

CHAN 3025(2)



Gabriele Bellini

CHANDOS
OPERA IN
ENGLISH

The Barber of Seville

Rossini



The Barber of Seville

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



Gioachino Rossini, c. 1820

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)

The Barber of Seville

An opera in two acts

Critical edition by Alberto Zedda

Libretto by Cesare Sterbini after the play *Le Barbier de Séville* by Beaumarchais

English translation by Amanda and Anthony Holden

Count Almaviva	Bruce Ford <i>tenor</i>
Bartolo , a doctor in Seville	Andrew Shore <i>baritone</i>
Rosina , ward of Doctor Bartolo	Della Jones <i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Figaro , a barber	Alan Opie <i>baritone</i>
Don Basilio , music teacher and hypocrite	Peter Rose <i>bass</i>
Fiorello , Count Almaviva's servant	Peter Snipp <i>baritone</i>
Berta , Bartolo's housekeeper	Jennifer Rhys-Davies <i>soprano</i>
An Officer	Christopher Ross <i>bass</i>

English National Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Stephen Harris chorus master

James Holmes assistant conductor

Gabriele Bellini

	Time	Page
COMPACT DISC ONE		
[1] Overture	7:04	60
Act I (Beginning)		
[2] 'Piano, pianissimo' <i>Fiorello, Chorus, the Count</i>	3:22	60
[3] 'See how the smile of heaven' <i>The Count</i>	4:18	60
[4] 'Hey, Fiorello!' <i>The Count, Fiorello, Chorus</i>	1:16	61
[5] 'Thank you, thank you' <i>Chorus, Fiorello, the Count</i>	1:47	61
[6] 'What common people!' <i>The Count, Fiorello</i>	0:28	62
[7] 'La la la lera' <i>Figaro</i>	4:39	62
[8] 'Ah ha! What could be better?' <i>Figaro, the Count</i>	2:05	63
[9] 'I cannot see him anywhere' <i>Rosina, the Count, Bartolo, Figaro</i>	1:37	64
[10] 'Poor little innocent creature!' <i>The Count, Figaro, Bartolo</i>	2:40	65
[11] 'My poor heart is so full of emotion' <i>The Count, Rosina, Figaro</i>	3:09	67
[12] 'What's happened?' <i>The Count, Figaro</i>	1:05	67

	Time	Page
[13] 'You need only mention money' <i>Figaro, the Count</i>	7:59	68
[14] 'In my heart a gentle voice' <i>Rosina</i>	2:37	70
[15] 'I can be so demure' <i>Rosina</i>	3:57	70
[16] 'Oh yes, I'll win the day' <i>Rosina</i>	0:39	71
[17] 'Good morning, Signorina' <i>Figaro, Rosina</i>	0:45	71
[18] 'Where would I be without him?' <i>Rosina, Bartolo</i>	1:07	72
[19] 'Who'd know?' <i>Bartolo, Basilio</i>	1:38	72
[20] 'Innuendo, the slightest whisper' <i>Basilio</i>	3:47	73
[21] 'Well, what d'you think?' <i>Basilio, Bartolo</i>	0:27	74
[22] 'So that's it!' <i>Figaro, Rosina</i>	2:45	74
[23] 'Then it's me...' <i>Rosina, Figaro</i>	5:25	76
[24] 'Now I feel so much better' <i>Rosina, Bartolo</i>	1:51	77
[25] 'Dare you offer such excuses' <i>Bartolo</i>	6:44	78

TT 73:12

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act I (Conclusion)

	Time	Page
[1] 'Where's the master?' <i>The Count, Bartolo</i>	3:09	79
[2] 'Ah! How long 'til I behold her?' <i>The Count, Bartolo, Rosina, Berta, Basilio</i>	6:07	80
[3] 'Stop this noise!' <i>Figaro, Bartolo, the Count, Rosina, Berta, Basilio</i>	1:14	84
[4] 'Someone is at the door' <i>Rosina, Berta, Figaro, the Count, Bartolo, Basilio, Chorus</i>	1:13	85
[5] 'Pay attention! What's the trouble?' <i>Chorus, Bartolo, Figaro, Basilio, Berta, the Count, Rosina, Officer</i>	1:24	85
[6] 'Frozen and motionless' <i>Rosina, the Count, Bartolo, Basilio, Figaro</i>	3:26	86
[7] 'If I may...' <i>Bartolo, Berta, Basilio, Chorus, Rosina, the Count, Figaro</i>	4:54	86

Act II

[8] 'I've got to find the answer!' <i>Bartolo</i>	0:54	87
[9] 'Peace and joy be yours for ever' <i>The Count, Bartolo</i>	2:25	87

	Time	Page
[10] 'I don't think we have met, Sir' <i>Bartolo, the Count</i>	2:50	88
[11] 'Come along, my dear, and listen' <i>Bartolo, Rosina, the Count</i>	1:05	90
[12] 'When a heart for love is yearning' <i>Rosina, the Count</i>	7:26	90
[13] 'What a talent. Bravissima!' <i>The Count, Rosina, Bartolo</i>	0:40	91
[14] 'Sweet little seventeena' <i>Bartolo</i>	0:59	92
[15] 'Bravo, Signor Figaro' <i>Bartolo, Figaro, Rosina, the Count</i>	3:07	92
[16] 'Don Basilio...' <i>Rosina, the Count, Figaro, Bartolo, Basilio</i>	6:38	94
[17] 'Now then, Signor Don Bartolo' <i>Figaro, Bartolo, the Count, Rosina</i>	3:58	96
[18] 'Things can't get much worse' <i>Bartolo</i>	0:41	98
[19] 'He wouldn't trust his mother!' <i>Berta</i>	0:29	98
[20] 'First the Doctor wants to marry' <i>Berta</i>	3:23	98

	Time	Page
[21] 'So this pupil Alonso' <i>Bartolo, Basilio</i>	1:05	99
[22] 'By force or persuasion' <i>Bartolo, Rosina</i>	2:52	100
[23] Thunderstorm	3:09	101
[24] 'We've made it' <i>Figaro, the Count, Rosina</i>	1:13	101
[25] 'Almaviva, not Lindoro!' <i>Rosina, Figaro, the Count</i>	7:08	102
[26] 'Ah! That's all we needed!' <i>Figaro, the Count, Rosina</i>	0:25	103
[27] 'Don Bartolo' <i>Basilio, Figaro, the Count, Rosina</i>	1:00	104
[28] 'Don't move a muscle!' <i>Bartolo, Figaro, Officer, the Count</i>	0:19	105
[29] 'I love a happy ending' <i>Figaro, Berta, Bartolo, Basilio, Chorus, Rosina, the Count</i>	2:27	105

TT 75:48

Gioachino Rossini: The Barber of Seville

Rossini wrote forty operas – all of them before his thirty-eighth birthday, when he had another thirty-eight years to live – yet a time came when he was remembered as the composer of just one: *Il barbiere di Siviglia*.

This was particularly true while Wagner reigned supreme, between about 1880 and 1920. Rossini's many serious operas had vanished, but for an occasional *Guillaume Tell* or *Mosè in Egitto*, put on as a salute to an ancient monument. Even comic operas like *L'italiana in Algeri* and *La Cenerentola*, highly successful in their own day and again in ours, were in eclipse. *Il barbiere*, though, marched on. Some of the best singers appeared in it, year in year out, and some of the worst; in the 1940s it was even transformed into a Broadway musical under the title *Once Over Lightly*, with a Russian Figaro; that turned out to be once too often.

What is it about the work that keeps it evergreen? Success now and then feeds on itself: of two plays or operas that are equally effective in the theatre, one may appear more often than the other because it is better known. *Il barbiere* was already famous when

the hard-pressed Rossini and his librettist Cesare Sterbini chose it in the freezing Rome winter of 1816. Beaumarchais's comedy of 1775 still held the stage, as it does in France today, helped by the triumph of its sequel *Le Mariage de Figaro* (the third play in the trilogy, *La Mère coupable* (The Guilty Mother), is a dreary, sententious melodrama: Beaumarchais had been overtaken by the French Revolution with its demand for earnestness). A neat comedy of intrigue, the original *Barbiere* was based on the conventions of comic opera – going back to the old Italian comedy of masks, with the hoariest of plots, the old guardian whose plan to marry his pretty ward is foiled by young love and clever servants; indeed Beaumarchais had originally written it with 'numbers' to be set to music.

What made the play special was the character of Figaro, the sort of uncommon common man who was to play a large part in the revolution: jack-of-all-trades, living on his wits, irreverent to his social superiors (up to a point while their superiority lasted), but always ready to score off them or exploit them. In the opera, where words have to be far fewer than in

the spoken play, his character is somewhat coarsened; his plebeian vigour comes through in his famous entrance aria, and so does his straightforward interest in money.

With the play well established, the reigning Italian composer of the late eighteenth century, Giovanni Paisiello, turned it into a comic opera. This *Barbiere* made its successful way round Europe after its first performance in St Petersburg in 1782. Rare festival performances today show it to be a delightful, melodious work, with a funny scene for Bartolo's sneezing and yawning servants, but rather mild and slow for modern taste. By the time Rossini got to work in 1816 Paisiello was out of date, in part because music did go out of date within thirty years or so (a repertory of works played again and again was only just beginning to form), but especially because the years of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars had brought forward a new audience: more middle-class, more impatient, more eager for strong sensations, especially those called up by military music. Rossini provided just what it wanted: fizz, zing, speed.

The story that the first night of his *Barbiere* went wrong because part of the audience was outraged on Paisiello's behalf is almost certainly a canard. It was common form for several

composers to write operas on the same subject and even to the same libretto. Rossini and Sterbini used a fresh title for their version (it was originally called *Almaviva* – suitably, for the star was the tenor Manuel García) and played down the famous sneezing and yawning scene; these too were normal precautionary measures. They also printed a note stating that they meant no discourtesy to the old composer (who was to die just over three months later). What seems to have happened is that younger rival composers were jealous, and fans of a rival theatre objected to the Teatro Argentina's trespassing into comic opera. The main reason for catcalls on the first night, however, was that the usual rush of an Italian opera season was, this time, a little too rushed.

The Argentina, the leading Rome theatre, at this season would normally have given serious opera. Its reason for asking Rossini to write *Il barbiere* rather than some classical drama was money: with the fall of Napoleon and the return of the Pope the theatre had lost its subsidy, Europe-wide economic crisis had thinned its audience, and comic opera was relatively cheap. Even then the owner-impresario could get a company together only through frantic efforts ('it's enough to make a poor wretch like me spit blood', he wrote) and

the season opened over a fortnight late. Rossini had not quite four weeks to work in between getting the first part of the libretto (25 January) and playing continuo, as was the custom, on the first night (20 February). For a composer this was nothing out of the ordinary; but the cast was probably tired out by the initial rush to get the season off the ground (with *L'italiana in Algeri*), and then by having to learn and rehearse *Il barbiere* while giving five performances a week. A stumbling first night gave way to success on later nights; after that the opera never looked back.

As well as the best of pure comic operas in the Italian tradition, it was almost the last. Rossini's own *Cenerentola* of the following year, and the best remembered of Donizetti's comic works (*L'elisir d'amore* and *Don Pasquale*), have a touch of sentiment or realism that speaks for a more cushioned epoch. Comic opera was in any case going out of vogue: it didn't suit the timorous, starchy monarchical regimes brought back after the fall of Napoleon, or the newly respectable middle classes. But *Il barbiere* distils the old comic-opera temper, a union of the nonsensical and the ruthless.

'He plays with everything: with wit, with philosophy, with drama, with actors and

audience, with the whole theatre'. So Bernard Shaw wrote about Oscar Wilde. It could have been written of Rossini. ('Playing with philosophy' may seem beyond his grasp – until we recall that Hegel and Schopenhauer, solemn philosophers both, thought highly of his works.) From start to finish he plays with the conventions of opera – as he had already done in *Il turco in Italia*, where one of the characters is writing the work as it goes along. In the opening scene of *Il barbiere* the serenading musicians' thanks mock the habit operatic choruses have of making loud and repetitive noises when they need to go off on tiptoe, and so, at the end of the opera, does the trio in which Figaro and the lovers keep announcing that very same need until the escape ladder eludes them. Here are the ancestors of the policemen's chorus in *The Pirates of Penzance*, 'With catlike tread'. The characters use theatre to mock their own theatrical selves.

In the earlier part of that final trio, Figaro takes off *Almaviva's* mooning melismas as the tenor celebrates his and Rosina's love instead of making good their escape. This is only the last of several musical parodies. Bartolo's little song in the lesson scene takes off the music he would have heard in his youth (pre-Paisiello), and his big aria with its elaborate repetitions

uses musical pedantry to make fun of the dry old lawyer. The supposed abbé's endless tidings of peace and joy at the start of the lesson scene mock the setting of those words in many a piece of church music. Figaro's opening praise of gold, launching his and Almaviva's duet in the opening scene, echoes the portentous line of serious opera.

Parody cuts deepest where Rossini takes off his own favourite devices: the crescendo moving to a noisy outburst, and the elegant coloratura cascade of notes. In his serious operas both can seem arbitrary. In *Il barbiere*, the most striking use of the crescendo is for once wholly suited to what is being sung about: the gradual spread of calumny in Basilio's celebrated aria. To accustomed ears – as those of the original audience were – the crescendo, with sudden modulations culminating in the 'cannon-shot', appears to be saying, 'You see? I can after all be aptly dramatic with the best': a further subtle guying of the opera form.

As for coloratura Rossini uses it in the tenor's opening aria to bring out Almaviva as urgent and graceful lover (the opera originally ended, just before the final line-up, with an elaborate display piece for García, but it held up the action; the composer later gave it to his

mezzo Cinderella to bring down the curtain on that work). Elsewhere coloratura serves to etch Rosina's personality in sharp outline. Her famous first aria tells of her assertiveness, her control of the situation and her capacity for ironic comment. This is no lovelorn romantic heroine: glittering and sardonic in her duet with Figaro, all charm and pleasure in the latter part of the lesson scene (while Bartolo is asleep), she is, as we can hear, a self-possessed young thing. (In the nineteenth century sopranos appropriated the part and turned the lesson scene into a concert larded with everything from 'Home, Sweet Home' to extravagant variations. The part belongs to a mezzo such as Della Jones – the natural Italian woman's voice, Rossini called it – and the lesson scene works best just as it stands.)

The heart of the opera is in two supremely crafted ensemble pieces – the long Act I Finale and the quintet in which the other four principals urge the flummoxed Don Basilio to go back to bed. Each is held together through changing sections by a perky, recurrent little musical phrase and a steady, heady accompaniment. The sight and sound of human beings behaving like machines is one potent cause of laughter in the theatre. By the headlong last section of the Act I Finale it

brings what was called at the time the Rossinian 'organised and total madness'. There and elsewhere Rossini lets music take over and takes little notice of the words. Yet words do tell, as when everyone tells Basilio he looks 'yellow', or Rosina blows the gaff on her 'docility' with the one little word 'but'. With an all-Italian cast making the most of the original words (not often to be had in recordings aimed at an international audience) such things can tell. So they can in a different way when, as here, all the singers share a language – even though the language is of a country where the temperature just before dawn rarely encourages serenades.

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Synopsis

Count Almaviva, a Spanish nobleman, is in love with Rosina, the ward of Dr Bartolo, an old doctor who is planning to marry her himself.

Act I

The street outside Dr Bartolo's house

The Count, helped by a group of musicians, serenades Rosina. In order to gain an introduction he enlists the help of Figaro, the

barber, who prides himself on his ability to manage the affairs of the town. In spite of the watchfulness of her guardian, Rosina contrives to drop a letter from the balcony asking his name and returning his affections. The Count then makes himself known to Rosina as a poor student called Lindoro. Figaro suggests that in order to gain admittance to the house he should instead pretend to be a soldier billeted on Dr Bartolo, and drunk.

Inside the house

Dr Bartolo has heard rumours about Almaviva's interest in Rosina and decides to marry her immediately. Rosina's singing teacher, an unscrupulous priest called Don Basilio, is Bartolo's confidant. Almaviva, disguised as a drunken soldier, arrives to take up his 'billet' with the Doctor. Rosina is delighted when she recognises her admirer. The Doctor's annoyance at the behaviour of the 'soldier' causes such a row that the militia are called in by the neighbours. The Count escapes arrest, much to Bartolo's fury.

