

The New Zealand Herald

Theatre review: Cosi fan Tutte, Mercury Theatre

By [William Dart](#)

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As Peter Scholes took the Auckland Chamber Orchestra through the sparkling overture to Mozart's *Cosi fan Tutte* on Sunday night, one felt privileged to be experiencing this classic opera in the sympathetic setting of Mercury Theatre.

Inevitably, many in the capacity audience must have remembered those life-enhancing productions of Mercury Opera in the 1980s and 90s, in which Jonathan Hardy, then Raymond Hawthorne, kept the city's operatic heart beating.

Sadly this handsome and brave joint venture by Auckland Opera Studio and the ACO was fated to have just the one Auckland performance.

Although this was not a *Cosi* as Mozart envisaged it, the composer may have approved of the zesty dialogue that replaced the long Italian recitatives. It went down well; references to texted smiley faces and mustachioed machos brought in the laughs, as did the gas masks which came on and off in response to the "anthrax" threats.

Patrice Wilson's vision of *Cosi fan Tutte* was faithful to the spirit of the original, capitalising on youthful players more than happy to romp and frolic with seemingly inexhaustible energy.

Kawiti Waetford's Guglielmo was a strapping delight, with a talent for arresting arias, and Anna Pierard a delightfully ditzy Dorabella.

Joel Amosa's Don Alfonso was a master of cool and one could scarcely imagine a kookier maid than Barbara Graham's Despina.

Working around the minimal set of a building facade, Wilson drew poetry where least expected, hindered at times by the occasional awkward lighting.

Countering the adrenalin-charged antics, she had the singers sometimes freeze or work in slow motion, creating moods that veered from the sad to the sinister.

There was little to fault musically, apart from passing raggedness in frenetic ensembles. Madeleine Pierard took the great *Come scoglio* in her vocal stride and her duets with sister Anna bloomed in a way they never could in a concert hall.

Tom Atkins' *Un 'aura amoroso* was the first of a number of thrilling arias, revealing just why this tenor has scored competition successes over the Tasman.

This may have been the only Auckland performance of *Cosi fan Tutte* but, if you happen to be in Hastings next Wednesday, it is being restaged with the same cast and local orchestra. It's well worth the trip.

Opera review

What: *Cosi fan Tutte*

Where: Mercury Theatre



Madeleine Pierard and Anna Pierard as sisters Fiordiligi and Dorabella in the Auckland Opera Studio's performance of *Cosi fan Tutte*. Photo / Allan McGillivray

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