

2010-2011
Issue 4, March/April 2011
IN THIS ISSUE

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



Music Composed
by
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

New libretto
by
Dimitri Costas

based on the original libretto
by Lorenzo Da Ponte, 1790

This production is proudly
sponsored by:



ASSURANT
Health



UNITED PERFORMING ARTS FUND



WISCONSIN arts BOARD
Creativity, Culture, Community, Commerce.

AUDIENCE GUIDE

Research/Writing by Justine Leonard
for ENLIGHTEN,
Skylight Opera Theatre's
Education Program

Edited by Ray Jivoff
414-299-4965
rayj@skylightopera.com
www.skylightopera.com

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is probably the greatest genius in western musical history. He excelled in every genre in which he worked, composing over 600 works including 22 operas and over 40 symphonies. He was born in 1756 in Salzburg, Austria, the last of seven children born to Leopold Mozart and his wife, Anna Maria, and one of only two to survive infancy. His father, a talented violinist and author of a successful book on violin technique, played in the court orchestra of the Archbishop of Salzburg.

Mozart's relationship with his father was central to his life. Leopold Mozart has been vilified as the archetypal domineering father dragging his prodigiously talented son around the courts of Europe at an early age and interfering in his personal life. But in fact, there is no evidence to suggest that Leopold was motivated by anything other than love and concern for his son's well-being and success. He was one of the few people who recognized his son's unique gift, and he took every step to prevent it from being squandered.

At the age of four, Wolfgang began to study keyboard and composition with his father. Wolfgang's elder sister, Maria Anna (Nannerl), was also a talented pianist. Leopold saw it as his duty to exhibit his exceptional children to the world. When they were six and eleven respectively, he took them to perform before the Elector of Bavaria at Munich, and the Empress Maria Theresa in Vienna.

From 1763 to 1766, the Mozart children were the darlings of audiences in Germany, the French court of Versailles and in London, where Mozart wrote his first symphonies. In 1768 he composed his first opera, LA FINTA SEMPLICE (THE PRETEND SIMPLETON). From 1769 to 1772, he toured Italy where he performed many concerts, received a papal audience, composed three operas and wrote eight symphonies.

The trouble with child prodigies is that they grow up and at the age of nine fickle audiences no longer found Mozart a charming novelty. As his fame

dwindled, he worked for token salaries composing a large number of secular and sacred works. In 1779, he returned to Salzburg where he was given the position of court organist and composer of church music, including the famous CORONATION MASS.

In the summer of 1780, he was commissioned to write a new opera for Munich, on the subject of Idomeneus, king of Crete. IDOMENEO is Mozart's first great opera, the first in which he demonstrated his extraordinary talent for bringing characters to life, allowing them to express real human emotions through the medium of music.

Back in Vienna in 1781, he composed a group of three new piano concertos to play at his own subscription concerts, as well as three magnificent wind serenades and a new opera, DIE ENTFUHRUNG AUS DEM SERAIL (THE ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO), with a German text and spoken dialogue (a device known as Singspiel). Its success was marred only by the laconic remark of the emperor that it seemed to have "too many notes".

In 1782, against his father's wishes, he married Constanza Weber, the younger sister of his first love, Aloysia, who had turned him down. The Mozarts had six children, two of whom survived.





Constanza (Weber) Mozart

For several years Mozart's new career proved successful. He had a busy teaching and concert schedule for which he turned out a string of piano concertos, raising the genre to new heights of virtuosity, passion and expression. Among these are the CONCERTO IN D MINOR (K466), a highly emotional work in the Sturm and Drang (storm and stress) style; and its companion the CONCERTO IN C MAJOR (K467), whose exquisite slow movement was featured in the 1967 film ELVIRA MADIGAN.

Mozart's first love, however, was opera, the genre which could make or break a composer, and in 1785 he began work on a daring new opera. It was based on Pierre Beaumarchais' notorious French play, THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO, which had been produced the previous year. The attack on aristocratic morals, disguised as a comedy, had already been

banned in Vienna. Mozart's collaborator was the Italian adventurer, ex-priest and poet Lorenzo Da Ponte, with whom he also worked on two later operas, DON GIOVANNI and COSI FAN TUTTE.