Act II

In Bartolo's house, later the same day

The Count assumes another disguise and enters the house as Don Alonso, a music

teacher. He says he has come to give Rosina a singing lesson in place of Don Basilio who has suddenly fallen ill. Under cover of the lesson the Count tells Rosina that he will elope with her at midnight. Figaro, who has arrived to shave Bartolo, manages to obtain the keys to the balcony. To their consternation Basilio appears, but when a purse of money is slipped into his hand he maintains the pretence of being ill. Bartolo, having become suspicious, catches the lovers in compromising conversation.

When the Count and Figaro have gone Bartolo confronts Rosina with the letter she addressed to Lindoro and catches her by surprise when he tells her that Lindoro is the agent of Almaviva, who wants to marry her only for her money. She agrees to marry Bartolo at once and tells him about the planned elopement.

Figaro and the Count return at the appointed time and climb in through the window. Rosina repulses 'Lindoro' until she learns that he is himself Almaviva. She falls into his arms. They are unable to escape, however, as Bartolo has removed their ladder from outside the window. Basilio, arriving with a notary who is to marry Rosina to her guardian, is easily bribed to witness instead the

marriage of Rosina to the Count. Bartolo arrives too late and is obliged to acknowledge that he has lost her.

Over the past decade **Bruce Ford** has established himself as an all-round *bel canto* tenor, specialising in the Mozart and Rossini roles. After he made his Pesaro Rossini Festival debut in 1990, performing the role of Agorante in *Ricciardo e Zoraide* at less than two weeks' notice, he has been a regular guest in Pesaro (singing in Rossini's *Otello*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Zelmira*), as well as in most of the leading opera houses and festivals in Europe. His appearances at Teatro alla Scala, Milan have included the roles of Uberto (*La donna del lago* under Riccardo Muti), Paolo Erisso (*Maometto II*) and Belmonte (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail* under Wolfgang Sawallisch). With The Royal Opera, Covent Garden he has enjoyed a string of successes including Almaviva, the title role in Mozart's *Mitridate, re di Ponto*, Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, Lindoro in *L'italiana in Algeri* and Osiride in *Mosè in Egitto*. Acclaimed appearances elsewhere include San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Salzburg, Amsterdam, Zurich, Lausanne, Geneva, Catania, Florence, Naples, Bologna, Lyon and Paris.

Bruce Ford has made numerous recordings for Opera Rara, including Meyerbeer's *Il crociato in Egitto*, Mayr's *Medea in Corinto*, Donizetti's *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, Rossini's *Ricciardo e Zoraide*, Pacini's *Maria, regina d'Inghilterra*, Donizetti's *Maria de Rudenz*, Rossini's *Otello* and two recital discs (*Rossini – Three Tenors and Romantic Heroes*). For Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation he has recorded a solo recital of operatic arias.

Andrew Shore is acknowledged as Britain's premier *buffo* baritone and an outstanding singer/actor. He has worked for all the major British companies, including English National Opera, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Opera North, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Scottish Opera and Welsh National Opera, as well as having appeared abroad with San Diego Opera, New Israeli Opera, Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, Opéra-Comique, Gran teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, as well as in Lyon, Nantes, Montpellier, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Vancouver and Ottawa. His many engagements have included the title roles of *Wozzeck*, *Falstaff*, *King Priam*, *Gianni Schicchi* and *Don Pasquale*, as well as Dulcamara (*The Elixir of Love*), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Papageno, King

Dodon (*Le Coq d'or*), Leandro (*The Love for Three Oranges*), Dikoy (*Kát'a Kabanová*), Dr Kolenaty (*The Makropulos Affair*), Shishkov (*From the House of the Dead*), Frank (*Die Fledermaus*), Baron (*La Vie parisienne*), Baron Trombonok (*Il viaggio a Reims*), Varlaam (*Boris Godunov*) and Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*). His recordings for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation comprise *The Elixir of Love*, *Don Pasquale*, *La bohème* and highlights from *Der Rosenkavalier* in addition to this *Barber of Seville* and the award-winning *Tosca*.

Della Jones was born in Neath and studied at the Royal College of Music where she won many prizes, including the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship. She has appeared with all the major British opera companies, throughout Europe, in the United States, Canada, Russia and in Japan. Her repertoire includes the title roles in *Ariodante*, *La Cenerentola* and *Carmen*, as well as Rosina, Herodias (*Salome*), Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*), Marcellina, Adalgisa, Dido (*Les Troyens* and *Dido and Aeneas*), Donna Elvira, Brangäne, Hermia (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Juno (*Semele*) and the Hostess (*Boris Godunov*). Della Jones broadcasts regularly on radio and television and her many recordings

include *Alcina*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *La clemenza di Tito* and Korngold's *Die Kathrin*. She has recorded *Gabriella di Vergy* (Donizetti), *Maria Padilla* (Donizetti), *Il crociato in Egitto* (Meyerbeer), *Ricciardo e Zoraide* (Rossini) and *Dinorah* (Meyerbeer) for Opera Rara, and her numerous recordings on Chandos include *Sancta Susanna* (Hindemith), *The Bear* (Walton) and, for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, *La traviata* and *Julius Caesar*.

Born in Cornwall, **Alan Opie** studied at the Guildhall School of Music and the London Opera Centre. He was Principal Baritone with English National Opera for many seasons and has sung with all the major British opera companies. Abroad he has appeared at the opera houses of Bayreuth, Paris (Opéra national de Paris-Bastille), Amsterdam, Chicago, Milan (Teatro alla Scala), Munich (Bavarian State Opera), Berlin, Vienna, Brussels and New York (The Metropolitan Opera). Recently he appeared as Beckmesser (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) at Vienna State Opera and was invited to return as Balstrode in *Peter Grimes*, a roll he also sang in Chandos' *Grammy Award*-winning recording of the opera. He appeared in Luciano Berio's

Outis at La Scala, Milan, and the Châtelet théâtre musical in Paris and as Mr Redburn in semi-staged performances of the two-act version of Britten's *Billy Budd* at London's Barbican Centre, a production subsequently recorded by Chandos for release in Spring 2000. Other appearances on Chandos include *The Rape of Lucretia* (Britten), *Martin's Lie* (Menotti), *Troilus and Cressida* (Walton), as well as *Mary Stuart*, *Pagliacci* and *La bohème* (all in collaboration with the Peter Moores Foundation).

Born in Canterbury, **Peter Rose** read music at the University of East Anglia and studied with Ellis Keeler at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He made his operatic debut as the Commendatore with Glyndebourne Festival Opera in Hong Kong in 1986 and was principal bass with Welsh National Opera until 1989. He has performed under the world's foremost conductors and appeared with all the major British opera companies, including The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, English National Opera and Scottish Opera. Abroad he has sung at The Metropolitan Opera, New York, the Opéra-Comique, Paris, German State Opera, Berlin, Hamburg State Opera, Vienna State Opera, Lyric Opera of

Chicago and New Israeli Opera, Tel Aviv, as well as in San Francisco, Amsterdam, Cologne, Rome and Seattle. He has also appeared at major festivals throughout the world, such as those in Orange, Aix-en-Provence, Istanbul, Bregenz and the Maggio musicale in Florence. Among his many roles are Ramfis, Fasolt, Hunding, Pimen, Osmin, King Marke, Baron Ochs, Rocco, Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Banquo (*Macbeth*), Cadmus/Somnus (*Semele*), Gessler (*Guillaume Tell*), Mustafa (*L'italiana in Algeri*) and Walter (*Luisa Miller*). His many recordings include, for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, the award-winning *Tosca* and this *Barber of Seville*.

Jennifer Rhys-Davies, who studied at the Trinity College of Music, has achieved great success in such major roles as Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, Konstanze, Queen of the Night, Pamina, Miss Jessel (*The Turn of the Screw*), Lucia, Semiramide and Lady Macbeth. At The Royal Opera, Covent Garden she has appeared as Berta (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Amaltea (*Mosè in Egitto*), Clorinda (*La Cenerentola*), Marianne (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Anna (*Nabucco*) and Sieglinde, and she sang the Italian Soprano (*Capriccio*) at the Glyndebourne

Festival, Olympia, Antonia and Giulietta (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) at the Grand théâtre de Limoges and Elisabetta (*Maria Stuarda*) at Theater Basel. Her recordings include, for Opera Rara, Mercadante's *Orazi e Curiazi* and, for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, highlights from *Der Rosenkavalier*.

The Chorus of English National Opera is one of the Company's finest assets. In countless English National Opera productions they have thrilled audiences with the power of their singing and the intensity of their acting. There are sixty-eight choristers and the wide range of skills and experience they bring to performances distinguish any production in which they appear. Particular triumphs for the Chorus have been Prokofiev's *War and Peace*, Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Britten's *Billy Budd* and *Peter Grimes*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, Bizet's *Carmen* and Verdi's *Otello*. Their recording of the last, in Jonathan Miller's production conducted by Mark Elder, is soon to appear on Chandos under the sponsorship of the Peter Moores Foundation, as are their recordings of *Werther* with Dame Janet Baker under Sir Charles Mackerras and of the celebrated 'Ring Cycle' conducted by Sir Reginald Goodall. Other

Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation recordings are *Mary Stuart*, *Julius Caesar*, *Rigoletto* (Jonathan Miller's production) and *La traviata*.

Critically and publicly acclaimed, **The Orchestra of English National Opera**, Leader Barry Griffiths, has in recent years received several prestigious awards, including the *Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award* and an *Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera*. The Orchestra is at the heart of the Company's artistic life and as well as opera performances in the London Coliseum has also been seen on the concert platform. In addition many of the players participate in the work of the Baylis Programme of the Company's education and outreach department and with the English National Opera Studio in the development of new operas, in particular Mark Anthony Turnage's *The Silver Tassie* which has its world premiere in February 2000. The Orchestra appears in many recordings, including the celebrated 'Ring Cycle' conducted by Sir Reginald Goodall, which is soon to appear on Chandos under the sponsorship of the Peter Moores Foundation, as are its recordings of *Werther* with Dame Janet Baker under Sir Charles

Mackerras and of Verdi's *Otello* under Mark Elder. Other recordings for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation are *Mary Stuart*, *Julius Caesar*, *Rigoletto* (Jonathan Miller's production) and *La traviata*.

Born in Legnago near Verona **Gabriele Bellini** was educated at the Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello in Venice and the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Milan, where he graduated in horn, composition and conducting. He continued his conducting studies with Franco Ferrara, Hermann Scherchen, Sergiu Celibidache and Hans Swarowsky. His professional engagements have ranged across Europe and the United States and included collaborations with Claudio Abbado at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan for many seasons. He has served as Artistic Director and Musical Director of Connecticut Grand Opera and as guest conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra and at the Cincinnati Opera House. An association with the Orkest van Hetooosten at Opera Forum in Enschede, The Netherlands that began in 1988 culminated in his appointment as Chief Conductor of the Orchestra from 1992 to 1997, during which period he conducted performances of *Macbeth*, *Stiffelio*, *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, *Falstaff*,

Madama Butterfly, *Tosca* and *Wozzeck*, among others. In 1998 he opened the Donizetti Festival in Bergamo with *L'elisir d'amore* and returned to conduct *La bohème*. Recently Gabriele Bellini has also conducted *Norma* in Groeningen, *La rondine* at the Teatro del

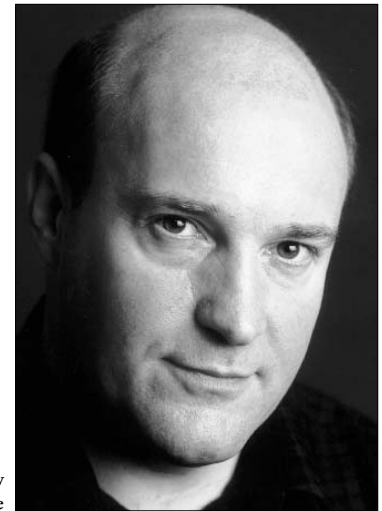
Giglio in Lucca, *Linda di Chamounix* in Bologna and *I puritani* in Spain. He has also conducted *Eine Nacht in Venedig* at Komische Oper, Berlin and appeared at the Norwegian Opera, Oslo, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden as well as in Göteborg and Leipzig.

Catherine Ashmore



Bruce Ford

Robert Workman



Andrew Shore

PETER MOORES, CBE, DL

Peter Moores was born in Lancashire, the son of Sir John Moores, founder of the giant Littlewoods mail order, chain store and football pools group. He was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where he read modern languages – he was already fluent in German and Italian. It was opera, however, which was his great love. He had worked at Glyndebourne Festival Opera before going up to university, and after Oxford he became a production student at the Vienna State Opera, combining this with a three-year course at the Vienna Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

By the end of his third year at the Academy Moores had produced the Vienna premiere of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, had worked as Assistant Producer at the San Carlo Opera House, Naples, the Geneva Festival and Rome Opera, and seemed set for a successful operatic career. At this point he received a letter from his father asking him to come home as he was needed in the firm. Family loyalty being paramount, he returned to Liverpool.

By 1977, he was Chairman of Littlewoods. Three years later he stepped down from the post, although still remaining on the Board. He was a director of a merchant bank from 1978 to 1992. From 1981 to 1983 he was a Governor of the BBC, and a Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1978 until 1985; from 1988 to 1992 he was a director of Scottish Opera. He received the Gold Medal of the Italian Republic in 1974, an Honorary MA from Christ Church, Oxford, in 1975, and was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Northern College of Music in 1985. In May 1992 he became Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire, and in the New Year's Honours List for 1991, he was made a CBE for his charitable services to the Arts.



Peter Moores, CBE, DL

Christina Burton/PMF

Whilst still in his early twenties, Peter Moores had started giving financial support to various young artists, several of whom – Joan Sutherland, Colin Davis and the late Geraint Evans amongst them – were to become world-famous. In 1964 he set aside a substantial part of his inheritance to establish the Peter Moores Foundation, a charity designed to support those causes dear to his heart: to make music and the arts more accessible to more people; to give encouragement to the young and to improve race relations.

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

In the field of music, the main areas supported by the Peter Moores Foundation are:

- the recording of operas from the core repertory sung in English translation; the recording or staging of rare Italian opera from the *bel canto* era of the early nineteenth century (repertoire which would otherwise only be accessible to scholars); the nurturing of promising young opera singers; new operatic work.

The Foundation awards scholarships annually to students and post-graduates for furthering their vocal studies at the Royal Northern College of Music. In addition, project awards may be given to facilitate language tuition in the appropriate country, attendance at masterclasses or summer courses, specialised repertoire study with an acknowledged expert in the field, or post-graduate performance training.

The Foundation encourages new operatic work by contributing to recordings, the publication of scores and stage productions.

Since 1964 the Foundation has supported the recording of more than forty operas, many of these sung in English, in translation. It has always been Peter Moores's belief that to enjoy opera to the full, there must be no language barrier, particularly for newcomers and particularly in the popular repertoire – hence the *Opera in English* series launched with Chandos in 1995. This includes many of the English language recordings funded by the Foundation in the 1970s and 1980s and is now the largest recorded collection of operas sung in English.

Bill Rafferty



Alan Opie as Figaro
(English National Opera)

22

Bill Rafferty



Della Jones as Rosina
(English National Opera)

23

Gioachino Rossini: Der Barbier von Sevilla

Rossini hat 40 Opern geschrieben – alle vor seinem 38. Geburtstag, als er noch weitere 38 Jahre zu leben hatte – und doch gab es eine Zeit, als man sich seiner nur als Komponist einer einzigen Oper erinnerte: dem *Barbiere di Siviglia*.

