

University of Washington
THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC OPERA THEATER

presents

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1997
3-16



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COSI FAN TUTTE

W. A. MOZART (1756-1791)

A Philadelphia Experiment

DAT #13,083-13,084

CASS #13,085-13,086

(NB - March 18 on DAT only,
#13,087-13,088)

8:00 PM, March 15 and 18, 1997

3:00 PM, March 16, 1997

The Studio Theater

The Philadelphia Characters / The Da Ponte counterparts

Mark Calvert..... *Philipe Freneau / Fernando*
 Glenn Guhr..... *David Humphreys / Guglielmo*
 Jeffrey Caldwell..... *Benjamin Franklin / Don Alfonso*
 Jennifer Trimboli..... *Abigail Adams / Fiordiligi*
 Marci Morrell..... *Susannah Rowson / Dorabella*
 Amy Cheifetz..... *Eliza Smith / Despina*
 Servants:..... Joachim Schneider, Adam Gossett
 Offstage Chorus:..... Joachim Schneider, Adam Gossett,
 Jesse Aasheim, Camille Couture,
 Amy Bils, April Fissel

Setting: Philadelphia, 1785

DAT 13,083 **ACT I** (1 HR 18 MIN)
 CASS 13,085

Scene 1: In the coffee house.
 The men are playing checkers
 Scene 2: In the ladies' garden
 Scene 3: In the ladies' sitting room
 Scene 4: In the ladies' garden

DAT 13,084 **ACT II** (later that day) (1 HR 18 MIN)
 CASS 13,086

Scene 1: In the ladies' rooms
 Scene 2: In the garden
 Scene 3: In Abigail's boudoir
 Scene 4: In the garden

COSI FAN TUTTE, A PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT

Mozart and Da Ponte's opera *Cosi fan tutte* (1790), has been set in every locale imaginable, possibly because its ambiguous setting of Naples plays little part in the plot. It has been suggested that sunny Naples gives the opera its playful joy, while at the same time, being in the shadow of Mt. Vesuvius lends a sense of danger.

For our purposes, since *Cosi* has been called the ideal opera of the Enlightenment with its symmetrical distribution of vocal parts and scenes, we have set our *Cosi* in the city that Voltaire called "the ideal city of the Enlightenment:" Philadelphia. Residing in that city was the man who embodied those principles: Benjamin Franklin. This well-known philosopher, statesman and inventor not only believed in the principles of reason applied to human behavior, he enjoyed great popularity through his good-natured guides of behavior in the form of aphorisms. Don Alfonso in *Cosi fan tutte* also cites proverbs in his attempts to teach the young couples. While the crusty, cynical bachelor Don Alfonso is transposed to the good-natured Franklin, the other Mozart/Da Ponte characters have also been transposed to historical figures of 1785 Philadelphia, although not as well known to the audience as Franklin. In the "Philadelphia *Cosi*", Fiordiligi becomes Abigail Adams, actually the daughter of the famous first lady. The young Abigail was a serious young woman, longing for her own independence while fighting the wills of her strong parents. Dorabella is Susannah Rowson, an actress who was later a novelist. The tenor Ferrando is transposed to Philipe Freneau, a published poet who has returned from the war, and the baritone Guglielmo is now David Humphreys, a career soldier opportunistic in his relationships to great men of the time, including George Washington. The fictional Elisa was an indentured servant, to be absorbed by the American middle class in a few years. All of the *Cosi* characters have been transposed for two reasons: First of all, to be consistent with the presence of the American Ben Franklin; the other reason is that precious little is known of the Mozart/Da Ponte characters, including their stations in life, family background, and even their last names. The history of the real figures helps our singers find reasons for actions, and may also lend a sense of reality to contrived opera buffa. This reality is in the way the "poison" is drawn from the young men, the way the men catch up to their ship, and the wager that Franklin has to win to maintain his reputation of being able to solve a problem of any kind with a pragmatic solution. In reality, however, his own history of success of the personal nature with his wife and son was not without its failures, for his wife rarely appeared at his side in public, and Franklin and his son were publicly estranged.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Mark Ross Clark Producer / Director
Robert Huw Morgan Music director / Conductor
Jeffrey Hanlon Rehearsal Pianist
Lisa Bergman Faculty Coach
Amy Bils and April Fissell Stage Managers
Greta Birkby Production Coordinator
Jason Meininger Lighting Designer
Derek Baylor Technical Director
Leanne Hintenberger Costume Coordinator
Ann Marie Clayton Make-up Consultant
Camille Couture Chorus Master

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Robin McCabe, Director, School of Music
School of Music Staff

School of Music Vocal Faculty:
Emilie Berendsen, Julian Patrick, Carmen Pelton

THANKS TO

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