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO is a masterpiece of characterization, sharp wit and emotional depth. But Vienna failed to appreciate it. By this time, Mozart's arrogance had made him many enemies, including the powerful court composer Antonio Salieri. Salieri and his friends were intensely jealous of Mozart's abundant talent and did all they could to sabotage the production. Salieri may not literally have poisoned Mozart, as some later claimed, but he certainly stifled his rival's career. However, audiences in Prague, where FIGARO was produced in 1787, took the opera to their hearts and immediately commissioned a new opera, DON GIOVANNI.

The final years of Mozart's brief life were a dismal catalogue of financial worry, constant moves to cheaper apartments and failing health. He finally achieved his desire of a court appointment, but only as a chamber composer, writing dance music for court balls for a meager salary.

In the summer of 1788, Mozart wrote his last three symphonies, including the JUPITER (No. 41), in the space of a few weeks; it is not known if he ever heard them performed. A third opera written with Da Ponte, COSI FAN TUTTE (literally, "so do all women"), was premiered in the autumn of 1789.

By the end of 1790 Mozart was deeply depressed. Nonetheless, he composed THE MAGIC FLUTE in 1791. On the surface, the opera appears to be an amusing pantomime with glorious music attached. But closer inspection reveals that the piece is infused with Masonic symbolism, including thinly disguised versions of secret Masonic rites and initiation ceremonies. Mozart, himself a Mason, was taking an enormous risk in exposing these secrets.

While working on the THE MAGIC FLUTE, he received two more commissions, one for an opera seria, LA CLEMENZA DI TITO (THE CLEMENCY OF TITUS) which was produced in Prague in 1791 and the other for a requiem Mass. The latter was commissioned, via a mysterious emissary dressed in grey, for a Viennese nobleman whose young wife had died.

Mozart's own health was failing by this time, and as he worked on the REQUIEM, he became obsessed by the idea that he was being poisoned. In fact, he had advanced kidney disease. He was only 35 when he died in his wife's arms on December 5, 1791. The unfinished work was completed after his death by Franz Sussmayr, one of his pupils.

He was given the cheapest possible funeral in an unmarked grave. Much has been made of this, but at that time such burials were legally required for all Viennese except those of noble or aristocratic birth.

According to the Arizona Opera website his contemporaries found the restless ambivalence and complicated emotional content of his music difficult to understand. Accustomed to the light, superficial style of rococo music, his aristocratic audiences could not accept the music's complexity and depth. Yet, with Josef Haydn, Mozart perfected the grand forms of symphony, opera, string quartet and concerto that marked the classical period in music. In his operas, Mozart's uncanny psychological insight is unique in musical history. His music influenced the work of Haydn and the next generation of composers, most notably Beethoven. The brilliance of his work continued until the end, although darker themes of poignancy and isolation grew more marked in his last years. His music continues to fascinate musicians and music lovers.



Leopold, Wolfgang and Nannerl Mozart, 1763.



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Discovering Lorenzo Da Ponte



Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749-1838)

When Dimitri Toscas accepted the Skylight's commission to update COSI FAN TUTTE one challenge was to adapt the words of Lorenzo Da Ponte, one of opera's most formidable librettists.

In his remarkable lifetime, Da Ponte was a Jew and a Catholic, a priest and a passionate lover of many women. He was a friend of Casanova, a faithful husband and devoted father, an Italian and later an American. And that was just his personal life!

Lorenzo Da Ponte was born Emanuele Conegliano in 1749 to Jewish parents in the ghetto of Ceneda, a Venetian suburb. His mother died when he was 5 and the family's children ran wild; by the age of 11 he could barely read or write. When he was 14, his father fell in love with a Roman Catholic girl, and in order to marry her, he and his family had to convert to Catholicism. Lorenzo was then able to get an education by joining a seminary and becoming a priest. The young Lorenzo, who viewed his orders as a means to an end, had his share of love affairs, producing several illegitimate children.

Da Ponte wrote some poems that questioned the value of an organized society which were denounced in the Venetian Senate. As a result, he was dismissed from his teaching position and banished from Venice for fifteen years. He ended up in Vienna, at that time the cultural capital of the world, with an introduction

to Antonio Salieri, director of the Italian Opera, Court composer and Mozart's rival. Da Ponte was soon appointed to the post of Poet to the Italian Theatre where he was to write new libretti and adapt those of others. His famous collaboration with Mozart began with THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO followed by DON GIOVANNI and COSI FAN TUTTE.