Das traf besonders in der Epoche zu, die Wagner unumschränkt beherrschte, ungefähr zwischen 1880 und 1920. Die vielen ernstesten Opern Rossinis waren in der Versenkung verschwunden, bis auf die eine oder andere Aufführung von *Guillaume Tell* oder *Mosè in Egitto*. Selbst komische Opern wie *L'italiana in Algeri* und *La Cenerentola*, überaus erfolgreich zu ihrer und wieder in unserer Zeit, waren untergegangen. Der *Barbiere* dagegen setzte unbeirrt seinen Siegeszug fort. Einige der besten Sänger traten Jahr um Jahr darin auf, ebenso einige der schlechtesten; nach 1940 wurde die Oper gar unter dem Titel *Once Over Lightly* zum Broadway-Musical verarbeitet, mit einem russischen Figaro; das aber war wohl des Guten zuviel.

Was hat dieses Werk an sich, das es zum Dauerbrenner macht? Erfolg nährt sich hin und wieder selbst: Es kann vorkommen, daß

von zwei Werken, sei es Drama oder Oper, die gleichermaßen bühnenwirksam sind, eines häufiger auf dem Programm steht als das andere, weil es bekannter ist. Der *Barbiere* war längst berühmt, als der ewig unter Druck stehende Rossini und sein Librettist Cesare Sterbini ihn im kalten römischen Winter des Jahres 1816 als Thema wählten. Beaumarchais' Komödie von 1775 behauptete sich nach wie vor auf der Bühne und tut es in Frankreich bis auf den heutigen Tag. Dazu trug der Triumph der Fortsetzung mit dem Titel *Le Mariage de Figaro* bei. (Das dritte Stück der Trilogie, *La Mère coupable* (Der neue Tartuffe), ist ein ödes, salbungsvolles Melodram: Beaumarchais war von der französischen Revolution und deren Forderung nach Ernsthaftigkeit eingenommen worden.) Der Original-*Barbiere*, eine raffinierte Intrigenkomödie, stützte sich auf die Konventionen der komischen Oper – Rückbesinnung auf das alte italienische Fastnachtsspiel, und das mit einer altbekannten Handlung vom greisen Vormund, dessen Plan, sein hübsches Mündel zu heiraten, von junger Liebe und gewitzten Bediensteten vereitelt wird; Beaumarchais

hatte ursprünglich sogar "Nummern" dazugeschrieben, die vertont werden sollten.

Was das Stück zu etwas Besondere machte, war die Figur des Figaro, eines ungewöhnlichen gewöhnlichen Mannes jener Sorte, die in der Revolution eine bedeutende Rolle spielen sollten: Hansdampf in allen Gassen, der sich mit Verstand durchs Leben schlägt, sozial Höhergestellten gegenüber respektlos ist (in gewissen Grenzen, solange sie noch höhergestellt waren), und immer bereit, ihnen eins auszuwischen oder sie auszunutzen. In der Oper, die nicht so viele Worte macht wie das Schauspiel, wird seine Figur ein wenig vergrößert; seine plebejische Vitalität schlägt durch in seiner berühmten Auftrittssarie, ebenso sein unumwundenes Interesse am Geld.

Nachdem das Theaterstück bestens eingeführt war, verwandelte Giovanni Paisiello, der führende italienische Komponist des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts, es in eine komische Oper. Dieser *Barbiere* machte nach seiner Uraufführung 1782 in St. Petersburg erfolgreich in ganz Europa die Runde. Die heute seltenen Darbietungen anlässlich von Festspielen zeigen, daß es sich um ein vergnügliches, melodisches Werk handelt, mit einer komischen Szene für Bartolos niesende und gähnende Dienerschaft, aber nach

gegenwärtigem Geschmack eher lahm und schwach. Als sich Rossini 1816 an die Arbeit machte, war Paisiello überholt, teilweise deshalb, weil Musik grundsätzlich innerhalb von etwa dreißig Jahren aus der Mode kam (ein Repertoire von immer wieder gespielten Werken begann sich gerade erst zu bilden), aber vor allem deshalb, weil die Jahre der Revolution und der napoleonischen Feldzüge ein neues Publikum hervorgebracht hatten: bürgerlicher, ungeduldiger, eifriger auf starke Empfindungen erpicht, insbesondere auf jene, die Militärmusik hervorruft. Rossini lieferte genau das, was es verlangte: Frische, Schmiß, Tempo.

Die Geschichte, daß die Premiere seines *Barbiere* schiefgelaufen sei, weil sich das Publikum im Namen Paisiellos empört habe, ist höchstwahrscheinlich eine Ente. Es war damals allgemein üblich, daß mehrere Komponisten Opern zum gleichen Thema, ja sogar nach ein und demselben Libretto schrieben. Rossini und Sterbini verwendeten für ihre Fassung einen neuen Titel (sie hieß zunächst *Almaviva* – passenderweise, denn der Star war der Tenor Manuel García) und spielten die berühmte Nies- und Gähnszene herunter; das waren normale Vorsichtsmaßnahmen. Außerdem ließen sie einen Zettel drucken, auf dem stand, daß sie dem alten

Komponisten (der nur drei Monate später sterben sollte) nicht zu nahe treten wollten. Passiert war jedoch offenbar folgendes: Rossini hatte sich den Zorn jüngerer, rivalisierender Komponisten zugezogen, und die Anhänger eines konkurrierenden Theaters nahmen übel, daß sich das Teatro Argentina auf das Gebiet der komischen Oper vorgewagt hatte. Hauptgrund für die Buhrufe am Premierenabend war jedoch, daß man es mit der üblichen Eile der italienischen Opernsaison diesmal etwas zu weit getrieben hatte.

Am Teatro Argentina, dem führenden Theater Roms, wären um diese Zeit normalerweise ernste Opern gelaufen. Daß man Rossini gebeten hatte, anstelle eines klassischen Dramas den *Barbiere* zu bearbeiten, hatte finanzielle Gründe: Mit dem Sturz Napoleons und der Rückkehr des Papstes hatte das Theater seine Subventionen eingebüßt, die in ganz Europa herrschende Wirtschaftskrise hatte die Publikumszahlen schwinden lassen, und komische Oper war relativ billig zu inszenieren. Dennoch mußte der Besitzer und Impresario verzweifelte Anstrengungen unternehmen, um eine Truppe zusammenzustellen ("Es ist schlimm genug, um einen armen Teufel wie mich Blut spucken zu lassen", schrieb er), und die Saison fing mit

vierzehn Tagen Verspätung an. Rossini blieben, nachdem er den ersten Teil des Librettos erhalten hatte (25. Januar), nicht ganz vier Wochen, bis er bei der Premiere (20. Februar) den Continuo-Part zu spielen hatte. Für einen Komponisten war das nichts Ungewöhnliches; aber das Ensemble war vermutlich erschöpft von der Hast, die den Saisonstart (mit *L'italiana in Algeri*) begleitet hatte, und anschließend davon, den *Barbiere* einstudieren und proben zu müssen, während es pro Woche fünf Vorstellungen gab. Einer holprigen Premiere folgten gelungene spätere Aufführungen, und von da an gab es für die Oper kein Halten mehr.

Nicht nur war sie unter den reinen komischen Opern italienischer Tradition eine der besten, sondern auch fast die letzte überhaupt. Rossinis *Cenerentola*, die im folgenden Jahr herauskam, und die bekanntesten komischen Werke Donizettis (*L'elisir d'amore* und *Don Pasquale*) haben sentimentale bzw. realistische Anklänge, die von einer gemütlicheren Epoche künden. Außerdem kam die komische Oper allmählich aus der Mode: Sie paßte weder zu den ängstlichen und verklemmten monarchischen Regimes, die nach dem Niedergang Napoleons wieder an die Macht kamen, noch zum

neuerdings auf Achtbarkeit bedachten Bürgertum. Der *Barbiere* jedoch destilliert den Charakter der komischen Oper alten Stils heraus, ein Zusammenfinden des Unsinnigen mit dem Rücksichtslosen.

"Er spielt mit allem: mit Witz, mit Philosophie, mit Dramatik, mit Darstellern und Publikum, mit dem ganzen Theater." So schrieb George Bernard Shaw über Oscar Wilde. Und so hätte man auch über Rossini schreiben können. (Es mag den Anschein haben, als entziehe sich das Spiel "mit Philosophie" seinem Zugriff – bis wir uns erinnern, daß Hegel und Schopenhauer, beides ernsthafte Philosophen, seine Werke sehr schätzten.) Von Anfang bis Ende spielt er mit den Konventionen der Oper – wie er es bereits in *Il turco in Italia* getan hatte: Darin schreibt eine der Figuren das Werk, während es abläuft. In der Eröffnungsszene des *Barbiere* verhöhnt die Danksagung der Musiker, die ein Ständchen bringen, die Angewohnheit von Opernchören, lautstarke und wiederholte Geräusche von sich zu geben, während sie eigentlich auf Zehenspitzen abzugehen hätten. Genauso hält es am Ende der Oper das Trio, in dessen Verlauf Figaro und die Liebenden solange die Notwendigkeit beteuern, leise zu sein, bis ihnen die Leiter zur Flucht abhanden

kommt. Sie alle sind die Vorläufer des Polizistenchors in *The Pirates of Penzance*, der sich seines "katzengleichen Schritts" rühmt. Die Figuren nutzen das Theater aus, um sich über ihre eigene Theatralik lustig zu machen.

Zu Anfang dieses abschließenden Trios übernimmt Figaro Almagivas schwärmerische Melismen, mit denen der Tenor seine und Rosinas Liebe feiert, anstatt ihre Flucht sicherzustellen. Dies ist die letzte von mehreren musikalischen Parodien. Bartolos Liedchen in der Gesangsstundenszene bedient sich der Musik, die er wohl in seiner Jugend (vor Paisiello) gehört hat, und seine große Arie mit den kunstvollen Wiederholungen nutzt musikalische Pedanterie, um den trockenen alten Rechtsgelehrten zu verspotten. Die endlosen Botschaften von Frieden und Freude, die der vermeintliche Abbé von sich gibt, parodieren die Vertonung solcher frommen Worte in manch einem Werk der Kirchenmusik. Figaros Loblied auf das Gold, das in der ersten Szene den Auftakt zu seinem Duett mit Almagiva bildet, läßt den unheilverkündenden Tonfall ernster Opern anklingen.

Am schärfsten wird die Parodie dort, wo Rossini die von ihm selbst bevorzugten Kunstgriffe aufs Korn nimmt – das Crescendo,

das in einen lärmenden Ausbruch übergeht, und die elegante Klangkaskade der Koloratur. In seinen ersten Opern kann beides willkürlich eingesetzt erscheinen. Im *Barbiere* paßt sogar übertriebenes Crescendo bestens zu dem, was gesungen wird – als die Verleumdung in Basilio's gefeierter Arie immer weiter um sich greift. Erfahrene Ohren – wie sie das ursprüngliche Publikum hatte – deuten das Crescendo mit seinen jähen Modulationen, die im "Kanonenschuß" gipfeln, als Auftrumpfen: "Seht ihr? Ich kann mindestens so schön dramatisch sein wie die anderen?" Auch das ist eine feinsinnige Verulkung des Operngenres.

Auf Koloraturen greift Rossini in der Auftrittsarie des Tenors zurück, um Almaviva als temperamentvollen, anmutigen Liebhaber darzustellen. (Die Oper endete ursprünglich kurz vor dem abschließenden Ensemble mit einer ausführlichen Glanznummer für García, doch das hielt zu sehr die Handlung auf; später übertrug der Komponist sie der Titelheldin von *Cenerentola*, einem Mezzosopran, als Schlußnummer.) An anderer Stelle dienen Koloraturen dazu, Rosinas Persönlichkeit scharfe Konturen zu geben. Ihre berühmte erste Arie verdeutlicht ihr Durchsetzungsvermögen, ihre Beherrschung der Situation und ihre

Fähigkeit, sich ironisch auszulassen. Dies ist keine unglücklich verliebte romantische Heldin: Glänzend und spöttisch humorvoll in ihrem Duett mit Figaro, durch und durch reizend und amüsant im letzten Teil der Gesangsstunde (während Bartolo schläft) ist sie, wie wir heraushören können, ein von sich überzeugtes junges Ding. (Im 19. Jahrhundert nahmen sich die Soprane der Partie an und machten aus der Gesangsstunde ein Konzert, das mit allem möglichen gespickt war, vom Heimatlied bis hin zu extravaganteren Variationen. An sich gehört sie einem Mezzosopran wie Della Jones – in der laut Rossini natürlichen Stimmlage der italienischen Frau. Dann wirkt die Gesangsstundenszene am besten so, wie sie geschrieben steht.)

Der Kern der Oper steckt in den zwei vortrefflich gestalteten Ensemblenummern – dem langen Finale zum I. Akt und dem Quintett, in dem die übrigen vier Hauptfiguren dem verwirrten Don Basilio gut zureden, wieder ins Bett zu gehen. Bei beiden werden die unterschiedlichen Abschnitte durch eine kecke, immer wiederkehrende Phrase und eine durchgehende, einprägsame Begleitung zusammengehalten. Von Menschen, die aussehen und sich anhören wie Maschinen, geht im Theater ein starker Anreiz

aus, zu lachen. Der überstürzte Schlußteil des Finales zum I. Akt sorgt für das, was seinerzeit der für Rossini typische "planmäßige und vollkommene Wahnsinn" genannt wurde. Bei einer ausschließlich italienischen Besetzung, die den Originaltext voll zur Geltung bringt (was bei Aufnahmen, die ein internationales Publikum erreichen sollen, nicht oft zustande kommt), erlangt dies erhebliche Bedeutung. Das gleiche gilt in anderer Form, wenn wie bei der vorliegenden Einspielung alle Sänger dieselbe Sprache sprechen – auch wenn es die Sprache eines Landes ist, dessen frühmorgendliche Temperaturen kaum je zu Serenaden anregen.

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Übersetzung: Anne Steeb/Bernd Müller

Inhaltsangabe

Graf Almaviva, ein spanischer Edelmann, ist in Rosina verliebt, das Mündel von Doktor Bartolo, einem alten Arzt, der vorhat, sie selbst zu heiraten.

I. Akt

Auf der Straße vor Bartolos Haus

Der Graf bringt Rosina mit Hilfe einer Schar von Musikern ein Ständchen. Um ihre

Bekannntschaft zu machen, versichert er sich der Unterstützung des Barbiers Figaro, der sich mit seiner Fähigkeit brüstet, in der ganzen Stadt für Ordnung zu sorgen. Trotz der Wachsamkeit ihres Vormunds gelingt es Rosina, einen Brief vom Balkon zu werfen, in dem sie Almaviva nach seinem Namen fragt und seine Artigkeiten erwidert. Der Graf stellt sich Rosina als armer Student mit Namen Lindoro vor. Figaro rät ihm, er solle sich, um Einlaß ins Haus zu erlangen, als Soldat ausgeben, der bei Doktor Bartolo einquartiert werden soll, und so tun, als sei er betrunken.

Im Haus

Bartolo sind Gerüchte über Almavivas Interesse an Rosina zu Ohren gekommen, und er beschließt, sie unverzüglich zu heiraten. Rosinas Gesangslehrer, ein skrupelloser Geistlicher namens Don Basilio, ist Bartolos Vertrauter. Almaviva tritt als betrunkenen Soldat verkleidet auf, um beim Doktor Quartier zu beziehen. Rosina ist beglückt, als sie in ihm ihren Bewunderer erkennt. Der Ärger des Doktors über das Gebaren des "Soldaten" verursacht solchen Aufruhr, daß die Nachbarn die Wache rufen. Doch der Graf entzieht sich der Festnahme, worüber Bartolo sehr wütend ist.

II. Akt

In Bartolos Haus, später am selben Tag

Der Graf legt eine neue Verkleidung an und betritt das Haus als Don Alonso, ein Musiklehrer. Er behauptet, er sei gekommen, um Rosina in Vertretung von Don Basilio, der plötzlich erkrankt sei, eine Gesangsstunde zu geben. Während des Unterrichts teilt der Graf Rosina heimlich sein Vorhaben mit, sie um Mitternacht zu entführen. Figaro, der erschienen ist, um Bartolo zu rasieren, schafft es, den Schlüssel zur Balkontür an sich zu bringen. Da trifft zu ihrer Bestürzung Basilio ein, wahrt jedoch, als ihm ein Beutel Geld zugesteckt wird, den Anschein, krank zu sein. Bartolo, der dennoch Verdacht geschöpft hat, ertappt die Liebenden bei einem kompromittierenden Gespräch.

