

Possum Park Productions Inc. (ppptheatre.com) is thrilled to announce the return of one of Australia's most beloved comedy classics — **Cosi** — to the Bendigo stage!

Based on playwright Louis Nowra's own experiences, **Cosi** follows Lewis, a first-time director thrown into the deep end when he's asked to stage Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte* in a psychiatric hospital... with a cast who can't sing, dance, or act. The result? Chaos, charm, and plenty of laughs¹.

Set in 1970s Melbourne, this heartwarming story dives into themes of love, madness, connection and the unexpected friendships that form when people come together through creativity.

At its core, **Cosi** is a joyful reminder of the power of music and performance to lift us up, bring us together, and offer hope when we need it most.

Get ready for a funny, moving, and unforgettable night at the theatre — **Cosi** is coming back, and you won't want to miss it.

About Possum Park Productions

Possum Park Productions is a community theatre group based in Bendigo, dedicated to bringing high-quality theatrical performances to the local community. We pride ourselves on our inclusive and supportive environment, where creativity and collaboration are encouraged. Our productions range from classic plays to contemporary works, and we are committed to providing opportunities for local talent to shine both on and off stage.

About the play

First staged in 1992, **COSI** is a brilliant, big-hearted comedy about madness, imagination, and the beautiful chaos of theatre. Set in a Melbourne mental institution in 1971, the story follows Lewis, a young and inexperienced director, who suddenly finds himself tasked with staging Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte* in a burnt-out theatre — all while anti-Vietnam War protests rage outside.

Working with a group of patients who bring their own quirks, challenges, and unexpected talents, Lewis is pulled into a world where creativity thrives in the most unlikely places. As rehearsals stumble forward, he discovers that chasing a dream sometimes requires a touch of madness — and that the people society overlooks often have the most to teach us.

COSI is at once a moving glimpse into life inside a psychiatric institution and a hilarious celebration of the unpredictable, exhilarating mess of putting on a show. It's a story about courage, connection, and the sheer joy (and terror) of stepping into the spotlight.

Information session: Wednesday 20 May, 7pm (The Engine Room, View Street, Bendigo).

Casting: Saturday 23 May 2.30pm (The Engine Room, View Street, Bendigo.)

¹ Play and character notes have been drawn from Web sources with the assistance of AI.

Rehearsals: Tuesday evening and Sunday afternoon, commencing Tuesday 23 June 2026

Other information

Rehearsals will follow a strict schedule, and only the characters required for the specific pages being rehearsed will need to attend.

The expectation is that cast will be off-book by the date determined in the rehearsal schedule.

The players fee of \$75 includes a new copy of the *Così* script.

More information will be provided in the cast welcome pack.

Performance details

Così will be performed in the Engine Room, View Street Bendigo. Production week commences on Monday 7 September with bump-in and tech rehearsal.

Performances are on Friday 11, Saturday 12, Friday 18 and Saturday 19 September at 7.30pm. Sunday 13 and Saturday 19 September at 1.30pm.

The cast

Lewis

Lewis is a young, inexperienced director—likely in his early to mid-20s but can be older—who enters the institution unsure of himself and unsure of the value of the work he has been hired to do. Initially motivated by financial need rather than passion, he approaches the project with hesitation and a lack of authority.

As the play progresses, Lewis becomes the emotional anchor of the group. Working with the patients forces him to confront his own assumptions about mental illness, creativity, and human connection. He begins to see the patients not as “cases” but as individuals with depth, humour, trauma, and insight.

His relationship with Lucy and Nick represents the outside world’s political cynicism—where love is dismissed as outdated and emotional vulnerability is seen as weakness. In contrast, the patients teach Lewis that love, loyalty, and connection matter deeply.

By the end, Lewis has undergone a quiet but profound transformation: he becomes more confident, compassionate, and willing to stand up for what he believes in. He discovers that emotional truth is just as important as political ideology.

Roy

Roy is a charismatic, theatrical, and deeply troubled man—any age from mid-30s—whose manic energy drives the entire production. His grandiose visions of staging *Così Fan Tutte* are both inspiring and impossible, reflecting his internal longing for beauty, order, and escape.

Roy's manic episodes fuel his enthusiasm, while his depressive crashes reveal a deep loneliness and fear of insignificance. His obsession with Mozart's opera is symbolic: he clings to the idea that art can elevate life above suffering.