Of the three, COSI is the only "original" libretto. DON GIOVANNI is based on a play by Tirso de Molina published in Spain around 1630. MARRIAGE OF FIGARO is based on a play by French playwright Beaumarchais, written in 1784.

For COSI FAN TUTTE, Da Ponte blended two popular literary themes: the myth of Cephalus and the classic story of the wager. Roman poet Ovid tells the tale of Cephalus, who was suspicious of his wife's fidelity. He creates an elaborate ruse in which he leaves home and returns disguised as a romantic stranger who woos his own wife. The wager motif, which is seen in tales from Cervantes to Shakespeare, involves a man forced to defend the honor of his lover by participating in a wager.

After reaching the heights of artistic success and the depths of financial ruin in some of Europe's greatest cities, Da Ponte and his family immigrated to New York City in 1805. Eventually, he founded the Manhattan Academy for Young Gentlemen, where boys learned Italian, French, Latin, writing, ciphering and geography.

Later Da Ponte moved to Pennsylvania where he worked as a grocer, distiller, milliner and pharmacist. He was also a respected teacher who took in boarders and introduced them to the joy of Italian cooking. At age 76, he became the first professor of Italian at Columbia University and helped establish New York City's first opera house.

This amazing man lived through the American Revolutionary War, the French Revolution and the conquest and defeat of Napoleon. He had lived in the glittering last years of the Venetian Republic, the brilliance of Vienna under Joseph II, the London of George III and was forced to leave them all, penniless and under a cloud. In each case, his drive enabled him to build a new life.

Never shy about his abilities, Da Ponte took full credit for Mozart's success. In his memoirs he wrote, "How wonderful is it that the three operas of Mozart and Da Ponte are more highly esteemed and valued in every theatre in Europe: we are the only ones that can cry out in triumph, we are eternal."

When Da Ponte died in 1838 in New York, an enormous funeral ceremony was held in old St. Patrick's Cathedral on Mulberry Street.

Livingston, Arthur, ed. Memoirs of Lorenzo Da Ponte. Orion Press, New York, 1959.
Fitzlyon, April: The Libertine Librettist. London, John Calder, 1955.
Hodges, Sheila: Lorenzo Da Ponte: The Life and Times of Mozart's Librettist, Granada, 1985.
Adapted and edited from the San Diego Operaepaedia



COSI FAN TUTTE Synopsis



Act 1
Chicago, 1959
Spring

Two sisters, FLORA and DORA, dress for work. Still living in their childhood bedroom, they seem to have the whole world before them. At the same time, their boyfriends, ELMER and RANDALL, ride the elevated train heading downtown. They chat about how in love they are with their ladies until they are interrupted by their boss, AL FONZARELLO, who can't take any more of their love sick blather. Fonzarello, believing there is no such thing as true love, makes a bet with the men that their girlfriends don't love them as much as they think they do. The men take the bet, promising to do whatever he asks them to do.

Later in the hall outside the men's office, we find Flora and Dora (who work for the same company) gazing lovingly through the hall window, enjoying the view of their handsome boyfriends as they work. But Fonzarello's plan is about to make things go awry. He announces that the men have been transferred to New York and must leave immediately. The women sadly agree that their men have to accept this promotion. The couples say a sad goodbye, promising to keep in touch through inter-office mail. After the men leave, the girls pray for their safe return. Fonzarello joins them in mock sadness and concern.

In the office breakroom, the girls are devastated. MISS DESI, the head of the secretarial pool, urges the girls to get back to work. Her dislike of the girls is obvious, as she finds them too "Pollyanna" for her taste. Dora is beyond consolation wailing, "Why did I wait for him? Now I'll die a virgin!" Miss Desi can't believe her ears. As a single mom whose man left her for his career, she has become jaded and believes the girls are silly to expect true love.

Desi, who now wants to teach the girls a lesson, joins Fonzarello in his silly bet. They tell the girls that Desi has two friends that they should meet who will cheer them up. Elmer and Randall return disguised as beatniks. They try their best to be cool but Flora and Dora are on to them. "Do they think we don't recognize them? What are they up to?" The

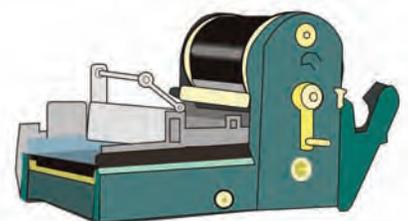
girls play hard-to-get, thinking this is some romantic game. They say they would never cheat on their boyfriends and send the beatniks away.

