



College of Music
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Worthington Family Foundation Opera Theatre Season
MSU OPERA THEATRE



Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Libretto by Giuseppe Petrosellini

Melanie Helton, stage director
Octavio Más-Arocas, conductor

Wednesday, November 16, 7:00 p.m.
Thursday, November 17, 7:00 p.m.
Friday, November 18, 7:00 p.m.
Sunday, November 20, 2022, 3:00 p.m.

Generously sponsored by
Susan Davis

Fairchild Theatre, MSU Auditorium

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Mozart wrote *La Finta Giardiniera* for the Salvator Theatre in Munich in 1775 when he was only 18 years old. He later wrote a German singspiel of the piece using German dialogue instead of Italian recitatives. The Italian version was only rediscovered in 1970 but has received multiple performances since around the world. MSU Opera Theatre first presented the opera in 2011.

It is obvious that this is a very young work. Mozart had not yet fully formed his harmonic language and form structure. It often seems that there are two extra measures at the end of sections, as opposed to a series of eight counts. Also, instead of the standard A B A form of the baroque (meaning section A, section B, and then a repeat of Section A), there are often C and D sections put in the middle.

Italian recitative is worthy of much study. This is dialogue set to music in 4/4 form. However, the performance of the text is strictly driven by language stress as well as poetic form. The recitatives are in what is called *versi sciolti* (free verse) – a very strict poetic form in which each line is either 7 or 11 syllables. The arias and ensembles are written in the various poetic forms which have varying numbers of syllables per line – from 5 up to 16! These verse forms create a rhythm of their own within a very limited harmonic rhythm. In fact, research has proven that singers did not necessarily always sing the printed notes, but just improvised within the harmony.

We were very fortunate to have the Worthington Family Foundation-sponsored coach Rachelle Jonck with us for the first three weeks of the semester. Rachelle is an internationally recognized expert in Italian lyric singing, particularly of the baroque, classical and bel canto styles. We all learned so much about the style and necessity for attention to the text.

There has been some research disagreement as to how much singers of Mozart's day ornamented the tunes by adding notes and dissonances. Because we have examples of ornaments in Mozart's own hand, that research has leaned much more to the side of extensive ornamentation which continues on into the bel canto era of Donizetti, Bellini, and Rossini. We have had fun coming up with varying pitches and rhythms which suit the style. This charming tale of mistaken identity has stood the test of time and is a wonderful introduction to the wonders that will come from Mozart's pen.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

In order of appearance

	<u>November 16 & 18</u>	<u>November 17 & 20</u>
Sandrink, formerly known as Violante, Marchesina Onesti	Elia Meekhoff	Eliza Beutler
Podestà, the local Mayor, in love with Sandrina	Landon Black	Kevon Thompson
Serpetta, maid to Podestà	Anna Hallwood	Phoenix Miranda
Ramiro, who loves Arminda	Ruoxi Bian	Paula Duva-Rodriguez
Nardo, formerly known as Roberto, friend and servant of Sandrina, who loves Serpetta	Joey Cross	Brayden Hunter
Arminda, niece of Podestà, promised to the Count	Melanie Walker	Xiaobin Ma
Count Belfiore, former fiancé of Violante (Sandrina) betrothed to Arminda	Cole Harvey	Tianchi Zhang

The Staff of Podestà's Mansion: Jamie Eagle, Divira Pahwa, Lily Wressel, Emily Wyatt

Understudies:

Serpetta: Anna Jesko
Ramiro: Riley Piazzon
Arminda: Kennedy Robinson
Nardo: Colin DeWitt
Count: Josh Mostyn

There is an abridged performance for the understudies on Monday, November 21, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in Hollander Hall in the Music Building. The public is welcome to attend this free event. Thanks to D.M.A. student Paige Heidrich for coordinating and assistant directing this additional opportunity for our vocal arts students.

STAFF FOR MSU OPERA THEATRE

Music Director	Octavio Más-Arocas
Producer	Melanie Helton
Set Design	Ranae Selmayer*
Set Construction/Technical Director	D.J. Selmayer
Lighting Design	Brent Wrobel*
Costume Designer	Melanie Helton
Guest Coach	Rachelle Jonck/Derrick Goff*
Production Stage Manager	Peyton Weil
Assistant Stage Manager	Nic Bishop
Musical Preparation	Dr. Elden Little
Assistant Conductor	Asieh Mahyar
Rehearsal Accompanist	Mira Choi
Fairchild Theatre Operations Manager	Nick Raffaele
Recording Services	Jennifer Shangraw
Publicity, MSU College of Music	Michael Sundermann, Rick Seguin
Budget Officer	Andrea Worful

*Guest Artist

Grateful Acknowledgments

James Forger, Dean, College of Music

MSU Vocal Arts Area Faculty:

Jane Bunnell, Marc Embree, Richard Fracker (chair), Melanie Helton, Harlan Jennings, Elden Little, Anne Nispel, David Rayl, Jonathan Reed, Mark Rucker, Sadie Rucker, Sandra Snow
Deborah Moriarty, Chair, piano area; Zhihua Tang, collaborative piano

MSU Department of Theatre

Ann-Marie Lindley, Director of Development, College of Music

College of Music Staff: Lynne Funk, Katie Bethel, Shawn Mahorney, Amy Rivard, Chuck Roberts

SYNOPSIS

The opera takes place near a country mansion with magnificent gardens.

