Opera synopsis

_Cosi fan tutte, osia la scuola degli amanti_ (All Women are Like That, or The School for Lovers) was written and performed in 1790 in Vienna on the libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte, who also wrote the libretti for _Don Giovanni_ and _The Marriage of Figaro_. It begins with two young men, Ferrando and Guglielmo, extolling the virtues and faithfulness of their fiancées, the sisters Dorabella and Fiordiligi respectively. Don Alfonso tells them they have a lot to learn; no woman can be trusted. The two men are outraged at the slur against their lovers’ honor, and agree to a test to prove that their lovers are faithful. They arrange a ruse; the young men pretend to be called off to war, and return disguised as exotic Albanians to attempt to seduce Dorabella and Fiordiligi. The sisters, saddened by the parting of their lovers, order the men away. The men pretend to take poison. The sisters’ maid, Despina, dresses as a doctor and cures them with a magnet. The sisters order them away again. Despina urges them to take advantage of having new suitors at hand. The sisters decide that a flirtation will do no harm and will help to pass the time; but they intend to remain faithful to their departed lovers. Dorabella, however, yields in the garden with Guglielmo (Fiordiligi’s fiancé). Fiordiligi refuses to give in to her desire and decides to dress as a man to join her lover at the front, but she then yields to Ferrando (Dorabella’s fiancé) when he threatens to kill himself. A wedding is arranged between the sisters and the new Albanian suitors, with Despina dressed as a notary. In the middle of the ceremony, it is announced that the original lovers have returned from war; the Albanians run out and “hide,” change clothes, come back as the original suitors, find the marriage contract, and expose the sisters’ infidelity. The lovers then reveal that they were the Albanians, the sisters are chastised, the original couples get back together, and everyone lives happily ever after.