The men think they've won the bet, but Fonzarello won't give up that easily. He has 24 hours to prove his point and they made a deal to play along, "Don't count your chickens before they hatch!" Fonzarello makes the guys hide in the storage closet until he comes up with the second part of his plan.

While in the closet, Randall reminds himself of all the things he loves about his girlfriend Dora. The girls find him there and eavesdrop. They are moved by his expression of love.

It's lunchtime and the sisters steal away to their secret spot on the roof and try to figure out what is going on. But the men rush to the roof and threaten to kill themselves by drinking poison, actually mimeograph ink. The guys pretend to be dying. Desi is now in on the act and enters as a doctor and tries to save the guys' lives. In a ridiculous turn, the girls decide to teach their men a lesson and pretend to be attracted to the other sister's man. The men suddenly feel insecure, wondering, "Could my girlfriend be attracted to my best friend?" Everything is turned upside down and the girls need a break to figure things out. They'll soon find that they're in this joke too deeply to turn back.

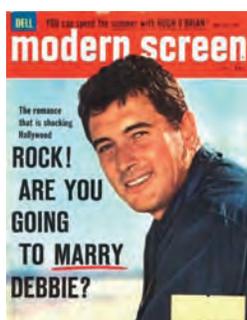
INTERMISSION



The mimeograph machine, patented in 1887, is a low-cost printing press that works by forcing ink through a stencil onto paper. Until the 1960s, "mimeos" were used in offices and schools.



Costume Design by Carol Blanchard



COSI FAN TUTTE Synopsis Act 2

In a swanky supper club, working at her night job as a chanteuse, Miss Desi explains the Woman's Guide to Love.

Back in the sisters' bedroom, the girls sadly finish embroidering their boyfriends' names on their "honeymoon panties." They try to figure out why their perfect boyfriends would do something so stupid! Then they come up with a plan to really teach them a lesson. They decide to pretend that they've fallen in love with these beatniks and the panties are just the thing they need to pull off this joke. Just then the guys call. They are downstairs on the corner and want to take the girls out on the town. The sisters agree.

In a hep, smoky nightclub, the "wrong" couples are on a first date. Flora and Randall decide to go for a walk and leave Dora to act on the secret plans. In a hot and heavy flirtation, Dora convinces Elmer that she doesn't love Randall anymore. To prove it, she slips off her embroidered "Randall" panties and gives them to Elmer as a gift, a sign of her commitment to her new lover. Elmer is shocked.

Out on the Michigan Avenue Bridge, Flora is not as successful. She can't bring herself to lie about leaving Elmer. She recites e.e. cummings poetry to the moon and wishes things were back the way they used to be. Randall is thrilled! He thinks they've won the bet for sure.

The next morning the men are on the train headed to the office, still in disguise. They share the stories of their very different dates. Randall is proud to say they won the bet but Elmer has bad news. Dora seems to have fallen in love with him. Randall doesn't believe it until Elmer reveals the panties with Randall's name embroidered on them. The men are crushed.

Elmer recounts a Man's Guide to Love, singing that even though they don't show it, men have feelings, too.

Back in the office, the men blame Fonzarelo. This bet has gone too far. In the Secretarial Pool, the girls now manipulate Miss Desi into believing that they want to marry their new lovers immediately. Desi believes their lie and reports to the men. The sisters giggle at how easy it is to pull off this joke.

To really drive the point home, the sisters, knowing the men are hiding in the closet, express their "true love" for their new boyfriends and their excitement at getting married. Their rotten boyfriends can hear every word.

Later in the closet, Fonzarelo finds the men in an emotional heap. He tells them not to beat themselves up, "the girls can't help it, it's human nature, women are just like men, we're all the same."

On the roof, it's time for the final blow: the mock wedding. Desi is disguised as

an Orthodox Priest and the "wedding" goes off without a hitch. The women sign the marriage certificate. The men are crushed. The sisters can't contain themselves any longer and erupt with laughter. They've turned the joke against their men to teach them that true love isn't to be tested! What were they trying to prove? Their true feelings are revealed, apologies all around and the lesson is learned by everyone:

"True love is where you work to find it. When you find it... you work to keep it!"