Act I

Sandrina has come to work as a gardener at the estate of Podestà, a country squire. In actuality, she is Violante, Marchesina Onesti. She was once engaged to Count Belfiore, who attacked her in a drunken rage. The Count believes that he killed her. She fled, seeking safety in the country along with her servant and friend, Roberto (known as Nardo). Serpetta, the maid of the home, has her sights set on Podestà, who has eyes only for Sandrina. Ramiro is the former betrothed of Podestà's niece, Arminda, a sharp-tongued harpy who has been promised to Count Belfiore.

Even though they sing of a happy day, each resident expresses their longings, sadnesses and desires. Serpetta expresses her jealousy of Sandrina as Nardo expresses his desire for Serpetta. Podestà longs for Sandrina, and Sandrina only wants peace. Ramiro is left behind to sing of his betrayal by Arminda.

Podestà tries to seduce Sandrina, comparing his love for her with the instruments of the symphony orchestra. She flees, and Arminda arrives in anticipation of meeting the Count. She is impatient that she has arrived before the Count, who soon appears bearing gifts for his betrothed. Arminda shrugs off the gifts, explaining to the Count that she is spiteful and willful, and that he will find her a handful. In another part of the garden, Nardo is flirting with Serpetta, who repels his advances while still flirting back. She claims that he is too old for her, and he replies that she needs a strong older man. She laughs, replying that she has her ways of getting any man she wants.

Sandrina is alone in the garden, comparing her lot to that of the caged bird. Arminda joins her, asking why she is so gloomy. Arminda then explains to Sandrina that she is to wed Count Belfiore. Sandrina is shocked and faints. Arminda calls to the Count for help as she goes for smelling salts. The Count is faced with his supposedly dead lover and is aghast, wondering if it is really her dressed as a gardener. Sandrina comes to, only to be face to face with her former lover. Arminda returns with the smelling salts as Ramiro enters. The former engaged couple are shocked to find themselves in the same space. They are all confused and heads are spinning as they try to figure out what is going on.

SYNOPSIS (cont.)

Podestà enters to find a quartet of raving lunatics. He asks them why they are so confused and they cannot reply. Again, Ramiro and the Count ask Sandrina and Arminda if it is really them. As the couples exit, Podestà is angered that they would treat him thus: he is a man of fame and stature, not to be abused.

Serpetta and Nardo enter. Serpetta tattles that she has seen the Count and Sandrina being intimate in another part of the garden. Nardo claims that she is lying as Podestà expresses his jealousy.

Sandrina comes back with the Count following her. She asks him what she wants because she is not his beloved Arminda. He claims that she, Violante, is still the queen of his heart. Serpetta exclaims that they are indeed together, and Podestà curses Sandrina. Nardo sees the Count, whom he knew when he was with Sandrina. Arminda accuses the Count of mocking her, and Ramiro calls her a deceitful woman. Sandrina questions what she did to deserve the Count's treatment of her. She agrees that Violante spoke like Sandrina, but that she died. The others want to know more, but Sandrina is silent. Arminda continues to rage at the Count, and Ramiro at her. The act ends in general confusion.

Act II

Ramiro enters bearing a letter from a magistrate in Milan stating that a murderer is in their midst, and that murderer is Count Belviore. Arminda is horrified that her possible marriage is in jeopardy, but Podestà says that he will get to the bottom of it while suspending the nuptials. Ramiro tries to appease Arminda, but she tells him to leave. Even though she is as nasty as ever, he sees hope in her response that she still cares.

The Count returns, jovially. Podestà asks him about Marchesina Onesti, and Arminda tries to shut him up, hoping to save her impending marriage. The interrogation continues, and the Count admits that she was a casualty of his jealousy. Podestà says that he must defend himself, but Sandrina steps in to defend him. She admits that he wounded her, but that she is still alive and forgives him. Podestà worries that he has lost his Sandrina, and Arminda goes to plot revenge. Sandrina says that she did defend him, but that he should return to his dear Arminda. She leaves, and the Count sings of his mind spinning, not knowing night from day. Ultimately, he is happy that she lives and has hope for a reconciliation.

SYNOPSIS (cont.)

Serpetta tells Nardo that she saw that Arminda has kidnapped Sandrina and taken her to a remote spot. Nardo is horrified and immediately goes to find the Count seeking help for Sandrina.