He is demanding, controlling, and often insensitive, yet his passion is genuine. Roy's volatility creates chaos, but without him, the production would never begin. He embodies the theme that creativity often emerges from instability—and that madness and genius can be intertwined.

Cherry

Cherry is a bold, emotionally intense woman of any age who expresses herself without filter. Her binge-eating and impulsive behaviour suggest unresolved trauma and a need for comfort and control.

She develops a fierce attachment to Lewis, which is both comedic and touching. Her protectiveness borders on possessive, and her habit of carrying knives adds a layer of unpredictability. Yet Cherry is not dangerous—she is vulnerable, passionate, and desperate for connection.

She is capable of expressing a wide emotional range, from jealousy to joy to tenderness. Cherry represents the raw, unguarded emotional honesty that contrasts sharply with the emotional detachment of Lucy and Nick.

Ruth

Ruth is a patient with obsessive-compulsive tendencies, fixated on logic, order, and the boundaries between reality and performance. She can be any age, capable of seriousness and rigidity.

Her constant questioning—"Is it real?" "Do I pick up the imaginary prop or the real one?"—highlights her struggle to navigate a world that feels inconsistent and overwhelming.

Ruth's anxieties bring humour but also poignancy. She represents the theme of illusion vs. reality, a central idea in both the play and the opera. Her need for structure contrasts with the chaos of the group, making her a grounding presence even when she seems difficult.

Doug

Doug is a pyromaniac with a mischievous, anarchic personality. He thrives on disruption, sexual jokes, and pushing boundaries. His institutionalisation for burning down his mother's house reveals a history of impulsivity and unresolved anger.

Despite his chaotic energy, Doug is intelligent, observant, and often the first to call out hypocrisy. He brings humour and danger in equal measure.

Doug represents the theme of uncontrolled impulse—the part of human nature that resists rules and structure. His presence keeps the group off-balance, but he also injects life and unpredictability into the production.

Julie

Julie is a young woman around Lewis's age, gentle and soft-spoken, with a history of drug dependency. She is one of the few patients who speaks to Lewis with emotional honesty rather than theatricality or defensiveness.

Her vulnerability draws Lewis in, and their quiet connection becomes one of the play's emotional anchors. Julie's struggles highlight the fragility of recovery and the human cost of addiction.

She represents truth, fragility, and the quiet resilience of those who have been hurt but still seek connection. Her presence reminds Lewis—and the audience—that mental illness is not always loud or dramatic; sometimes it is quiet, lonely, and deeply human.

Henry

Henry is an older ex-lawyer with a severe stutter and a conservative worldview. He is withdrawn, cautious, and resistant to change. His dislike of communists and discomfort with the play reflect his rigid worldview.

Over time, Henry undergoes one of the most subtle but meaningful transformations. Through participating in the production, he gains confidence, finds his voice, and begins to engage with others.

Henry represents **dignity, repression, and the possibility of late-life growth**. His journey shows that even those who seem closed off can be reached through patience and creativity.

Zac

Zac is the heavily medicated pianist whose lethargy and unpredictability add humour and tension. He dislikes Mozart and prefers Wagner, which becomes a recurring joke and a source of conflict with Roy.

His sudden disappearances and reappearances, along with his flat affect, make him an unpredictable but essential part of the production.

Zac represents the theme of **artistic conflict** and the challenge of collaboration. His mild nudity (mooning) is often played for comedic effect and highlights his disregard for social norms.

Justin

Justin is the social worker responsible for overseeing the patients. He is procedural, cautious, and focused on safety and compliance. While well-meaning, he often lacks emotional insight into the group's dynamics.

He represents the **institutional perspective**—structured, rule-bound, and somewhat disconnected from the emotional realities of the patients.

Lucy

Lucy is Lewis's girlfriend, a politically engaged activist who prioritises ideology over emotional connection. She dismisses love as outdated and sees Lewis's work at the institution as trivial compared to political activism.

Her emotional detachment highlights the contrast between the outside world's cynicism and the patients' emotional authenticity.

Lucy represents **political idealism without empathy**.

Nick

Nick is Lewis's best friend, a radical left-wing activist who values ideology above all else. He is outspoken, manipulative, and dismissive of Lewis's involvement in the play.

Nick's affair with Lucy exposes his hypocrisy and emotional immaturity. He represents the intellectual arrogance of the era's political movements.

Nick embodies **ideological extremism, emotional detachment, and performative activism**.

Note:

The roles of Julie and Lucy could be played by the same actor.

The roles of Zac, Justin and Nick could be played by the same actor.