Als der Graf und Figaro fort sind, hält Bartolo Rosina den Brief vor, den sie an Lindoro gerichtet hat, und überrumpelt sie mit der Behauptung, Lindoro sei ein Abgesandter Almayivas, der sie nur ihres Geldes wegen heiraten wolle. Sie erklärt sich bereit, Bartolo sofort zu ehelichen, und erzählt ihm von der geplanten Entführung.

Figaro und der Graf kehren zur verabredeten Zeit zurück und steigen durchs Fenster ein. Rosina weist "Lindoro" zurück, bis sie erfährt,

daß er selbst Almayiva ist. Sie sinkt in seine Arme. Doch die Flucht ist ihnen verwehrt, denn Bartolo hat die Leiter vor dem Fenster entfernt. Basilio erscheint mit einem Notar, der Rosina und ihren Vormund trauen soll, läßt sich aber ohne weiteres bestechen, statt dessen als Zeuge der Eheschließung Rosinas und des Grafen beizuwohnen. Bartolo kommt zu spät und muß einsehen, daß er sie verloren hat.

Im Lauf der vergangenen zehn Jahre hat sich **Bruce Ford** als vielseitig einsetzbarer Belcanto-Tenor einen Namen gemacht und sich auf Mozart- und Rossini-Partien spezialisiert. Nach seinem Debüt 1990 bei den Rossini-Festspielen in Pesaro, wo er mit weniger als zwei Wochen Vorlauf als Agorante in *Ricciardo e Zoraide* aufgetreten ist, hat er regelmäßig in Pesaro gastiert (und Rossinis *Otello*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* und *Zelmira* gesungen) und war an den meisten bedeutenden Opernhäusern und Festspielstätten Europas zu sehen. Am Teatro alla Scala in Mailand ist er unter anderem als Uberto (*La donna del lago* unter Riccardo Muti), Paolo Erizzo (*Maometto II*) und Belmonte (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail* unter Wolfgang Sawallisch) aufgetreten. Mit der Royal Opera, Covent Garden hat er eine Reihe von Erfolgen gefeiert, beispielsweise als

Almayiva, in der Titelrolle von Mozarts *Mitridate, re di Ponto*, als Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, Lindoro in *L'italiana in Algeri* und Osiride in *Mosè in Egitto*. Mit Beifall bedacht wurden seine Auftritte in San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Salzburg, Amsterdam, Zürich, Lausanne, Genf, Catania, Florenz, Neapel, Bologna, Lyon und Paris.

Bruce Ford hat für Opera Rara zahlreiche Tonträger aufgenommen, darunter Meyerbeers *Il crociato in Egitto*, Mayrs *Medea in Corinto*, Donizettis *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, Rossinis *Ricciardo e Zoraide*, Pacinis *Maria, regina d'Inghilterra*, Donizettis *Maria de Rudenz*, Rossinis *Otello* und zwei Soloprogramme (*Rossini – Three Tenors* und *Romantic Heroes*). Für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation hat er ein Soloprogramm mit Opernarien aufgezeichnet.

Andrew Shore gilt als der herausragende Buffo-Bariton Großbritanniens und ist ein ausgezeichnete Sänger und Schauspieler. Er hat für alle großen britischen Opernensembles gearbeitet, so auch für die English National Opera, die Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Opera North, die Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Scottish Opera und Welsh National Opera, und ist im Ausland an der San Diego

Opera, der New Israeli Opera, der Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, der Opéra-Comique, dem Gran teatro del Liceu in Barcelona, in Lyon, Nantes, Montpellier, Kopenhagen, Amsterdam, Vancouver und Ottawa aufgetreten. Seine zahlreichen Verpflichtungen haben die Titelrollen von *Wozzeck*, *Falstaff*, *King Priam*, *Gianni Schicchi* und *Don Pasquale* eingeschlossen. Darüber hinaus hat er Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*) gesungen, Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Papageno, den Zaren Dodon (*Le Coq d'or*), Leandro (*Die Liebe zu den drei Orangen*), Dikoj (*Katja Kabanowa*), Dr. Kolenaty (*Die Sache Makropulos*), Šiškov (*Aus einem Totenhaus*), Frank (*Die Fledermaus*), den Baron (*La Vie parisienne*), Baron Trombonok (*Il viaggio a Reims*), Warlaam (*Boris Godunow*) und Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*). Für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation hat er an folgenden Aufnahmen mitgewirkt: *L'elisir d'amore*, *Don Pasquale*, *La bohème* und Highlights aus dem *Rosenkavalier* sowie der vorliegende *Barbiere di Siviglia* und die preisgekrönte *Tosca*.

Della Jones wurde in Neath geboren und am Royal College of Music ausgebildet, wo sie zahlreiche Preise gewonnen hat, darunter das

Stipendium Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship. Sie ist zusammen mit allen bedeutenden britischen Operntruppen, in vielen Teilen Europas, in den USA, in Kanada, Rußland und Japan aufgetreten. Ihr Repertoire umfaßt die Titelrollen von *Ariodante*, *La Cenerentola* und *Carmen*, Rosina, Herodias (*Salome*), Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*), Marcellina, Adalgisa, Dido (*Les Troyens* und *Dido and Aeneas*), Donna Elvira, Brangäne, Hermia (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Juno (*Semele*) und die Schenkwirtin (*Boris Godunow*). Della Jones tritt regelmäßig in Rundfunk und Fernsehen auf, und zu ihren vielen Aufnahmen gehören *Alcina*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *La clemenza di Tito* und Korngolds *Die Kathrin*. Außerdem hat sie für Opera Rara *Gabriella di Vergy* (Donizetti) aufgezeichnet, *Maria Padilla* (Donizetti), *Il crociato in Egitto* (Meyerbeer), *Ricciardo e Zoraide* (Rossini) und *Dinorah* (Meyerbeer). Für Chandos hat sie unter anderem *Sancta Susanna* (Hindemith) und *The Bear* (Walton) aufgenommen, für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation *La traviata* und *Giulio Cesare*.

Alan Opie, der aus Cornwall stammt, hat an der Guildhall School of Music und am

London Opera Centre studiert. Er war viele Spielzeiten lang Baritonsolist an der English National Opera und hat zusammen mit allen bedeutenden britischen Opernensembles gesungen. Außerhalb Großbritanniens ist er an den Opernhäusern von Bayreuth, Paris (Opéra national de Paris-Bastille), Amsterdam, Chicago, Mailand (Teatro alla Scala), München (Bayerische Staatsoper), Berlin, Wien, Brüssel und New York (The Metropolitan Opera) aufgetreten. In jüngster Zeit war er als Beckmesser (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) an der Wiener Staatsoper zu sehen und wurde erneut dorthin eingeladen, um als Balstrode in *Peter Grimes* aufzutreten, eine Rolle, die er auch für die mit dem Grammy ausgezeichnete Chandos-Aufzeichnung der Oper gesungen hat. Er ist in Luciano Berios *Outis* an der Mailänder Scala und am Châtelet théâtre musical in Paris aufgetreten, und als Mr. Redburn in einer teils szenischen Aufführung der zweiaktigen Fassung von Britten's *Billy Budd* am Londoner Barbican Centre, die danach zur Herausgabe im Frühjahr 2000 von Chandos aufgezeichnet wurde. Außerdem war er an folgenden Chandos-Aufnahmen beteiligt: *The Rape of Lucretia* (Britten), *Martin's Lie* (Menotti), *Troilus and Cressida* (Walton) sowie *Maria*

Stuarda, *Pagliacci* und *La bohème* (jeweils in Zusammenarbeit mit der Peter Moores Foundation).

Peter Rose wurde in Canterbury geboren, hat an der University of East Anglia Musik studiert und wurde von Ellis Keeler an der Guildhall School of Music and Drama ausgebildet. Sein Operndebüt gab er als Komtur beim Gastspiel der Glyndebourne Festival Opera 1986 in Hongkong und war dann bis 1989 Baßsolist an der Welsh National Opera. Er ist unter der Leitung der führenden Dirigenten der Welt und mit allen bedeutenden britischen Operntruppen aufgetreten, darunter die Royal Opera, Covent Garden, die English National Opera und Scottish Opera. Außerhalb Großbritanniens hat er an der Metropolitan Opera in New York gesungen, an der Opéra-Comique in Paris, der Deutschen Staatsoper Berlin, der Hamburgischen Staatsoper, der Wiener Staatsoper, der Lyric Opera of Chicago und der New Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv, in San Francisco, Amsterdam, Köln, Rom und Seattle. Er war bei bedeutenden Festspielen auf der ganzen Welt wie jenen in Orange, Aix-en-Provence, Istanbul und Bregenz zu Gast, sowie beim Maggio musicale in Florenz. Zu seinen zahlreichen Partien gehören Ramfis, Fasolt,

Hunding, Pimen, Osmin, König Marke, Baron Ochs, Rocco, Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Banquo (*Macbeth*), Cadmus/Somnus (*Semele*), Geßler (*Guillaume Tell*), Mustafa (*L'italiana in Algeri*) und Walter (*Luisa Miller*). Auf Tonträger hat er unter anderem für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation die preisgekrönte *Tosca* und den vorliegenden *Barbiere di Siviglia* aufgenommen.

Jennifer Rhys-Davies, die am Trinity College of Music ausgebildet wurde, hat in bedeutenden Rollen wie Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, Konstanze, die Königin der Nacht, Pamina, Miss Jessel (*The Turn of the Screw*), Lucia, Semiramide und Lady Macbeth große Erfolge erzielt. An der Royal Opera, Covent Garden ist sie als Berta (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Amaltea (*Mosè in Egitto*), Clorinda (*La Cenerentola*), Marianne (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Anna (*Nabucco*) und Sieglinde aufgetreten. Außerdem hat sie beim Glyndebourne Festival die italienische Sängerin (*Capriccio*) gegeben, Olympia, Antonia und Giulietta (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) am Grand théâtre de Limoges und Elisabetta (*Maria Stuarda*) am Stadttheater Basel. Sie hat unter anderem für Opera Rara Mercadantes *Orazi e Curiazi* und

für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation Highlights aus dem *Rosenkavalier* auf Tonträger aufgenommen.

Der **Chor der English National Opera** ist eine Stütze der gesamten Truppe. In zahllosen Produktionen der English National Opera hat er das Publikum mit der Kraft seines Gesangs und der Intensität seiner Darstellung entzückt. Der Chor besteht aus achtundsechzig Sängern, und die weit gefächerten Talente und Erfahrungen, die sie in ihre Darbietungen einbringen, kennzeichnen jede Inszenierung, an der sie mitwirken. Besondere Triumphe für den Chor waren Prokofjews *Krieg und Frieden*, Schostakowitschs *Lady Macbeth von Mzensk*, Brittens *Billy Budd* und *Peter Grimes*, Mussorgskis *Boris Godunow*, Bizets *Carmen* und Verdis *Otello*. Seine Aufnahme der letztgenannten Oper in der von Mark Elder geleiteten Inszenierung von Jonathan Miller wird unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation demnächst bei Chandos erscheinen, ebenso seine Aufzeichnung des *Werther* mit Dame Janet Baker unter Sir Charles Mackerras und des gefeierten *Ring-*Zyklus unter der Leitung von Sir Reginald Goodall. Andere Aufnahmen des Chors für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation

sind *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (Regie: Jonathan Miller) und *La traviata*.

Das von der Kritik ebenso wie vom Publikum gefeierte **Orchester der English National Opera** unter Konzertmeister Barry Griffiths hat in den letzten Jahren mehrere angesehene Preise gewonnen, beispielsweise den Musikpreis der *Royal Philharmonic Society* und einen *Olivier Award* für herausragende Leistungen im Bereich der Oper. Das Orchester ist von zentraler Bedeutung für das künstlerische Leben der Truppe und war nicht nur bei Opernvorstellungen im Londoner Coliseum, sondern auch auf dem Konzertpodium zu sehen. Zusätzlich sind viele der Musiker am Baylis-Programm der für Schul- und Gemeindearbeit zuständigen Abteilung des Orchesters beteiligt und arbeiten mit dem English National Opera Studio an der Entwicklung neuer Opern, speziell an Mark Anthony Turnages *The Silver Tassie*, das im Februar 2000 uraufgeführt wird. Das Orchester hat an vielen Einspielungen mitgewirkt, zum Beispiel am gefeierten *Ring-*Zyklus unter der Leitung von Sir Reginald Goodall, der demnächst bei Chandos herauskommen wird. Dies geschieht unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores

Foundation, die sich auch auf seine Einspielung des *Werther* mit Dame Janet Baker unter Sir Charles Mackerras und von Verdis *Otello* unter Mark Elder erstreckt. Andere Aufnahmen des Orchesters für Chandos und die Peter Moores Foundation sind *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (in der Inszenierung von Jonathan Miller) und *La traviata*.

Gabriele Bellini, in Legnago bei Verona geboren, wurde am Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello in Venedig und am Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Mailand ausgebildet, wo er sein Studium in den Fächern Horn, Komposition und Dirigieren abschloß. Anschließend nahm er weiter Dirigierunterricht bei Franco Ferrara, Hermann Scherchen, Sergiu Celibidache und Hans Swarowsky. Seine Verpflichtungen haben ihn nach ganz Europa und die USA geführt, beispielsweise zur jahrelangen Zusammenarbeit mit Claudio Abbado am Teatro alla Scala in Mailand. Er hat als

Künstlerischer Leiter und Musikdirektor der Connecticut Grand Opera amtiert, als Gastdirigent des American Symphony Orchester und des Cincinnati Opera House. Die Verbindung, die er 1988 mit dem Orkest van Hetoosten am Opernforum im niederländischen Enschede angeknüpft hatte, gipfelte in seiner Ernennung zum Chefdirigenten des Orchesters. Von 1992 bis 1997 dirigierte er dort unter anderem Aufführungen von *Macbeth*, *Stiffelio*, *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, *Falstaff*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca* und *Wozzeck*. 1998 eröffnete er die Donizetti-Festspiele in Bergamo mit *L'elisir d'amore* und ist seither zurückgekehrt, um *La bohème* zu dirigieren. In letzter Zeit hat Gabriele Bellini außerdem *Norma* in Gröningen dirigiert, *La rondine* am Teatro del Giglio in Lucca, *Linda di Chamounix* in Bologna und *I puritani* in Spanien. Darüber hinaus hat er an der Komischen Oper Berlin *Eine Nacht in Venedig* geleitet und hat an der Norwegischen Oper in Oslo, der Royal Opera, Covent Garden, in Göteborg und Leipzig gastiert.

Gioachino Rossini: Le Barbier de Séville

Rossini écrivit 40 opéras, tous avant son 38ème anniversaire, c'est-à-dire pendant la première moitié de son existence, puisqu'il lui restait encore 38 ans à vivre. Pourtant, à un certain moment, il ne fut plus connu que pour avoir composé la musique du *Barbiere di Siviglia*.

C'est au moment où régnait la musique de Wagner, entre 1880 et 1920, que l'oubli sévit particulièrement. Les opéras sérieux disparurent de la scène, à part *Guillaume Tell* et *Mosè in Egitto* auxquels furent accordées quelques représentations occasionnelles en raison de leur statut de chefs-d'œuvre anciens. Les opéras comiques, et même *L'italiana in Algeri* et *La Cenerentola* qui avaient connu en leur temps (et connaissent aujourd'hui) un énorme succès ne furent plus qu'un souvenir. Mais *Il barbiere di Siviglia* poursuivit sa carrière, bon an mal an. Parfois ce furent les meilleurs chanteurs du moment qui tiraient les rôles, parfois ce furent les pires. Dans les années 40, à New York/Broadway, le *Barbiere* fut transformé en comédie musicale, sous le titre: *Once Over Lightly* (Une fois de plus, légèrement) avec un Figaro russe, mais cette "fois de plus" s'avéra une fois de trop!

