

Cosi louis nowra essay



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In *Cosi*, a semi- autographical play by Louis Nowra, various characters are faced with challenges that exist in real life and throughout the play some characters rise to the challenges put before them and overcome them, while others fail. Using that concept Louis Nowra hopes to communicate the challenges that people must undergo in their life and that fairy-tale endings do not exist in real life. Louis Nowra uses the play within a play technique so that he can easily explore various themes such as love and fidelity and growth and change.

Louis Nowra manages to use the characters in the play “ *Cosi*” to represent the different themes that both “ *Cosi*” and “ *Cosi fan tutte*” represent. Love and fidelity are universal concepts. According to Mozart’s *Cosi Fan Tutte*, the issue of fidelity is depicted to be an ideal that is never achieved. Since ‘ women are like that’. In *Cosi Fan Tutte*, Mozart encourages the belief that man should simply accept women are indeed disloyal in relationships. Nowra illustrates this same idea about women and infidelity through Lewis and Lucy’s relationship.

Lucy cannot understand why Lewis is directing a play about love when thousands are dying in the Vietnam War. Lucy believes that the Vietnam War and politics are more important than anything else. Nowra presents the realities that took place in society with the relationships and the idea of free love. While Lucy is ‘ sleeping’ with Lewis, she is also ‘ having sex’ with Nick. The idea of free love was popular within the people at the time period and women were all labeled as unfaithful by society.

When Lewis discovers Lucy's betrayal, she waves aside his shock, defending that 'it is not as if we're married. The revelation does indeed prove that Cosi Fan Tutte is correct in stating that, 'woman's constancy is like the Arabian Phoenix. Everyone swears it exists, but no one has seen it.' However it is ironic that Lewis questions Lucy's fidelity when he too is being unfaithful. This is presented as Julie is Lewis' love interest in the play and is a catalyst for Lewis and Lucy's deteriorating relationship. The dialogue between Lewis and Lucy show the contrasting views on love that have been presented in both the play *Cosi Fan Tutte* and in *Cosi*.

Nowra uses the challenges that the characters face to present the complexity of people and how the conventions of relationships have being challenged. In addition Roy asserts that 'Music is what love between humans should be'. Music is symbolic of loyalty and peace. It helps develop the audiences understanding about love and commitment, developing self-confidence and discovering what is important in real life. The extract introduces Nowra's important idea of the nature of love and fidelity through the dramatic technique of a play within a play. Love and fidelity are concerns of both *Cosi* and *Cosi Fan Tutte*.

In both texts the audience sees the effects of relationships between the sexes and that fairy tale endings do not exist in real life***. Both texts also show how men and women view sex differently. Many of the men in *Cosi* don't believe that women can be faithful and the female patients view the males with suspicion. The same belief was happening in real life***.

Throughout both plays Nowra demonstrates the different negative opinions that society during the Vietnam War have placed on love and fidelity. On

another note the line between sanity and insanity is explored through the juxtaposition of the patients and society.

In the 1970's, those who behaved abnormally were declared to be 'insane' and placed in mental institutions that were shunned by society. While the patients were viewed as 'madmen' from outsiders, Lewis soon discovers that the people he works with in the play are in many ways, ordinary people. The character that undergoes the most growth is clearly Lewis. He has only taken on the role of director for money as he states 'I need the money.' Lewis, who in the beginning of the play believed that 'love is not so important nowadays', gradually changes his mind to note that 'without love the world wouldn't mean much.

The lights in act 1 scene 1 highlight Lewis entrance into a new world, where he associates with patients who will ultimately, help him in learning and self-development. Lewis begins to see the patients as individuals and breaks away from stereotyping them as 'mad'. However, as he works with the patients, he develops a new perspective and insight into certain matters of the world and himself. It is ironic that Lewis has been able to find himself and discover what is important in a world that is closed off from reality.

Nowra uses different characters in the play to demonstrate society's different perceptions in the 1970's on the mentally ill. Attitudes on the mentally ill during the time period were predominantly negative. The physical setting of the play is "a burnt out theatre" with "a bit of a hole" in the roof and some problems with the wiring. The setting is symbolic of the negative attitudes people have towards the mentally ill. Furthermore, when

Nick and Lucy denounce Lewis for doing a play about love, Lewis sees that love is important, regardless of the Vietnam War. ‘ It’s about important things-like love and fidelity’.

Lewis’s changing relationship with the patients and his growing ability to assert himself as a director is explored through his dialogue. Lewis’s initial stage directions demonstrate his uncertainty and hesitation in ‘ not knowing what to say. ’ In comparison to Lewis, Nick and Lucy are characters in the play that are portrayed as individuals that do not develop a sense of growth and change. Their main interest remains focused on politics and the Vietnam War. Lucy’s dialogue ‘ Lewis get a grip on yourself. You’ve always mistaken lust for love,’ shows that she tells Lewis to face reality but it’s one thing she never really grasps herself.

Lucy’s ideas about love and fidelity remain the same. Her interest also remains fixed on politics. Nowra purposely uses the same actor to take on the two roles of Lucy and Julie. This has been used to get the audience thinking about who really is the mad one. As an audience, people like happy endings. However, Nowra demonstrates that life is not a fairy tale. This is presented through Lewis’s epilogue “there was no next year. This theatre mysteriously burnt down a week after the performance.. ” Lewis turns off the lights at the end of the play.

This symbolises to the audience the hardships and realities of real life. In conclusion, Nowra shows different perceptions on love and fidelity with the use of characters. Nowra also presents that views have changed about love throughout the play. The audience learns to accept that life is no fairy tale.

Many characters undertook changes and developed into new worlds that helped them see the world differently. The play gave many characters opportunities to develop an understanding about the complexity of the world they live in and also develop an understanding of their own self.