



Cosi Fan Tutte

Banff Centre production shows what opera should be

By Niall O'Rourke

Banff is well known for its majestic beauty, the healing power of the area, the awe inspiring scenery. Most visitors have come to expect this from the National Park, but through Saturday they can also expect it from the Banff Centre's production of Mozart's opera *Cosi Fan Tutte*.

The director of the summer program for young professionals, and the director of this show has once again given music lovers something to cheer about.

All the elements of a first class opera experience are in place. Wonderful singing from this young international cast highlighted by Texan Wright Moore and Vancouverite Anita Krause. All of these "unknowns," sing with confidence, appearing at ease with their vocal apparatus, and the characters they portray. Never have the usu-

ally ponderous recitative sections sounded so natural, so much like conversation.

Period costume dramas and comedies often seem stiff and farcical, usually for all the wrong reasons. The great thing about this *Cosi Fan Tutte* is that it has personality. All of the characters come to life, and the comedy of the libretto is never lost.

The cast is comfortable with the elegant costumes created by Susan Benson, and manages to transcend musical and language barriers to connect with the audience.

Elizabeth Pomes is perfectly comical and engaging as Despina, almost stealing the show. But the audience is also treated to powerful performances by the two lead women, Krause, and Barbara Yeichner, who not only sing beautifully, but show us an evolution of their characters through the course of twists and turns in this opera.

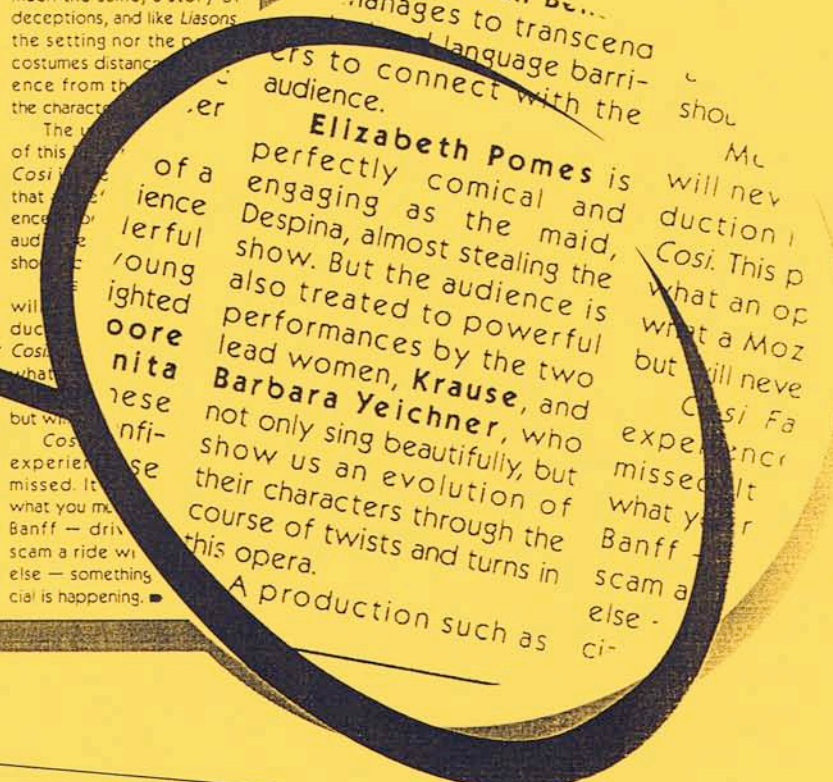
A production such as

this leaves one in mind of the film *Dangerous Liaisons*, and the impact and popularity that venture had. *Cosi* is much the same, a story of deceptions, and like *Liaisons* the setting nor the costumes distance the audience from the characters.

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THEATRE



Bach not alone in Baroque showcase

The Underground Tuesday, November 21, 1989, Page 9

by Ron Morgan

Did you know that the word 'Baroque' comes from a Portuguese word meaning 'irregularly shaped'?