Qu'y-a-t-il donc dans cette œuvre qui la maintienne toujours aussi fraîche? Le succès, autrefois et aujourd'hui, se répète de lui-même. Les deux œuvres, opéra et comédie devenue classique, sont aussi attirantes sur une scène lyrique que sur une scène de théâtre, l'une étant plus souvent représentée que l'autre parce qu'elle est mieux connue. La comédie était déjà célèbre quand Rossini, à court de temps, et son librettiste, Cesare Sterbini, décidèrent de s'en servir pendant le dur hiver romain de 1816. Le chef-d'œuvre de Beaumarchais (1775) se jouait toujours avec autant de succès, aidé par le triomphe de la suite de l'histoire, *Le Mariage de Figaro* (La troisième pièce de la trilogie, *La Mère coupable* (1792), est une comédie larmoyante et sentencieuse; Beaumarchais ayant été dépassé dans sa ferveur frondeuse par la révolution de 1789). Le *Barbiere* d'origine, comédie étincelante, dans laquelle brille le génie de l'intrigue, reposait en fait sur les mêmes fondations que l'opéra comique – celles de la vieille comédie de masques italienne, avec ses machinations centenaires: le vieux tuteur qui se propose d'épouser sa jolie pupille voit l'amour déjouer ses plans, assisté en cela par

des serviteurs intelligents et madrés. Mieux encore, pour faciliter la mise en musique, Beaumarchais avait écrit sa pièce avec des numéros.

Mais ce qui donne au *Barbiere* son caractère spécial, c'est le personnage de Figaro, homme hors du commun, du genre de ceux qui allaient jouer un rôle important dans la révolution. Maître Jacques à trente-six métiers, il vit d'inventions; irrévérencieux envers ses supérieurs (mais seulement jusqu'au point où leur supériorité le permet), il est toujours prêt à les rouler ou à les exploiter. Dans l'opéra, les mots étant, par nécessité, beaucoup moins nombreux que dans la pièce, le personnage est dessiné avec moins de subtilité; dès son air d'entrée au premier acte, il fait étalage d'un dynamisme plébéien et d'un penchant pour les pièces d'or.

La comédie de Beaumarchais devenue fameuse, Giovanni Paisiello, compositeur italien très en vogue à la fin du 18ème siècle, se chargea d'en faire un opéra comique. Créé à Saint-Petersbourg en 1782, son *Barbiere* voyagea avec grand succès à travers l'Europe. Aujourd'hui, quelques rares représentations de festivals, révèlent une œuvre charmante et mélodieuse, avec une scène assez drôle au cours de laquelle les serviteurs de Bartolo

éternuent et bâillent; mais dans l'ensemble une œuvre un peu trop fade et traînante pour les goûts modernes. Lorsque Rossini se mit à l'ouvrage en 1816, Paisiello n'était plus en vogue. Sa musique avait passé de mode en trente ans (un répertoire d'œuvres qui se rejetaient constamment commençait à se former), et surtout la révolution et la période napoléonienne avaient ouvert accès à un public nouveau, plus bourgeois, plus impatient, plus réceptif aux sensations fortes, à la musique militaire notamment, et Rossini lui offrait ce qui lui plaisait alors: pétulance, exaltation, entrain.

L'histoire de la première représentation du *Barbiere* de Rossini, victime d'une cabale montée par les défenseurs de Paisiello, est sans doute une invention. A cette époque, l'usage permettait à plusieurs compositeurs d'écrire des opéras sur le même sujet, et parfois sur le même livret. De plus Rossini et Sterbini avaient pris deux sages précautions; ils avaient modifié le titre (le titre d'origine: *Almaviva*, convenait parfaitement au tenant du rôle-titre, le ténor-vedette Manuel García) et ils avaient considérablement abrégé la scène des éternuements et bâillements. Plus encore, ils avaient fait publier une note déclarant qu'ils n'avaient nullement l'intention de froisser le

vieux compositeur (qui mourut trois mois plus tard). Ce qui se produisit ressemblerait plutôt à une démonstration de jalousie; de jeunes compositeurs rivaux et quelques abonnés d'un théâtre concurrent protestèrent parce que, selon eux, le Teatro Argentina aurait outrepassé ses droits en montant un opéra comique. Cependant, au fond, les vrais problèmes de la première soirée étaient tout simplement le résultat d'une course frénétique contre la montre, pour ouvrir à temps la saison d'opéra; la course, bien qu'habituelle, avait été, cette fois-là, un peu trop frénétique.

L'Argentina, principal théâtre de Rome, aurait dû normalement présenter un grand opéra. Mais, pour économiser de l'argent, la direction demanda à Rossini d'écrire un opéra comique au lieu d'un drame lyrique classique. Après la chute de Napoléon et le retour du pape, le théâtre avait perdu ses subsides; et la crise économique, étendue à toute l'Europe, se manifestait, dans la salle, par des spectateurs moins nombreux. Un opéra comique revenait moins cher à monter qu'un grand opéra (ce dernier exigeait un nombre d'artistes impressionnant que le propriétaire-impresario ne pouvait engager, il écrivait: "un pauvre homme comme moi en arrive à pleurer des larmes de sang"). Finalement, la saison s'ouvrit

avec deux semaines de retard. Quatre semaines s'étaient à peine écoulées entre la rédaction de la première partie du livret (25 janvier) et la création du Barbier (20 février) avec Rossini au continuo, selon la coutume. Pour un compositeur, ce régime accéléré n'était peut-être pas très éloigné de l'ordinaire, mais pour les chanteurs, il frisait l'intolérable; ils étaient exténués. Pendant la bousculade des préparatifs de la saison (qui avait commencé par l'*Italiana in Algeri*), ils avaient dû apprendre les rôles du *Barbiere*, ensuite, alors qu'ils interprétaient l'*Italiana* sur scène cinq soirs par semaine, ils répétaient *Il barbiere* dans la journée. En fin de compte, la première et ses commotions furent vite oubliées grâce au succès de l'opéra, qui n'a jamais failli depuis.

Opéra comique de pure tradition italienne, le *Barbiere* est aussi le dernier du genre. *La Cenerentola* de Rossini, qui suivit un an après, et par la suite les deux grands succès comiques de Donizetti, *L'elisir d'amore* et *Don Pasquale* expriment des sentiments, un certain réalisme qui annoncent une autre époque et un style plus direct. Le genre lui-même commença à passer de mode; après la chute de Napoléon, les régimes royalistes timorés au pouvoir, et les nouvelles classes moyennes, très respectables, ne pouvaient guère l'apprécier. Seul le *Barbiere*

survécut en conservant son caractère de vieil opéra comique, à la fois absurde et impitoyable.

"Il joue de tout: humeur, philosophie, drame, et avec tous: acteurs, public et le théâtre entier" écrivait Bernard Shaw au sujet d'Oscar Wilde. On pourrait en dire autant de Rossini (la philosophie semblerait peut-être hors de son domaine, mais il ne faut pas oublier que Hegel et Schopenhauer, deux grands et graves philosophes, admiraient beaucoup ses œuvres). Du début à la fin du *Barbiere*, Rossini se joue des conventions de l'opéra (il l'avait déjà fait; dans *Il turco in Italia*, un des personnages écrit le scénario au fur et à mesure que l'action se déroule). Dès la première scène, les musiciens, ayant donné la sérénade, remercient à tue-tête et ridiculisent ainsi les chœurs d'opéra chantant à pleine voix la même phrase, plusieurs fois, alors qu'il serait temps de partir sans se faire remarquer. A la fin de l'opéra, Figaro et le couple des amants répètent qu'il leur faut déguerpir ... si souvent que l'échelle de la fuite leur échappe. (Ils sont les précurseurs des policiers de l'opérette *The Pirates of Penzance*, qui, en chœur, chantent longuement "En Catimini".) Ces personnages se servent du théâtre pour railler leurs propres personnalités théâtrales.

Au début de ce même trio, Figaro imite avec ironie Almaviva et ses mélismes [groupes de notes chantées sur une seule syllabe] au clair de lune, pour réaffirmer son amour envers Rosine au lieu de s'enfuir avec elle. Mais ce n'est là que la dernière d'une série de parodies musicales. Dans la scène de la leçon, la petite chanson de Bartolo contrefait la musique qu'il aurait entendue dans sa jeunesse (antérieure à Paisiello), et son grand air aux répétitions poussées, musicalement pédant, se gausse indirectement du vieux notaire desséché. Le début de la même scène, avec l'abbé qui semble prêcher sans fin la "bonne nouvelle", paix et béatitude, est une petite moquerie des airs de cantiques sur lesquels se chantent ces paroles. L'éloge de l'or, que prononce Figaro au premier acte dans son duo avec Almaviva, se fait l'écho des lignes prophétiques du grand opéra.

La parodie va même plus loin lorsque Rossini satirise ses propres inventions – le crescendo qui va jusqu'au déchaînement et la cascade élégante de notes coloratura. Dans ses opéras sérieux, les deux peuvent être arbitraires. Dans *Il barbiere*, le crescendo le plus frappant est, pour une fois, parfaitement adapté à ce qui se chante – la calomnie se répand graduellement, enfle et menace (le fameux grand air de Basilio). Pour

les oreilles éduquées, comme celles du public de la création, le crescendo – avec ses modulations soudaines et son apogée en coup de canon – semble dire: “Vous voyez? Après tout je peux très bien me faire “dramatique” avec ce que j’ai de meilleur!”, autre moyen subtil de narguer l’opéra.

Quant au coloratura, Rossini s’en sert dans le premier air du ténor pour présenter Almaziva sous la forme d’un amant, pressant et élégant (l’opéra d’origine, juste avant le grand final tous personnages en scène, offrait un passage complexe au ténor, pour que García puisse faire étalage de sa virtuosité vocale. Mais il paralysait l’action. Aussi le compositeur l’utilisa-t-il dans un autre opéra, *La Cenerentola*, en le confiant à la mezzo; le rideau tombe juste après son coup d’éclat). Ailleurs, le coloratura sert à dessiner finement le portrait de Rosine. Son (premier) fameux grand air témoigne de son assurance, de sa maîtrise de la situation, de son talent pour l’ironie. Ce n’est pas une héroïne romantique qui se meurt d’amour. Éclatante et sardonique dans son duo avec Figaro; charmante et joyeuse vers la fin de la scène de la leçon (quand Bartolo s’est endormi), c’est une jeune femme qui a bien la tête sur les épaules. (Au 19^{ème} siècle les sopranos s’approprièrent le

rôle et transformèrent la leçon en un récital truffé d’airs incroyables, y compris d’extravagantes variations sur de vieux airs populaires. Le rôle de Rosine fut conçu pour une mezzo, comme Della Jones, “à la voix italienne naturelle” précisait Rossini - et la scène de la leçon est beaucoup mieux, telle que le compositeur l’a écrite.)

Les parties optimales de l’opéra sont deux morceaux pour ensemble, superbement ouvragés: le long Finale de l’acte I et le quintette dans lequel quatre des personnages principaux veulent convaincre Don Basilio, interloqué, qu’il doit retourner au lit. A travers les sections changeantes, toutes les parties restent liées entre elles par une petite phrase musicale guillerette qui revient quand il le faut, et par un accompagnement impétueux et ferme. La vue et le son d’êtres humains qui se comportent comme des machines a toujours provoqué le rire au théâtre. La section fougueuse qui met fin à l’acte I, a tout l’air, selon une expression du temps de Rossini, “d’une folie organisée et totale”. A cet endroit, (quelques fois aussi ailleurs), Rossini laisse la musique prendre le dessus sur les mots. Pourtant les mots disent quelque chose; par exemple “jaune”, quand tout le monde répète à Basilio qu’il a le teint “jaune”. Et une fois

que Rosine a longuement chanté sa docilité, elle détruit l’impression d’humilité qu’elle a créée par un seul petit “mais” bien servi. Certes, avec une distribution entièrement italienne (que l’on n’entend pas souvent sur des disques destinés à une clientèle internationale), qui fait ressortir de son mieux les paroles originales, les mots-clé ne passent pas inaperçus. Mais ils se remarquent aussi, évidemment d’une façon différente, quand, comme c’est le cas ici, tous les chanteurs parlent la même langue, même si cette langue est celle d’un pays dont la température matinale, juste avant le lever du jour, encourage rarement les sérénades.

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Traduction: Paulette Hutchinson

Le Barbier de Séville

Le Comte Almaziva, un homme issu de la noblesse espagnole, est amoureux de Rosine, la pupille du Dr Bartolo, un vieux médecin qui a lui-même l’intention d’épouser Rosine.

Acte I

Dans la rue, devant la maison du Dr Bartolo
Le Comte, aidé par une troupe de musiciens, chante la sérénade sous les fenêtres de Rosine.

Afin de lui être présenté, il réussit à gagner l’aide de Figaro, le barbier, qui se fait gloire de gérer les intrigues amoureuses de la ville. En dépit de l’attention de son tuteur, Rosine trouve le moyen de faire tomber une lettre de son balcon dans laquelle elle lui demande son nom et lui déclare la réciprocité de ses sentiments. Le Comte se présente alors à Rosine sous les traits d’un pauvre étudiant répondant au nom de Lindoro. Afin d’être admis en la demeure, Figaro suggère au Comte de se faire passer pour un soldat, ivre, demandant à être logé chez le Dr Bartolo.

A l’intérieur de la demeure

Dr Bartolo a eu vent de rumeurs au sujet de l’intérêt d’Almaziva pour Rosine et décide de l’épouser sur le champ. Le maître de chant de Rosine, un prêtre sans scrupules du nom de Basilio, est le confident de Bartolo. Almaziva, déguisé en soldat ivre, arrive chez le docteur afin d’y prendre ses quartiers. Rosine est ravie lorsqu’elle reconnaît son admirateur. Le désagrément qu’éprouve le docteur devant le comportement du “soldat” déclenche une telle querelle que les voisins décident de faire appel à la milice. Le Comte échappe à l’arrestation, au grand courroux de Bartolo.

Acte II

Dans la demeure de Bartolo, plus tard même jour
Le Comte s'affuble d'un nouveau déguisement et pénètre dans la demeure sous les traits de Don Alonso, un professeur de musique. Il déclare qu'il vient donner à Rosine une leçon de chant à la place de Don Basilio qui est soudain tombé malade. Sous couvert de donner la leçon à Rosine, le Comte annonce à Rosine qu'il l'enlèvera de la maison paternelle à minuit. Figaro, qui vient d'arriver pour raser Bartolo, réussit à se faire donner les clés du balcon. A la consternation de tous, Basilio apparaît mais on lui presse alors une bourse bien pleine dans la main afin qu'il continue à prétendre qu'il est malade. Bartolo, dont les soupçons se sont éveillés, surprend les amoureux au cours d'une conversation compromettante.

Lorsque le Comte et Figaro s'en sont allés, Bartolo confronte Rosine avec la lettre qu'elle a adressée à Lindoro, et il la prend au dépourvu lorsqu'il lui déclare que Lindoro n'est autre que l'agent d'Almaviva qui ne veut l'épouser que pour son argent. Elle accepte tout de suite d'être mariée à Bartolo et lui dévoile les plans d'enlèvement.

Figaro et le Comte arrivent au rendez-vous à l'heure convenue, et pénètrent dans la maison

par la fenêtre. Rosine repousse "Lindoro" jusqu'au moment où elle apprend qu'il est le Comte Almaviva lui-même. Elle tombe dans ses bras. Cependant, ils ne peuvent plus s'échapper, car Bartolo a retiré l'échelle de dessous la fenêtre. Basilio, arrive avec un notaire censé marier Rosine à son tuteur, mais on parvient facilement à le corrompre et à assister au mariage de Rosine avec le Comte. Bartolo arrive trop tard et il est obligé de reconnaître l'évidence: il a perdu Rosine.