Flora and Dora propose to their real boyfriends. The couples are happily reunited and it seems their topsy-turvy adventures may have kicked off the sexual revolution. And we have a sweet "happily ever after."

By Dimitri Toscas



COSI FAN TUTTI
SKYLIGHT OPERA THEATRE
PAINT INFORMATION



Set design by Ken Goldstein

Costume Design by Carol Blanchard

The Making of a New COSI FAN TUTTE

A highlight of the Skylight's 2007-2008 season was the exciting re-invention of LA TRAVIATA by Dimitri Toscas. This year we've put a fresh face on another classic, Mozart's COSI FAN TUTTE. "Of all the Mozart operas, COSI really lends itself to a re-telling," said Artistic Director Bill Theisen. "We wanted to give it a brand new take to make it more accessible to today's audiences. No one can do that better than Dimitri Toscas. He is wildly creative and thinks in incredibly imaginative ways, but his first focus is always on telling the story."

At first, Toscas wasn't sure he wanted to do it. "It's very exciting to have the opportunity to do an adaptation of a classic like LA TRAVIATA once in your life and to be asked to work on another masterpiece is really thrilling. But I had some reservations about the opera itself. It didn't speak to me as being contemporary. There were so many things about the story that just aren't acceptable any more. For one, I didn't like that the women are duped."

Toscas also had a problem with the men testing the faithfulness of their fiancées with disappointing results and then concluding that's what all women do. "I can appreciate the opera as a period piece but when we've been through wars, disasters, financial crises, women's lib and the sexual revolution, a contemporary update just didn't feel right. It needed to be reset in a more innocent period."

Toscas was drawn to the late 1950s, a time when the world was still very conservative and puritanical. "It wasn't an era of questioning. People lived very confined lives in little boxes and no one stepped out of line. It was before the sexual revolution and the whole country was waiting to let loose. There was a pocket of young adults that was a step ahead of the time, caught between two worlds." Toscas wanted the women in the play to be those people and to be the first to take the steps between the worlds. "I wanted them to be more liberated. I wanted them to be the first to say out loud, "Why did I wait for a guy to ask me to marry him when I could have asked him first?"

With that premise, the story came alive for Toscas. But he still felt something more was needed. He and Theisen

discussed making a change in the story line that would let the women in on the joke and then control the joke, trying to teach the men a lesson. Theisen was already thinking in that direction and he gave Toscas the go ahead. "For me, that twist suddenly empowered the women. They were a little more sexually free. Now it seemed funny, like a romantic comedy. I had stayed true to the story, just re-interpreted," said Toscas.

As the production evolved, Toscas relied on the show's designers to help tell the story. Ken Goldstein, the set designer, said he was moved by Toscas' new libretto because the emotion and comedy of the original remain but the language is contemporary and accessible. "What's really great about the Skylight is that you have a chance to work and collaborate with the director and the other designers to develop a cohesive vision for the show."

Toscas was clear that although he had set the opera in 1959, he didn't want it to be a period study." He was looking for an interpretation of the late '50s. He wanted it to feel like a modern, contemporary theater piece.

Goldstein and the other designers recognized immediately that the women drive

the events of the story. "It struck us that the men could fit in a lot of places and time periods, while the women have character depth, sophistication and liberation about them. It was important for all of us to empower them," said Goldstein. "Once we got a sense of the story Dimitri wanted to tell, it was relatively easy to define the world of the play and put together the details that reflected the location and spaces we should explore."

Toscas had Chicago in mind for the location. "Chicago was the most progressive place to be at the end of the 50s and into the 60s. It was ahead of the time. Hugh Hefner, Playboy Magazine and the Playboy Club were the hub of a new culture. There was that short time when everyone from everywhere wanted to come to Chicago to go to the clubs, hang out with the musicians. It was all about Chicago."

Goldstein agreed. "As we got into the action and time period of the opera, it was very urban and Chicago made sense, the feel of it, the sensibility, seemed to capture the right time. When we looked at images, we were really able to find our visual vocabulary- the L, the Michigan Avenue Bridge, very evocative details that helped tell the story."



