

Così fan tutte

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Louis Nowra's play *Così*, is written as a parallel to Mozart's opera, *Così Fan Tutte*. The title, often translated to "Women are like that" refers to women's nature or tendency to be unfaithful or disloyal to their partners. In Mozart's opera, Ferrando and Guglielmo confidently declare that their wives, who are coincidentally sisters, Dorabella and Fiordiligi are steadfastly loyal to their husbands under any circumstances. Don Alfonso, an old philosopher claims that the men should not possess so much confidence for he can prove that their wives, like all women are disloyal. Certain of Dorabella and Fiordiligi, the two men form a bet with Don Alfonso that their wives will not betray them. In order to set up a situation where an opportunity exists for the women to be unfaithful, the men pretend to be sent off to war.

The women, who become distressed at the news, are left devastated, claiming their love for their respective husbands. The women's maid, Despina, seeing the despair of the sisters assures that they will find new lovers while their husbands are gone. The men return dressed as Albanians, each disguised so well with new clothing and moustaches that their wives cannot see through their deception. Fearing that Despina will recognise the men, Don Alfonso offers a bribe: help the women fall for the Albanians in return for gold. The men attempt to win over the women, yet with no avail. As soon as the women leave, their husbands burst into laughter at Don Alfonso's bet for their wives indeed proven loyal.

Don Alfonso is incredulous at the women's fidelity and allows Despina to take over the plan. At the garden, the women are distraught for their

husbands. The Albanians intrude declaring their love for the women, and since their feelings are not reciprocated, each drink a vial of poison.

The women call for a doctor, and Despina enters, disguised as a doctor and cures them through the use of a magnet. The men, still delirious from the poison believe that Dorabella and Fiordiligi are goddesses and ask for a kiss, which infuriates the women and consequently, they leave the scene. Act II Despina encourages the women to yield to the Albanians since any other woman would do so, especially since their husbands are at war. The maid exits, leaving the women to discuss the men. They reach the conclusion of amusing themselves with the Albanians in order to speed up the boredom while in the absence of their husbands.

Dorabella chooses Guglielmo while Fiordiligi settles for Ferrando. In a garden by the seashore are singers and musicians along with Ferrando and Guglielmo. Despina is also present, while Don Alfonso enters with the sisters. Ferrando and Fiordiligi separate from the other two, strolling in the garden. Guglielmo successfully entices Dorabella, who accepts his gift of a locket instead of retaining possession of Ferrando's portrait.

Guglielmo is privately sympathetic for Ferrando, yet still pleased to have a loyal wife. Meanwhile, Dorabella is shocked that she is falling in love with the Albanian. Ferrando and Guglielmo meet. Ferrando reveals that he attempted to woo Fiordiligi with no success for she only teased and joked about him instead. Upon Guglielmo's revelation of Dorabella's disloyalty however, Ferrando is left infuriated at women's indiscretion. Alone, Ferrando laments. Don Alfonso enters, and Ferrando states that the old

philosopher owes him the fifty sequins from the bet. Don Alfonso readily agrees, however urges Ferrando to wait another day, for they should not count their chickens before they hatch.

Fiordiligi reveals to Despina that she has fallen in love with Ferrando. Dorabella enters, confiding in Fiordiligi her adultery. Fiordiligi, overwhelmed, orders Despina to grab two swords, helmets and tunics so that the sisters can disguise themselves at war with their husbands. Yet before Fiordiligi's plan unfolds, Ferrando successfully woos her. The men are enraged at their wives' disloyalty. Don Alfonso explains that women are like that (cosi fan tutte). Consequently, Despina shares that the women desire marriages, and the men hesitantly agree.

At the wedding with the Albanians, military music is heard, signaling the return of the sisters' husbands. The Albanians and the notary (Despina in disguise) hide, which provides the men an opportunity to change. They return to the women who are thrilled to see their husbands. Don Alfonso accidentally leaves the contract of marriage for the men to see, and they subsequently become furious at their wives. The men storm off, intending to return as Albanians.

Unfortunately, they return with their Albanian clothes but no moustaches. Their deception is revealed and all is forgiven. The women are reunited with their husbands, Don Alfonso wins the bet and Despina earns her share of the cunning plot.