Sandrina has been left outside a cave on an ancient altar. She claims that God has been cruel to abandon her alone and lost like this. She weeps. Outside the cave, Nardo and the Count search for her through the dark. They are soon joined by Arminda, then Podestà and Serpetta. Podestà thinks that Arminda is Sandrina, and Arminda thinks that Podestà is the Count. The Count mistakes Serpetta for Sandrina, and she mistakes him for Podestà. They are all happy to be reunited with their supposed lovers. Ramiro enters with some friends, determined to find out what is going on. Ultimately everyone is discovered, and the knowledge sends Sandrina and the Count spinning into madness as the others look on amazed.

Serpetta is still toying and flirting with Nardo. He claims that he is the right man for her. He asks her that if he died, would she be sorry? She says she would not cry. After that, she agrees to love him, but that he has to woo her with passion and fire. He replies that he will woo her in the Italian, French, and English style, and that he will love her forever.

Sandrina and the Count find themselves back in the garden maze, dressed in their clothes from before. They are confused and wonder if they are dreaming. Sandrina, still hurt from his involvement with Arminda, says that she does not belong to the Count. Their love for each other begins to heal all wounds, and they approach each other tenderly. Their love conquers all past hurts.

Nardo tells everyone that Sandrina and the Count have regained their senses and have married. Podestà is astounded and Ramiro thrilled. Sandrina explains that Nardo is indeed her servant and friend Roberto. Arminda begs forgiveness, which Sandrina freely grants. Arminda makes the best of a bad situation and asks for the hand of Ramiro as Serpetta asks for Nardo's. Podestà agrees and says that he needs to continue to look for his own version. Sandrina says that she will always remember the kindness given to her, the secret gardener girl of love.

MSU SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Octavio Más-Arocas, conductor

Violin I

Yu Xin
Ruilin Chen
Maria Skidmore

Violin II

Yuanmiao Li
Gerson Medina
Tess Peckman

Viola

Yi-Pei Lin
Zhen Huang
Kunjie Chai

Cello

Yukyung Na
Po-Chen Chang
Yu-Chen Lin

Bass

Albert Daschle
Jake Weichert

Flute

Tzu-Shan Fu
Kim Stewart

Oboe

Robin Vorkink
Lauren O'Connor

Clarinet

Taewoo Kim
Andrew Buckley

Bassoon

Olivia Fletcher
Finn McCune

Horn

Jennifer Ornelas
August Kuhlman

Trumpet

Chase Domke
Ryan Evans

Timpani

Eric Saroian

Assistant/Guest Conductor

Asieh Mahyar

Librarians

Ursula Glasmacher
Catherine Lee

Harpsichord

Elden Little

MSU Opera Society Donors

2022 – 2023 Season

MSU Opera Society is the community support organization of the MSU Opera Theatre. We are grateful to our members for their generous contributions.

The 2022-23 MSU Opera Theatre season is generously funded by the Worthington Family Foundation.

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Opera Theatre

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For information about the MSU Opera Society, please contact the College of Music Advancement Office at (517) 353-9872 or e-mail Ann-Marie Lindley at alindley@msu.edu.

MAKE A GIFT



UPCOMING EVENTS

11/16, 11/17, 11/18, 11/20 Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday

***La Finta Giardiniera* by Mozart**

Worthington Family Foundation Opera Theatre Season

7:00 p.m., Wed- Friday, 3:00 p.m. Sunday. Fairchild Theatre \$\$\$

11/21 Monday

Trombone Choir

7:30 p.m., Fairchild Theatre \$

11/22 Tuesday

Symphony Orchestra: Monuments and Reformations

7:30 p.m., Fairchild Theatre \$

11/28 Monday

Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series sponsored by WKAR

Pastorals and Longings: Jewish Heritage Lyricism

7:30 p.m., Fairchild Theatre \$

11/30 Wednesday

Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series sponsored by WKAR

Connecting Cultures: Piano Four Hand Music from Around the World

7:30 p.m., Cook Recital Hall \$

12/1 Thursday

Symphony Band

7:30 p.m., Cobb Great Hall, Wharton Center \$

12/2 Friday

Mosaic and Chamber Choir

8:00 p.m., Alumni Chapel \$

12/3 Saturday

Sensory Friendly Spartan Concert

3:00 p.m., Cook Recital Hall (Free)

TICKET PRICES

\$ \$12 Adults, \$10 Seniors (age 60 and older), Students with ID and anyone under age 18 are free but require a ticket for admission.

\$\$ \$17 Adults, \$15 Seniors, \$7 Students with ID and anyone under age 18.

\$\$\$ \$22 Adults, \$20 Seniors, \$12 Students and those under age 18.

Please note: *All events scheduled in Murray Hall are general admission seating.*