Scenic model by Ken Goldstein

The first thing the audience sees is the main backdrop, which is literally the design of the Playboy office ceiling. "The geometric squares spoke to me of the 50s and those boxes that people were in," explained Toscas. "The show is very symmetrical at the beginning and then slowly, as the women become more liberated it becomes asymmetrical."

Toscas, Goldstein and lighting designer Annmarie Duggan decided that the visuals would look like lifestyle pictorials from a magazine. "The matching color tones were planned to suggest the period, like a photo-spread but relatively lacking in color. That way, the people become important and the colors in the costumes hold some weight," explained Goldstein.

Most of the show takes place in offices where all the characters work. The furniture, colors and lighting are replications of the offices of the time.

Goldstein has worked with Duggan on a number of productions at the Skylight. "Annmarie is so good at visually expanding and compressing space. It's exciting to see the little spaces feel really little and big spaces really big."

Costume Designer Carol Blanchard, who worked with Toscas on LA TRAVIATA, was familiar with his hands-on approach to his productions. "I wanted Carol to push the styles into the 60s. I wanted these characters to be ahead of the curve and in that way the costumes would become part of the story telling." Blanchard said Toscas was also very specific about the sisters, Flora and Dora. "He wanted them to be two very different sisters with different ideas of the world and how they fit into it, yet linking them. The costumes are a very fine mix of what you would find in 1959 but edging into the 1960s with patterns and colors like the shades of pink and salmon, lavender, teal, turquoise and chartreuse that were becoming popular then."

She dressed Dora, the tomboy, in bold geometrics-stripes, polka dots and circles with very little detail because her style is more tailored. Flora, the girlie sister, appears in floral patterns with 3-dimensional trim and laces that give her a detailed and feminine look. The men are very much in the era. Early in the show they appear in three-piece suits,

white shirts, fedora hats, ultra-conservative looking. Later, in disguise, they join the "beat" generation and become very "unconservative" in skinny suits, berets, sun glasses, soul patches, even Huarache sandals.

Toscas says COSI FAN TUTTE was much more challenging to adapt than LA TRAVIATA, which underneath was a simple story of a person who wants to be loved and accepted for who she is. "I was pretty much able to follow that story beat by beat. But COSI is longer and wordier with aria after aria and duet after duet. So I had to take more liberties in order to stick to the original libretto and keep as much of the music as possible." For instance, he edited Desi's aria in the second act, the most famous aria in the show, breaking it into three parts so Desi becomes like a counterpoint, a narrator setting up the act.

Toscas said because he approached the opera like a play, he needed them to be actors who could tell the story. "This cast is fantastic -- experienced and fun and willing to do things on the stage that makes this feel like a play that just happens to be sung."

Skylight audiences are in for some rollicking, rib-tickling fun in Dimitri Toscas' adaptation. "Very exciting stuff," said Toscas. We think you'll agree.



Costume Design by Carol Blanchard

Curtain Up! Light The Lights!

Here's an abbreviated timeline documenting the development process of the Skylight's new COSI FAN TUTTE in which the Skylight's outstanding creative staff worked with designers from New York and Chicago. Dimitri Toscas is from California.

2009

December-First discussions between Toscas and Skylight Artistic Director Bill Theisen on possible COSI adaptation.

2010

January-Toscas receives commission to adapt COSI.

February 18-Toscas begins research and development. Casting by Theisen begins.

March 1-Toscas begins editing music.

March 22-Toscas begins writing.

April 27-First draft complete. Following week spent rewriting for continuity, comedy and polishing.

May 1-Final draft approval with notes from Skylight received end of week.

June 25-Final score submitted.

July 8-First production meeting in Milwaukee with Toscas and set, lights and costume designers. Design discussions continue via phone and internet.

October 4-Final designs submitted to Skylight production department.

December- Initial construction in all shops begins during run of HMS PINAFORE.

2011

January 25-Conference call production meeting between Toscas and the whole production team.

February 1-Construction shifts into high gear after JACQUES BREL opens.

February 21-First rehearsal.

March 6- March 18-All designers in residence at the Skylight, working with production staff in shops during intensive build and finish process.

March 6- Designer Run Through: staff, crew and designers see a run through in the rehearsal hall.

