mozart

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Aida

Verdi

The grandest of grand operas, *Aida* is an epic love story about an Ethiopian princess who longs to be with Radames, leader of the Egyptian army that conquered her homeland.

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Puccini

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