Durant ces dix dernières années, **Bruce Ford** s'est forgé une excellente réputation de ténor *bel canto* très complet, spécialiste des rôles de Mozart et Rossini. Depuis ses débuts au Festival Rossini de Pesaro en 1990, lorsqu'il accepta moins de deux semaines avant la représentation de jouer le rôle d'Agorante dans *Ricciardo e Zoraide*, il se produit régulièrement à Pesaro (chantant dans *Otello*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* et *Zelmira* de Rossini) ainsi que sur les plus grandes scènes lyriques et dans les plus grands festivals en Europe. Au Teatro alla Scala à Milan, il a été entre autres Uberto (*La donna del lago* sous la direction de Riccardo Muti), Paolo Erisso (*Maometto II*) et Belmonte (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail* sous la direction de Wolfgang Sawallisch). Il a connu une kyrielle de

succès avec le Royal Opera à Covent Garden, chantant entre autres Almaviva, le rôle-titre de *Mitridate*, *re di Ponto* de Mozart, Ferrando dans *Così fan tutte*, Lindoro dans *L'italiana in Algeri* et Osiride dans *Mosè in Egitto*. Il a également triomphé à San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Salzbourg, Amsterdam, Zurich, Lausanne, Genève, Catania, Florence, Naples, Bologne, Lyon et Paris.

Bruce Ford a fait de nombreux disques pour Opera Rara, comme *Il crociato in Egitto* de Meyerbeer, *Medea in Corinto* de Mayr, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* de Donizetti, *Ricciardo e Zoraide* de Rossini, *Maria, regina d'Inghilterra* de Pacini, *Maria de Rudenz* de Donizetti, *Otello* de Rossini et deux disques de récitals (*Rossini – Three Tenors* et *Romantic Heroes*). Pour Chandos, en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation, il a enregistré en soliste un récital d'airs d'opéra.

Andrew Shore est considéré comme le principal baryton bouffe en Grande-Bretagne aujourd'hui, remarquable pour ses talents de chanteur et d'acteur. Il a travaillé avec la plupart des grandes compagnies britanniques, comme l'English National Opera, le Royal Opera à Covent Garden, Opera North, le Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Scottish Opera

et le Welsh National Opera, se produisant sur de nombreuses scènes lyriques internationales, comme l'Opéra de San Diego, le New Israeli Opera, l'Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, l'Opéra-Comique, le Gran teatre del Liceu à Barcelone ainsi qu'à Lyon, Nantes, Montpellier, Copenhague, Amsterdam, Vancouver et Ottawa. Il a tenu entre autres les rôles-titres de *Wozzeck*, *Falstaff*, *King Priam*, *Gianni Schicchi* et *Don Pasquale*, chantant aussi Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Papageno, le roi Dodon (*Le Coq d'or*), Leandro (*L'Amour des trois oranges*), Dikoj (*Katia Kabanova*), Dr Kolenaty (*L'Affaire Makropoulos*), Chichkov (*Souvenirs de la maison des morts*), Frank (*Die Fledermaus*), le baron (*La Vie parisienne*), le baron Trombonok (*Il viaggio a Reims*), Varlaam (*Boris Godounov*) et Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*). Pour Chandos en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation, il a enregistré *L'elisir d'amore*, *Don Pasquale*, *La bohème* et des extraits de *Der Rosenkavalier*, de même que cette version du *Barbiere di Siviglia* et une version primée de *Tosca*.

Née à Neath, **Della Jones** fit ses études au Royal College of Music à Londres, remportant de nombreux prix dont la Kathleen Ferrier

Memorial Scholarship. Elle s'est produite avec les plus grandes troupes lyriques de Grande-Bretagne, dans l'Europe entière ainsi qu'aux Etats-Unis, au Canada, en Russie et au Japon. A son répertoire figurent les rôles-titres d'*Ariodante*, *La Cenerentola* et *Carmen*, ainsi que les rôles de Rosina, Herodias (*Salome*), Baba le Turc (*The Rake's Progress*), Marcellina, Adalgisa, Didon (*Les Troyens* et *Dido and Aeneas*), Donna Elvira, Brangäne, Hermia (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Junon (*Semele*) et de l'hôtesse (*Boris Godounov*). Della Jones travaille régulièrement pour la radio et la télévision; son abondante discographie comprend entre autres *Alcina*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *La clemenza di Tito* et *Die Kathrin* de Korngold. Elle a enregistré *Gabriella di Vergy* (Donizetti), *Maria Padilla* (Donizetti), *Il crociato in Egitto* (Meyerbeer), *Ricciardo e Zoraide* (Rossini) ainsi que *Dinorah* (Meyerbeer) pour Opera Rara et parmi ses nombreux enregistrements pour Chandos notons *Sancta Susanna* (Hindemith), *The Bear* (Walton) et, pour Chandos en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation, *La traviata* et *Giulio Cesare* de Haendel.

Né en Cornouailles, **Alan Opie** fit ses études à la Guildhall School of Music de Londres et au

London Opera Centre. Premier baryton de l'English National Opera durant plusieurs saisons, il a chanté avec les plus grandes troupes lyriques de Grande-Bretagne. Sa carrière internationale l'a conduit à Bayreuth, Paris (Opéra national de Paris-Bastille), Amsterdam, Chicago, Milan (Teatro alla Scala), Munich (Opéra d'état de Bavière), Berlin, Vienne, Bruxelles et New York (The Metropolitan Opera). Il a récemment tenu le rôle de Beckmesser (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) à l'Opéra d'état de Vienne qui l'a invité à monter à nouveau sur sa scène, cette fois-ci sous les traits de Balstrode dans *Peter Grimes*, un rôle qu'il tient aussi dans l'enregistrement de l'opéra par Chandos qui a remporté un *Grammy Award*. Il a chanté dans *Outis* de Luciano Berio à La Scala de Milan et au Châtelet théâtre musical à Paris, tenant le rôle de Mr. Redburn dans une mise en scène partielle de la version en deux actes de *Billy Budd* de Britten au Barbican Centre à Londres, une version que Chandos a par la suite enregistrée et qui sortira au printemps 2000. Pour Chandos, Alan Opie a chanté dans *The Rape of Lucretia* (Britten), *Martin's Lie* (Menotti), *Troilus and Cressida* (Walton) ainsi que dans *Maria Stuarda*, *Pagliacci* et *La bohème* (trois enregistrements produits en

collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation).

Né à Canterbury, **Peter Rose** étudia la musique à l'Université d'East Anglia puis fut l'élève d'Ellis Keeler à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama à Londres. Il fit ses débuts sur la scène lyrique dans le rôle du Commandeur avec le Glyndebourne Festival Opera à Hong Kong en 1986 et fut première basse du Welsh National Opera jusqu'en 1989. Il a chanté avec les principaux chefs d'orchestre dans le monde et les plus grandes troupes lyriques britanniques comme The Royal Opera à Covent Garden, l'English National Opera et Scottish Opera. Sa carrière internationale l'a conduit au Metropolitan Opera à New York, à l'Opéra-Comique à Paris, à l'Opéra d'état allemand à Berlin, à l'Opéra d'état de Hambourg, à l'Opéra d'état de Vienne, au Lyric Opera de Chicago et au New Israeli Opera à Tel Aviv de même qu'à San Francisco, Amsterdam, Cologne, Rome et Seattle. Il a aussi participé aux plus grands festivals dans le monde entier, à Orange, Aix-en-Provence, Istanbul, Bregenz et à Florence (Maggio musicale). Il a été entre autres Ramfis, Fasolt, Hunding, Pimène, Osmin, le roi Marke, le baron Ochs, Rocco, Bottom (*A*

Midsummer Night's Dream), Banquo (*Macbeth*), Cadmus/Somnus (*Semele*), Gessler (*Guillaume Tell*), Mustafa (*L'italiana in Algeri*) et Walter (*Luisa Miller*). Parmi ses nombreux enregistrements, notons pour Chandos, en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation, la version primée de *Tosca* et cette version du *Barbiere di Siviglia*.

Depuis ses études au Trinity College of Music à Londres, **Jennifer Rhys-Davies** a tenu avec succès plusieurs rôles majeurs comme ceux de Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, Konstanze, la Reine de la Nuit, Pamina, Miss Jessel (*The Turn of the Screw*), Lucia, Semiramide et Lady Macbeth. Au Royal Opera à Covent Garden, elle a été Berta (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Amaltea (*Mosè in Egitto*), Clorinda (*La Cenerentola*), Marianne (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Anna (*Nabucco*) et Sieglinde, chantant aussi la Soprano italienne (*Capriccio*) au Festival de Glyndebourne, Olympia, Antonia et Giulietta (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) au Grand Théâtre de Limoges et Elisabetta (*Maria Stuarda*) au Théâtre de Bâle. Parmi ses enregistrements, notons *Orazi e Curiazi* de Mercadante pour Opera Rara et, pour Chandos en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation, des extraits de *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Le **Chœur de l'English National Opera** est l'un des plus beaux atouts de cette compagnie lyrique. Remarquable autant pour la puissance de son chant que l'intensité de son jeu, cet ensemble a enthousiasmé le public dans d'innombrables productions de l'English National Opera. Ces soixante-huit choristes, riches d'une vaste expérience et d'une multitude de talents, marquent de leur sceau toutes les représentations auxquelles ils participent. Le Chœur a triomphé entre autres dans *Guerre et Paix* de Prokofiev, *Lady Macbeth de Mzensk* de Chostakovitch, *Billy Budd* et *Peter Grimes* de Britten, *Boris Godounov* de Moussorgsky, *Carmen* de Bizet et *Otello* de Verdi. Leur enregistrement de ce dernier opéra, dans une mise en scène de Jonathan Miller et sous la direction de Mark Elder, sortira prochainement chez Chandos grâce au financement de la Peter Moores Foundation, tout comme leur version de *Werther* avec Dame Janet Baker sous la baguette de Sir Charles Mackerras et leur enregistrement combien célèbre du cycle de l'*Anneau* dirigé par Sir Reginald Goodall. Ils ont aussi enregistré pour Chandos, en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation, *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (dans la mise en scène de Jonathan Miller) et *La traviata*.

Salué autant par la critique que par le public, l'**Orchestre de English National Opera**, avec Barry Griffiths comme premier violon, s'est vu décerner ces dernières années plusieurs prix prestigieux comme le Prix de la *Royal Philharmonic Society* et un *Olivier Award* pour sa contribution exceptionnelle au monde lyrique. L'Orchestre est au cœur de la vie artistique de la Compagnie et outre les représentations lyriques au Coliseum à Londres, il se produit également en concert. De plus, de nombreux membres de l'Orchestre participent au Projet Bayliss mis sur pied par la branche de la Compagnie chargée de l'éducation ainsi qu'au développement de nouveaux opéra avec l'English National Opera Studio, comme *The Silver Tassie* de Mark Anthony Turnage dont la création mondiale est prévue pour février 2000. L'Orchestre a participé à de nombreux enregistrements, comme le fameux cycle de l'*Anneau* dirigé par Sir Reginald Goodall qui doit prochainement paraître chez Chandos grâce au financement de la Peter Moores Foundation, tout comme son enregistrement de *Werther* avec Dame Janet Baker sous la baguette de Sir Charles Mackerras et celui d'*Otello* de Verdi sous celle de Mark Elder. Parmi ses autres enregistrements pour Chandos, en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation,

notons *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (dans la mise en scène de Jonathan Miller) et *La traviata*.

Né à Legnago près de Vérone, **Gabriele Bellini** fit ses études au Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello à Venise et au Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi à Milan dont il sortit diplômé en cor, en composition et en direction d'orchestre. Il poursuivit ses études de direction d'orchestre avec Franco Ferrara, Hermann Scherchen, Sergiu Celibidache et Hans Swarowsky. Sa carrière l'a conduit dans toute l'Europe et aux Etats-Unis et il a collaboré plusieurs saisons avec Claudio Abbado au Teatro alla Scala à Milan. Il a travaillé comme directeur artistique et directeur musical du Grand Opera du Connecticut, dirigeant aussi à l'occasion

l'American Symphony Orchestra et à l'Opéra de Cincinnati. Il commença à collaborer avec l'Orkest van Hetooosten à Opera Forum à Enschede aux Pays-Bas en 1988, assumant les fonctions de chef principal de l'Orchestre de 1992 à 1997; durant cette période, il dirigea entre autres *Macbeth*, *Stiffelio*, *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, *Falstaff*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca* et *Wozzeck*. En 1998 il inaugura le Festival Donizetti à Bergame avec *L'elisir d'amore*, y dirigeant par la suite *La bohème*. Récemment, Gabriele Bellini a dirigé *Norma* à Groningen, *La rondine* au Teatro del Giglio à Lucca, *Linda di Chamounix* à Bologne et *I puritani* en Espagne. Il a également dirigé *Eine Nacht in Venedig* au Komische Oper à Berlin et s'est produit à l'Opéra de Norvège à Oslo, au Royal Opera à Covent Garden ainsi qu'à Göteborg et Leipzig.

Gioachino Rossini: Il barbiere di Siviglia

Rossini compose 40 opere – tutte prima del suo trentottesimo compleanno, allorché aveva ancora 38 anni di vita – eppure ci fu un tempo in cui fu ricordato come l'autore di una sola opera: *Il barbiere di Siviglia*.

Ciò fu particolarmente vero mentre Wagner regnava supremo, fra il 1880 e il 1920 circa. Le molte opere serie di Rossini erano svanite, eccetto un occasionale *Guillaume Tell* o *Mosè in Egitto*, allestite come omaggio ad un antico monumento. Persino opere comiche, come *L'italiana in Algeri* o *La Cenerentola*, di gran successo al loro tempo e di nuovo ai giorni nostri, erano in eclisse. Ma la marcia del *Barbiere* continuava. Anno dopo anno vi apparvero alcuni dei migliori cantanti, e alcuni dei peggiori; negli anni 40 di questo secolo venne persino trasformato in un musical per le scene di Broadway, con il titolo di *Once Over Lightly*, con un Figaro russo; un esperimento che finì per essere una volta di troppo.

Cosa c'è in questa opera che la mantiene sempre verde? Il successo, di quando in quando, si autoalimenta: fra due commedie od opere che funzionano egualmente bene sulla scena una può essere rappresentata più di

frequente dell'altra perché meglio conosciuta. *Il barbiere* era già famoso quando l'oberato Rossini e il suo librettista Cesare Sterbini lo scelsero nel gelido inverno romano del 1816. La commedia scritta da Beaumarchais nel 1775 era ancora calda sulla scena, come lo è tuttora in Francia, aiutata dal trionfo della successiva *Le Mariage de Figaro* (la terza commedia della trilogia, *La Mère coupable* (La madre colpevole), è un melodramma uggioso e sentenzioso: Beaumarchais era stato lasciato indietro dalla Rivoluzione Francese, con le sue esigenze di gravità). *Il barbiere* originale – ben tornita commedia d'intrighi – era basato sulle convenzioni dell'opera comica, riportandosi alla vecchia commedia italiana delle maschere, con la più vetusta delle trame, il vecchio tutore il cui piano di sposare l'avvenente pupilla è mandato a monte dall'amore giovane e dai servitori scaltri; in effetti, Beaumarchais originariamente l'aveva scritto con dei "numeri" da mettere in musica.

Ciò che rese speciale la commedia fu il carattere di Figaro, quel tipo di uomo comune non comune, destinato ad avere un ruolo cospicuo nella rivoluzione: il factotum che vive

d'espédients e che non ha rispetto per coloro che gli sono socialmente superiori (fino ad un certo punto finché durava la loro superiorità) ma che è sempre pronto ad avere la meglio su di loro o ad approfittarsene. Nell'opera, dove le parole devono essere molto più limitate che nella commedia, il suo carattere risulta un po' più grossolano; il suo vigore plebeo s'impone nella sua famosa aria introduttiva così come nel suo schietto interesse al denaro.

Con la commedia ben affermata, il regnante compositore del tardo Settecento, Giovanni Paisiello, ne fece un'opera comica. Questo *Barbiere* progredì con successo attraverso l'Europa dopo la sua prima esecuzione a S. Pietroburgo nel 1782. Oggi rare esecuzioni in Festivals la rivelano un'opera dilettevole e melodiosa, con una scena divertente di starnuti e sbadigli per i servitori di Bartolo, ma piuttosto blanda e lenta per il gusto moderno. Nel 1816, quando Rossini si mise al lavoro, Paisiello era già passato di moda, in parte perché la musica passava di moda nel giro di una trentina d'anni (un repertorio di opere che erano riprese più volte stava appena formandosi), ma in particolare perché gli anni delle guerre rivoluzionarie e napoleoniche avevano introdotto un pubblico nuovo: più borghese, più impaziente, più avido di forti

sensazioni, specialmente di quelle suscitate dalla musica militare. Rossini gli fornì proprio quello che voleva: sprizzo, guizzo, razzo.