MUSIC REVIEW

Singer sensitive in modern works

Performance

Elizabeth Pomes, soprano and Peter Tiefenbach, piano
Carleton University Alumni Theatre
Sunday only

By Richard Todd
Citizen correspondent

Elizabeth Pomes is a soprano with a rich voice that could, and probably does occasionally, work in the mezzo range. The fact that she is touring the country as winner of the 1993 Eckhardt-Gramatté Vocal Competition might suggest that she is a young, largely untried singer. In fact, she is a seasoned professional with experience in opera, concerts, recitals and radio.

Although her repertoire is by no means confined to new music, her present tour program is all from the 20th century. Sunday night's performance at Carleton University's Alumni Theatre showed her to be a persuasive advocate of a broad range of modern musical styles.

If she was to be faulted for anything, it was her diction. Although one could usually follow the words when she was singing in French, English song texts were all but incomprehensible.

She opened the program with George Crumb's *Apparition*, a gentle if unconventional setting of poetry by Walt Whitman. Pomes handled the melodic vocal line with sensitivity while pianist Peter Tiefenbach scraped and strummed the strings of his piano, and occasionally struck a few keys in a most musical manner.

Patrick Cardy's song cycle *Autumn* was the "imposed" piece in the 1993 competition, but it's doubtful that many of the entrants found it much of an imposition. If it was a little inconsequential, at least it was eminently singable music.

The one item on the program that was well known, selections from Joseph Canteloube's *Songs from the Auvergne*, was perhaps the least interesting as well. Pomes sang the songs with the necessary color and sexy demeanor, but they sounded a little out of place in a program of relatively challenging music.

Benjamin Britten's *Quatre chansons francaises* was written in 1928, when the composer was only 15. While the songs are highly eclectic, even derivative, and while they only hint at Britten's adult style, they still have a strong, if naive, sound of modernism about them.

Pomes was at her best in two unaccompanied items, a wordless aria

da gamba and the elegantly painted harpsichord.

The concert alternated vocal soloists Elizabeth Pomes and Peter Tiefenbach.

from R. Murray Schafer's *The Princess of the Stars* and Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III*. In both cases she succeeded brilliantly in creating self-sufficient worlds of artistic expression. The Schafer was the more satisfying of the two pieces, but the Berio had much to say as well, and said it with considerable wit.

The program ended with a delightful song cycle by accompanist Peter Tiefenbach entitled *Songs from my Cupboard*. Struck by the poetic force of the French versions of the label information on several products he keeps in his kitchen, Tiefenbach decided to set some of them to music in a variety of styles.

Among the products thus illuminated were Japanese seaweed, corn starch (Canada's national spice, according to the corn and steak spice).

It's hard to describe the depth of feeling with which Pomes sang the lines of the corn starch song that meant "Helps to absorb perspiration and prevent unpleasant odors in shoes," or the serene bliss with which she sang of "soothing relief from sunburn and minor skin irritation."

The cycle ended with a "cautionary lango" concerning the potential risks of using A.S.A. tablets.

cilitated a greater sense of communication between the performers.

Their enjoyment of Rameau's "Troisieme Concert" was a highlight. It contrasted the lovely, delicate "La Timide" movement with the foot-stomping "Air of the Bourbin en Rondeau."

Adding the finishing touches to this concert was soprano Elizabeth Pomes. Besides her sound technique, which facilitates a free, spinning effect that brings the lovely quality of her voice to the audience, the sense of importance that she brings to the event creates an excitement in the air. Her stance is confident and her sense of communication and sensitivity to the words is never lacking.

Although it is silly to think of a musician creating eye contact with the audience instead of his/her score, this "sense of event" can also be captured during applause, how one enters and exits the stage, and during those short pauses between movements.

Surely did an instrumentalist create before a piece was begun. It is at this point that the performer separates herself from the student and elevates the performance from just another, to a special event.

If you missed this Sunday concert, be sure not to miss The Toronto Consort performing "A Christmas Feast" of medieval and renaissance music on December 10.