March 9- Sitzprobe, the first rehearsal with cast and orchestra in the theatre.

March 12 & 13- Technical rehearsals: lights, sound, set changes and finally costumes are added.

March 13-March 16- Dress rehearsals.

March 18-OPENING NIGHT.

The 1950s

Director Dimitri Toscas was looking for a "more innocent period," as the setting for his adaptation of COSI FAN TUTTE. He chose the 1950s because he felt it was a more conservative and puritanical time. But it was also a very volatile time, a mix of conformity and innovation.

These were the years following World War II when America was eager for peace and prosperity, but it seemed Communism was out to conquer the world. "The Cold War," the struggle between the US and the Soviet Union for control of Eastern Europe dominated international relations. In 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea and President Truman ordered American GIs to the battlefield.

Beatniks

Back home, Americans were drifting into complacency and the mood of conformity was reflected in works like Ayn Rand's ATLAS SHRUGGED and Sloan Wilson's THE MAN IN THE GRAY FLANNEL SUIT. By 1948, a new group of authors, the "Beat Generation," was emerging. It was named by writer Jack Kerouac, the acknowledged leader of the movement. Among the most influential "Beat" writings were Kerouac's ON THE ROAD, Allen Ginsberg's poem HOWL and William Burroughs' NAKED LUNCH.

Some of the major effects of the Beat Generation were the sexual "revolution," (gay liberation, women's liberation), a demystification of drugs, the evolution of rhythm and blues into rock and roll and opposition to the military-industrial complex.

San Francisco newspaper columnist Herb Caen coined the name "Beatnik" and soon the media depicted them as unwashed and lazy instead of Kerouac's ideal of "a swinging group of new Americans intent on joy."



Women's Liberation

In the fifties and early sixties, gender roles were still strongly held-girls played with dolls and grew up to be housewives or teachers while boys played with guns and grew up to be whatever they wanted to be. The women's movement gained momentum when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was amended to include gender. Led by Betty Friedan, author of THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE, the National Organization of Women was founded in 1966 and fought for the equal treatment of women.



This adaptation of COSI is reminiscent of a classic Doris Day romantic comedy. Day is remembered for her portrayals of the goody-goody, Pollyanna, girl next door. Looking back, these roles had deeper layers. While her characters may have been 'biding time' until they married the man of their dreams, they also represented women living full lives, whether or not "he" came along. How many women in the real world of this period could say that?

Day played mothers and career women in fields such as advertising, interior design, union organization and construction. These roles reflect women who "had it all" decades before the phrase was even used. Without a personality like Doris Day, who played these roles with such grace, wit and gumption, perhaps society would not have been as quick to accept the possibility of women in these positions. Times changed, but Day's films did not. Critics dubbed her, "the world's oldest virgin," a tag the women in Toscas' COSI are trying hard to avoid.

As the 60's began, there was a new spirit of optimism in the country. America had elected John F. Kennedy, a young, charismatic president, and in the first exciting days of the 1960s, the apathy and conformity of the prior decade

began to fade. There was also tension and stress as the country faced the Cuban Missile Crisis, the escalating Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement and threats from the Communist world.

The whole world was shattered on November 22, 1963 when President Kennedy was assassinated. Vice President Lyndon Johnson took the Presidential oath of office and assured the nation that the promise of the Kennedy years were not really dead. But, a feeling of unrest prevailed throughout the country. Bob Dylan's song *The Times They Are a-Changin'* seemed to capture the spirit of social and political upheaval that characterized the 1960s. A new era had begun and we never looked back.

A Few 50s and 60s Facts

- 1950**
Xerox photocopiers produced.
- 1952**
Dwight D. Eisenhower elected US President. He served two terms.
- Dow Chemical creates Saran Wrap.
- 1953**
DNA Discovered.
- First issue of *Playboy Magazine*, features Marilyn Monroe on the cover.
- 1954**
Segregation ruled illegal in US.
- 1955**
Disneyland opens.
- 1957**
Soviet satellite Sputnik launches the Space Age.
- 1959**
Pantyhose introduced.
- Castro becomes dictator of Cuba.
- The microchip is invented.
- 1960**
First televised Presidential debates.
- John F. Kennedy elected President.
- Lasers invented.
- 1961**
Berlin Wall built.
- 1963**
JFK Assassinated.