La storia che la prima del suo *Barbiere* non andò a segno perché parte del pubblico era insorta a favore di Paisiello è quasi certamente una favola. Era uso comune che diversi compositori scrivessero opere sullo stesso soggetto, e persino con lo stesso libretto. Rossini e Sterbini usarono un titolo nuovo per la loro versione (originariamente fu chiamata *Almaviva* – con buona causa, giacché la stella era il tenore, Manuel García), e smorzarono la famosa scena degli starnuti e sbadigli: anche questa era una normale precauzione. Stamparono inoltre una nota in cui affermavano di non avere inteso essere scortesi nei riguardi del vecchio compositore (che morì poco più di tre mesi dopo). Quello che sembra sia successo è che dei compositori rivali più giovani sarebbero stati gelosi e che i sostenitori di un teatro concorrente si sarebbero opposti allo sconfinamento del Teatro Argentina nel campo dell'opera comica. La principale ragione dei fischi della prima sera, comunque, fu che la consueta fretta di una stagione lirica italiana fu, questa volta, un po' troppo affrettata.

L'Argentina, il principale teatro romano, di solito in questa stagione avrebbe allestito

un'opera seria. La sua ragione di chiedere a Rossini di scrivere il *Barbiere*, piuttosto che un qualsiasi dramma classico, era finanziaria: la caduta di Napoleone e il ritorno del Papa avevano fatto perdere al teatro la sovvenzione; la crisi economica che imperversava in Europa aveva diminuito l'affluenza del pubblico e l'opera comica era relativamente a buon mercato. Pertanto, l'impresario-proprietario era riuscito a mettere insieme una compagnia solo con sforzi frenetici ("c'è quanto basta per far sputare sangue ad un povero diavolo come me", scrisse) e la stagione aprì con più di due settimane di ritardo. Rossini ebbe un po' meno di quattro settimane fra ricevere la prima parte del libretto (il 25 gennaio) e sedersi a suonare il continuo, come era d'uso, la prima sera (il 20 febbraio). Per un compositore ciò non era fuori dell'ordinario, ma la compagnia era probabilmente esausta dall'iniziale furia di far decollare la stagione (con *L'italiana in Algeri*) e poi mettersi a studiare ed a provare il *Barbiere*, dando allo stesso tempo cinque recite alla settimana. L'inciampo della prima sera si trasformò in successo nelle repliche, dopo di che l'opera non conobbe più ostacoli.

Oltre ad essere il meglio della pura opera comica nella tradizione italiana, fu anche quasi l'ultima. *La Cenerentola* dello stesso Rossini

l'anno successivo e le opere comiche di Donizetti che più si ricordano (*L'elisir d'amore* e il *Don Pasquale*) hanno un tocco di sentimento o di realismo che denota un'epoca più ammorbidita. In ogni caso l'opera comica stava per passare di moda: non si adattava ai regimi monarchici, timorosi e rigorosi, che erano stati riportati in auge dopo la caduta di Napoleone, né al ceto medio divenuto di recente rispettabile. Ma il *Barbiere* distilla l'indole della vecchia opera comica, un'unione dell'assurdo con lo spietato.

"Gioca con tutto: con lo spirito, la filosofia, il dramma, con gli attori e col pubblico, con il teatro interno". Così scrisse Bernard Shaw di Oscar Wilde. Potrebbe essere stato scritto di Rossini. ("Giocare con la filosofia" potrebbe sembrare al di là dei suoi mezzi – fin quando non si ricorda che Hegel e Schopenhauer, ambedue filosofi austeri, ebbero un'alta opinione delle sue opere.) Dal principio alla fine Rossini gioca con le convenzioni dell'opera – così come già aveva fatto nel *Turco in Italia*, dove uno dei personaggi va scrivendo l'opera mentre procede l'azione. Nella scena introduttiva del *Barbiere*, i ringraziamenti dei musicisti che fanno la serenata prendono in giro l'usanza dei cori operistici di far grande e ripetuto fracasso

quando dovrebbero uscirsene in punta di piedi, e altrettanto fa, alla fine dell'opera, il trio in cui Figaro e gli amanti continuano a proclamare la stessa urgenza finché non vien loro meno la scala a pioli. Qui sono gli antenati del coro dei poliziotti ne *The Pirates of Penzance*, "With catlike tread" (A passi felini). I personaggi usano il teatro per beffarsi dei loro stessi caratteri teatrali.

All'inizio di quel trio finale, Figaro deride le canore smancerie di Almaviva mentre il tenore inneggia all'amore di Rosina e suo quando invece dovrebbero darsi alla fuga. Questa è soltanto l'ultima di molte parodie musicali. La canzoncina di Bartolo nella scena della lezione prende in giro la musica che avrebbe sentito in gioventù (ante-Paisiello) e la sua grande aria, con le sue elaborate ripetizioni, usa la pedanteria musicale per burlarsi del vecchio e arido avvocato. Gli eterni annunci di pace e gioia del presunto abate al principio della scena della lezione scimmiettano il modo in cui le stesse parole venivano messe in musica in molti pezzi liturgici. L'iniziale elogio dell'oro di Figaro, che dà il via al suo duetto con Almaviva nella prima scena, imita il tono solenne dell'opera seria.

La parodia è ancora più tagliente quando Rossini beffeggia i suoi stessi procedimenti

preferiti – il crescendo, che incalza verso uno scoppio fragoroso, e l'elegante cascata di note della coloratura. Nelle sue opere serie ambedue possono sembrare arbitrari. Nel *Barbiere* l'uso straordinario del crescendo è, una volta tanto, interamente appropriato all'argomento di cui si canta: il graduale dilagare della calunnia nella famosa aria di Basilio. Alle orecchie assuefatte – quali erano quelle del pubblico del tempo – il crescendo, con improvvise modulazioni che culminano nel "colpo di cannone", sembra dire, "Vedete? Io, dopotutto, son capace di essere debitamente drammatico con i migliori"; un'altra sottile caricatura della forma operistica.

Per quanto riguarda la coloratura, Rossini la usa nell'aria introduttiva del tenore per presentare Almaviva come un amante sollecito ed elegante (in origine l'opera finiva, proprio prima dello schieramento finale, con un'elaborata aria di bravura per García, ma ciò ostacolava l'azione; più tardi, il compositore la diede al mezzosoprano protagonista a conclusione della *Cenerentola*). Altrove la coloratura serve a delineare nettamente la personalità di Rosina. La sua famosa prima aria descrive il suo carattere deciso, il suo controllo della situazione e la sua capacità d'ironico commento. Questa non è l'eroina

romantica di un amore infelice: scintillante e sardonica nel suo duetto con Figaro, tutta fascino e voluttà nella parte successiva della scena della lezione (mentre Bartolo dorme), Rosina è – come ben possiamo sentire – una ragazza in gamba. (Nell'Ottocento i soprani si appropriarono la parte e trasformarono la scene della lezione in un concerto infarcito di tutto un po', da "Home, Sweet Home" a stravaganti variazioni. La parte appartiene a un mezzosoprano come Della Jones – la naturale voce femminile italiana, secondo la definizione di Rossini – e la scena della lezione funziona meglio se lasciata proprio com'è.)

Il fulcro dell'opera sta nei due concertati, composti con suprema abilità – il lungo Finale dell'Atto I e il quintetto in cui gli altri quattro personaggi esortano lo sconcertato Don Basilio a tornarsene a letto. Ognuno è collegato attraverso mutabili sezioni da una piccola frase musicale, vivace e ricorrente, e da un accompagnamento saldo e inebriante. La vista e il suono di esseri umani che si comportano come macchine è una potente causa d'ilarità in teatro. Con l'ultima precipitata sezione del Finale dell'Atto I arriva quella che al tempo veniva chiamata "l'organizzata totale follia rossiniana". Qui e altrove Rossini lascia che la musica prenda il

comando e tiene poco conto delle parole. Eppure le parole contano, come quando tutti dicono a Basilio che è "giallo", o come quando Rosina smentisce la sua "docilità" con la paroletta "ma". Con una compagnia interamente italiana, che trae il massimo vantaggio dal testo originale (il che non si trova spesso in dischi intesi per un pubblico internazionale) certe cose si notano. Così come si notano, in una maniera diversa, quando – come accade qui – tutti i cantanti hanno una lingua in comune, e sia pure la lingua di un paese dove la temperatura, poco prima dell'alba, raramente incoraggia le serenate.

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Traduzione: Marcella Barzetti

La trama

Il Conte Almaviva, nobile spagnolo, è innamorato di Rosina, pupilla di Don Bartolo, un vecchio dottore, che intende sposarla lui stesso.

Atto I

La strada davanti alla casa del Dott. Bartolo

Il Conte, assistito di un gruppo di musicanti, fa la serenata a Rosina. Per farsi introdurre a lei sollecita l'aiuto di Figaro, il barbiere, che si

vanta di esser capace di maneggiare gli affari della città. Eludendo la vigilanza del tutore, Rosina riesce a far cadere dal balcone una lettera nella quale chiede ad Almaviva il suo nome e reciproca il suo amore. Il Conte si presenta allora a Rosina come uno studente povero chiamato Lindoro. Figaro suggerisce che per potersi introdurre nella casa il Conte dovrebbe pretendere di essere un soldato acquartierato presso il Dott. Bartolo, ed ubriaco.

Dentro la casa

Il Dott. Bartolo ha sentito correr voci sull'interesse di Almaviva a Rosina e decide di sposarla immediatamente. Il maestro di canto di Rosina, un abate di pochi scrupoli a nome Don Basilio, è confidente di Bartolo. Almaviva, travestito da soldato, arriva a prendere "quartiere" presso il Dott. Bartolo. Rosina è incantata quando riconosce il suo ammiratore. L'indignazione del Dott. Bartolo al comportamento del "soldato" causa un tale fracasso che i vicini chiamano le guardie. Il Conte sfugge all'arresto con gran furia di Bartolo.

Atto II

Nella casa di Bartolo, più tardi lo stesso giorno

Il Conte assume un altro travestimento ed entra nella casa come Don Alonso, maestro di

musica. Dice di esser venuto a dare una lezione di canto a Rosina al posto di Don Basilio che si è improvvisamente ammalato. Sotto il pretesto della lezione il Conte dice a Rosina che fuggirà con lei a mezzanotte. Figaro, che è venuto a fare la barba a Bartolo, riesce a trafugare le chiavi del balcone. Con loro costernazione appare Basilio, che però, quando gli viene passato un sacchetto di denaro, convalide la pretesa di essere malato. Bartolo, insospettito, sorprende gli amanti in compromettente conversazione.

Quando il Conte e Figaro sono partiti Bartolo confronta Rosina con la lettera che essa ha indirizzato a Lindoro e la coglie di sorpresa quando le dice che Lindoro è l'agente di Almaviva che vuole sposarla solo per la sua dote. Rosina acconsente a sposare Bartolo immediatamente e gli rivela la proposta fuga.

Figaro e il Conte ritornano all'ora prestabilita e si introducono nella casa dalla finestra. Rosina respinge "Lindoro" ma poi scopre che lui stesso è Almaviva. Gli cade fra le braccia. Non riescono però a fuggire perché Bartolo ha sottratto la scala appoggiata sotto la finestra. Basilio, giungendo con un notaio che dovrebbe sposare Rosina al suo tutore, si lascia facilmente corrompere a far da testimone invece alle nozze di Rosina con il Conte.

Bartolo arriva troppo tardi ed è costretto a riconoscere che ha perduto Rosina.

Negli ultimi dieci anni **Bruce Ford** si è affermato come tenore del *bel canto* a tutto tondo, specializzandosi nei ruoli di Mozart e di Rossini. Dopo aver debuttato al Rossini Festival di Pesaro nel 1990, interpretando il ruolo di Agorante in *Ricciardo e Zoraide* a meno di due settimane dalla notizia, è stato regolare ospite a Pesaro (cantando nell'*Otello*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* e *Zelmira* di Rossini), nonché nella maggior parte dei principali teatri lirici e festival d'Europa. Le sue apparizioni al Teatro alla Scala di Milano lo hanno visto nei ruoli di Uberto (*La donna del lago* diretto da Riccardo Muti), Paolo Erisso (*Maometto II*) e Belmonte (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail* diretto da Wolfgang Sawallisch). Con The Royal Opera, Covent Garden ha goduto di una serie di successi tra cui Almaviva, il ruolo del protagonista nel *Mitridate, re di Ponto* di Mozart, Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, Lindoro in *L'italiana in Algeri* e Osiride in *Mosè in Egitto*. Acclamato appaizioni, tra le altre, a San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Salisburgo, Amsterdam, Zurigo, Losanna, Ginevra, Catania, Firenze, Napoli, Bologna, Lione e Parigi.

Bruce Ford ha inciso numerose registrazioni per Opera Rara, tra cui *Il crociato in Egitto* di Meyerbeer, *Medea in Corinto* di Mayr, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* di Donizetti, *Ricciardo e Zoraide* di Rossini, *Maria, regina d'Inghilterra* di Pacini, *Maria de Rudenz* di Donizetti, l'*Otello* di Rossini e due dischi recital (*Rossini – Three Tenors* e *Romantic Heroes*). Per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation ha registrato un recital da solista di arie d'opera.

Andrew Shore è riconosciuto come il primo baritono *buffo* della Gran Bretagna e come sorprendente cantante/attore. Ha lavorato per tutte le principali compagnie britanniche, compresa la English National Opera, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Opera North, Glyndbourne Festival Opera, Scottish Opera e Welsh National Opera, oltre ad essere apparso all'estero con San Diego Opera, New Israeli Opera, Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, Opéra-Comique, Gran teatre del Liceu a Barcellona, nonché a Lione, Nantes, Montpellier, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Vancouver e Ottawa. I suoi numerosi impegni hanno incluso il ruolo da protagonista in *Wozzeck*, *Falstaff*, *King Priam*, *Gianni Schicchi* e *Don Pasquale*, nonché Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), Figaro

(*Le nozze di Figaro*), Papageno, Re Dodon (*Le Coq d'or*), Leandro (*L'amore delle tre melarance*), Dikoy (*Kat'a Kabanová*), Dr Kolenaty (*Il caso Makropulos*), Shishkov (*Da una casa di morti*), Frank (*Die Fledermaus*), il Barone (*La Vie parisienne*), il Barone Trombonok (*Il viaggio a Reims*), Varlaam (*Boris Godunov*) e Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*). Le sue registrazioni per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation comprendono *L'elisir d'amore*, *Don Pasquale*, *La bohème* e brani scelti da *Der Rosenkavalier* oltre questo *Barbiere di Siviglia* e *Tosca*, vincitrice di un premio.

Della Jones è nata a Neath e ha studiato al Royal College of Music dove ha vinto molti premi, tra cui la borsa di studio alla memoria di Kathleen Ferrier. È apparsa con tutte le principali compagnie liriche britanniche, in tutta Europa, negli Stati Uniti, in Canada, Russia e Giappone. Il suo repertorio comprende i ruoli da protagonista in *Ariodante*, *La Cenerentola* e *Carmen*, nonché quelli di Rosina, Herodias (*Salome*), Baba il Turco (*The Rake's Progress*), Marcellina, Adalgisa, Dido (*Les Troyens* e *Dido and Aeneas*), Donna Elvira, Brangäne, Hermione (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Juno (*Semele*) e la Locandiera (*Boris Godunov*). Della Jones

trasmette regolarmente alla radio e alla televisione e le sue innumerevoli registrazioni includono *Alcina*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *La clemenza di Tito*, e *Die Kathrin* di Korngold. Ha registrato *Gabriella di Vergy* (Donizetti), *Maria Padilla* (Donizetti), *Il crociato in Egitto* (Meyerbeer), *Ricciardo e Zoraide* (Rossini) e *Dinorah* (Meyerbeer) per Opera Rara, e tra le numerose registrazioni su Chandos troviamo *Sancta Susanna* (Hindemith), *The Bear* (Walton) nonché, per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, *La traviata* e *Giulio Cesare*.

Nato in Cornovaglia, **Alan Opie** ha studiato alla Guildhall School of Music e al London Opera Centre. È stato Baritono Principale con la English National Opera per diverse stagioni ed ha cantato con tutte le principali compagnie liriche britanniche. All'estero è apparso nei teatri lirici di Bayreuth, Parigi (Opéra national de Paris-Bastille), Amsterdam, Chicago, Milano (Teatro alla Scala), Monaco (Opera nazionale della Baviera), Berlino, Vienna, Bruxelles e New York (The Metropolitan Opera). Recentemente è apparso nel ruolo di Beckmesser (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) all'Opera nazionale di Vienna ed è stato invitato a ritornare nel ruolo di Balstrode

in *Peter Grimes*, ruolo che ha interpretato anche nella registrazione dell'opera Chandos che ha vinto il *Grammy Award*. È apparso in *Outis* di Luciano Berio alla Scala di Milano, e al Châtelet théâtre musical di Parigi ed è stato Mr Redburn in interpretazioni parzialmente rappresentate della versione in due atti del *Billy Budd* di Britten presso il Barbican Centre di Londra, una produzione successivamente registrata da Chandos per essere distribuita nella primavera 2000. Altre apparizioni su Chandos includono *The Rape of Lucretia* (Britten), *Martin's Lie* (Menotti), *Troilus and Cressida* (Walton), nonché *Maria Stuarda*, *Pagliacci* e *La bohème* (tutte in collaborazione con la Peter Moores Foundation).

Nato a Canterbury, **Peter Rose** ha studiato musica all'Università dell'East Anglia ed ha studiato con Ellis Keeler alla Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Ha debuttato nell'opera nel ruolo di Commendatore al Glyndebourne Festival Opera di Hong Kong nel 1986 ed è stato basso principale con la Welsh National Opera fino al 1989. Si è esibito diretto dai primi direttori al mondo ed è apparso con tutte le maggiori compagnie liriche britanniche, tra cui The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, English National Opera e Scottish

Opera. All'estero ha cantato alla Metropolitan Opera, New York, all'Opéra-Comique, Parigi, Opera nazionale tedesca, Berlino, Opera nazionale di Amburgo, Opera nazionale di Vienna, Lyric Opera di Chicago e New Israeli Opera, Tel Aviv, nonché a San Francisco, Amsterdam, Colonia, Roma e Seattle. È anche apparso nei principali festival di tutto il mondo, come quelli di Orange, Aix-en-Provence, Istanbul, Bregenz e al Maggio musicale di Firenze. Tra i numerosi ruoli da lui interpretati Ramfis, Fasolt, Hunding, Pimen, Osmin, Re Marke, Barone Ochs, Rocco, Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Banquo (*Macbeth*), Cadmus/Somnus (*Semele*), Gessler (*Guillaume Tell*), Mustafa (*L'italiana in Algeri*) e Walter (*Luisa Miller*). Le sue numerose registrazioni comprendono, per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, la *Tosca* che si è aggiudicata un premio e questo *Barbiere di Siviglia*.

Jennifer Rhys-Davies, che ha studiato al Trinity College of Music, ha raggiunto un grande successo in ruoli principali come Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, Konstanze, Regina della notte, Pamina, Miss Jessel (*The Turn of the Screw*), Lucia, Semiramide e Lady Macbeth. Alla Royal Opera, Covent Garden

ha interpretato il ruolo di Berta (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Amaltea (*Mosè in Egitto*), Clorinda (*La Cenerentola*), Marianne (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Anna (*Nabucco*) e Sieglinde, e ha cantato come Soprano Italiano (*Capriccio*) al Glyndebourne Festival, Olympia, Antonia e Giulietta (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*) al Grand théâtre de Limoges e Elisabetta (*Maria Stuarda*) al Teatro di Basilea. Tra le sue registrazioni, per Opera Rara, *Orazi e Curiazi* di Mercadante e, per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, brani scelti da *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Il **Coro di English National Opera** è una delle migliori risorse dell'Opera. In innumerevoli produzioni della English National Opera ha entusiasmato le platee con il potere del canto e l'intensità della recitazione. Si tratta di sessantotto coristi e l'ampia gamma di capacità ed esperienza che portano nelle esibizioni costituiscono il tratto distintivo di ogni produzione in cui appaiono. Particolari trionfi per il Coro sono stati *Guerra e pace* di Prokofiev, *Lady Macbeth dei bacelli* di Shostakovich, *Billy Budd* e *Peter Grimes* di Britten, *Boris Godunov* di Mussorgsky, la *Carmen* di Bizet e l'*Otello* di Verdi. La loro ultima registrazione, nella produzione di Jonathan Miller diretta da Mark Elder, uscirà

presto per Chandos con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation, come le loro registrazioni del *Werther* con Dame Janet Baker diretti da Sir Charles Mackerras e del famoso "Ciclo del *Ring*" diretti da Sir Reginald Goodall. Altre registrazioni Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation sono *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (produzione di Jonathan Miller) e *La traviata*.

Acclamata dalla critica e dal pubblico, L'**Orchestra di English National Opera**, primo violino Barry Griffiths, ha ricevuto negli ultimi anni diversi premi prestigiosi, tra cui il *Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award* e un *Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera*. L'Orchestra è al centro della vita artistica dell'Opera e, oltre a esibizioni liriche al Coliseum di Londra è stata anche vista sul palco in concerto. Inoltre molti dei musicisti partecipano al lavoro del Baylis Programme del dipartimento di educazione e "outreach" dell'Opera e con l'English National Opera Studio allo sviluppo di nuove opere, in particolare *The Silver Tassie* di Mark Anthony Turnage che uscirà in prima mondiale nel febbraio 2000. L'Orchestra appare in numerose registrazioni, tra cui il famoso "Ciclo del *Ring*" diretto da Sir Reginald

Goodall, che apparirà presto su Chandos con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation, come pure le sue registrazioni del *Werther* con Dame Janet Baker diretto da Sir Charles Mackerras e dell'*Otello* di Verdi diretto da Mark Elder. Altre registrazioni per Chandos/ Peter Moores Foundation sono *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rigoletto* (produzione di Jonathan Miller) e *La traviata*.

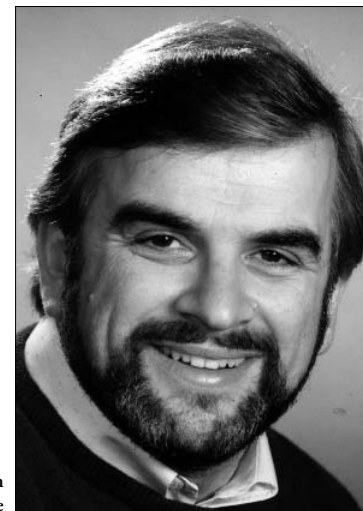
Nato a Legnago nei pressi di Verona, **Gabriele Bellini** è stato educato al Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello di Venezia e al Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi di Milano, dove si è diplomato in corno, composizione e direzione. Ha continuato i suoi studi per diventare direttore d'orchestra con Franco Ferrara, Hermann Scherchen, Sergiu Celibidache e Hans Swarowsky. I suoi impegni professionali hanno spaziato in tutta l'Europa e negli Stati Uniti ed includono collaborazioni con Claudio Abbado al Teatro alla Scala di Milano per molte stagioni. Ha lavorato come

Direttore Artistico e Direttore d'Orchestra della Connecticut Grand Opera e come direttore ospite dell'American Symphony Orchestra e alla Cincinnati Opera House. Una collaborazione con la Orkest van Hetooosten all'Opera Forum di Enschede, Paesi Bassi, iniziata nel 1988, è culminata nella sua nomina a Direttore Capo dell'Orchestra dal 1992 al 1997; durante questo periodo ha diretto le esibizioni di *Macbeth*, *Stiffelio*, *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, *Falstaff*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca* e *Wozzeck*, tra le altre. Nel 1998 ha aperto il Festival di Donizetti a Bergamo con *L'elisir d'amore* ed è tornato a dirigere *La bohème*. Recentemente Gabriele Bellini ha anche diretto la *Norma* a Groenigen, *La rondine* al Teatro del Giglio di Lucca, *Linda di Chamounix* a Bologna e *I puritani* in Spagna. Ha anche diretto *Eine Nacht in Venedig* alla Komische Oper di Berlino ed è apparso all'Opera norvegese di Oslo, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden come pure a Göteborg e Lipsia.

Lichfield



Della Jones



Alan Opie

Robert Carpenter Turner

COMPACT DISC ONE

1 OVERTURE

Act 1

Scene 1

A square in Seville

The time is just before dawn. At the left is the house of Bartolo, the windows having closed blinds and bars which may be opened with a key. Fiorello, carrying a lantern, leads in a group of musicians with their instruments.

2 Introduction

Fiorello (*approaching cautiously*)

Piano, pianissimo, don't make a sound.
This is the house, gather around, gather around.
Come gather round!

Chorus

Piano, pianissimo, don't make a sound.
Come gather round.

Fiorello

Ev'rything's quiet, there's no one near
who might disturb us, or overhear.

The Count

Fiorello, you there?

Fiorello

Signor, I'm here.

The Count

Your friends... they're ready?

Fiorello

Oh, have no fear.

The Count

Bravi, bravissimi.
Please do be silent;
piano, pianissimo,
don't make a sound.

Chorus

Piano, pianissimo,
don't make a sound.

Fiorello

Don't make a sound.
Gather around...
Don't make sound.

3 (*The musicians tune their instruments and the Count sings, accompanied by them.*)

Cavatina

The Count

See how the smile of heaven
smiles as this fair dawn is breaking.
Are you not yet awaking,
ah, how can you still sleep?

Awake, now, arise my darling,
come my beloved, save me,
comfort the pain you gave me;
love's dart has pierced so deep!

Be silent, she's coming.

If only she'd hear me:

I need my love so near me to end my despair!

How I love her now and ever.

Undying devotion!

I will love her forever.

Oh, blissful emotion beyond compare.

(*It grows lighter.*)

4 Hey, Fiorello!

Fiorello

Signore...

The Count

Well, do you see her?...

Fiorello

Sorry, no.

The Count

All my hopes will come to nothing!

Fiorello

Dawn has broken, we'll be discovered.

The Count

She ignores me... I have failed.
It is useless... You musicians...

Chorus

Yes, Signor...

The Count

He'll pay you, he'll pay you.

(*The Count gives his purse to Fiorello, who distributes money to the musicians.*)

No more singing, no more playing.

I no longer need your music, so you can go.

Fiorello

So good morning, you've got your money,
if we need you, we'll let you know.

5 (*The musicians gather around the Count, kissing his hands and cloak. He is annoyed and tries to chase them away. Fiorello does the same.*)

Chorus

Thank you, thank you,
Sir, we thank you, at your service...
Such an honour, thank you.
You have done us such a favour.
If you need us we will stay.
It's an honour to have met him.
He is noble and he's sincere!

Fiorello

Quiet, quiet! What a racket!
Damn you people! Go away!

The Count

Thank you, thank you, that's enough now,
I don't need you, please be quiet...
Damn you people!
Why can't you stop it?
Noisy rabble. Go away!
All this noise will wake the neighbours,
stop this chaos, they will hear.

Fiorello

Damn you people, can't you stop it?
Noisy rabble, go away.

Quiet, quiet!
Quiet, quiet, what on earth am I to do?
(*The musicians go out.*)

Recitative

The Count

[6] What common people!

Fiorello

I'm sure they will have woken all the neighbours
with that terrible racket... They'll never work
again...
I'll see to that!

Figaro (*offstage*)

La la la la la la la.

The Count

Damnation, someone's coming.
I'll hide round this corner
'til I see what is his game.
Even in daylight my love will know no shame.

(*He hides under the portico.*)

Scene 2

(*Figaro, with a guitar slung round his neck; the
Count [hidden]*)

[7] **Cavatina**

Figaro (*entering*)

La la la lera, la la la la.
Here at your service to do or die am I!

I have a finger in every pie have I!
Ah, what a life I lead,
oh, so fulfilling,
to be a barber and I'm the best!
Ah, bravo Figaro, bravo, bravissimo, bravo!
La la la la la la la la la.
Fortune has singled me out for success.
Not a dull moment, life is all action,
job satisfaction's what I enjoy.
Lots of adventure, money and laughter,
all I've been after since I was a boy.
Brushes and brilliantine,
scissors and shaving cream,
these are the precious tools of my trade.
Part of my service, for all enquirers,
helping the ladies and their admirers.
Ev'ryone's after me, after my services,
widows and virgins, dandies and urchins:
give me a kiss-curl, help me find this girl...
Short back and sides please...
Find me a bride please...
Figaro, Figaro, Figaro.
It's all too much, I'm busy, queue up.
Too many!
Do me a favour,
please, wait your turn.
What now? Eh!
But how?
Figaro come, Figaro go,
Figaro yes, Figaro no.
You need a gigolo: trust in old Figaro,
you want a barber, I am your man.

Ah, bravo Figaro,
bravo, bravissimo.
You have a problem, I have the answer,
you cannot solve it, Figaro can.
I solve your problems, I am your man.

Recitative

Figaro

[8] Ah ha! What could be better?
To be a barber is so very undemanding
that I've lots of little sidelines, it's easy money...
reward for my experience and wisdom!
I'll explain: without Figaro no girl in the whole
of Seville can get married and all the wealthy
widows ask me to find them husbands.
Listen... under cover of hairdressing by day
with my guitar as alibi at night-time,
I'm a proper marriage broker.
I fix them up, it's all part of the service –
What a life... such fun!
What a vocation...
but I must go and open the shop.

The Count (*stepping forward*)
(I know him, or am I mistaken)

Figaro (*noticing the count*)
(Who can this fellow be?)

The Count
(Yes, I'm sure I'm right – Figaro!)

Figaro (*recognising the Count*)
At your service... Oh, good heavens, your Lordship!

The Count

Keep your voice down, be quiet.
I am here incognito,
and I wish to remain so.
You see... I'm on a secret mission.

Figaro

I like it, I like it, I'll make myself scarce.

The Count

No!

Figaro

You need me?

The Count

Can I still count on your discretion?

Figaro

Why, of course! But you, what brings you to
Seville?

The Count

Well now, I'll tell you:
in Madrid I saw the girl of my dreams...
Ah, what perfection!
Daughter of a certain decrepit old doctor
who lives in that house there;
it was love at first sight.
I at once made my mind up,
followed her here, and standing night and day,
pacing up and down I wait beneath her
window.

Figaro

You mean that window... a doctor?
Well I can tell you,
you have chosen the right street,
you lucky fellow... you've fallen on your feet.

The Count

Really?

Figaro

Really! In that house I am the barber,
the hairdresser, the surgeon,
the herbalist, the vet...
I'm indispensable... In fact I run the place!

The Count

This is perfect!

Figaro

Moreover, your beloved isn't the doctor's daughter,
he's only her guardian.

The Count

Oh, that's even better.

Figaro

And so... quiet!

The Count

What now?

Figaro

There's someone coming.
(They hide under the portico.)

Scene 3

(Rosina, then Bartolo on the balcony, and the others)

Rosina *(looking out over the square)*

⁹ I cannot see him anywhere. Maybe...

The Count *(stepping out from under the portico)*

Oh, my angel! My goddess! My beloved! At last I
see you... at last!

(The Count hides again.)

Rosina *(She holds out a letter.)*

How can I do it? I must give him this letter?

Bartolo

Good morning, Rosina.
How's the weather?
And what is that paper?

Rosina

Nothing, nothing, Signore,
only the words of that aria from
'The Girl who lov'd a Stranger'.

The Count *(to Figaro)*

I like it, from 'The Girl who lov'd a Stranger'...

Figaro

How crafty!

Bartolo

And who may she be, this 'Girl who lov'd a
Stranger'!

Rosina *(to the Count)*

Oh, haven't you heard of it?
It's from Rossini's new opera.

Bartolo

An opera?

Is it really?

I suppose it's the usual kind of nonsense:
these modern operas are quite unfathomable,
the story's always feeble, miserable rubbish,
should be made illegal!

Rosina *(She lets the letter fall to the pavement.)*

Oh! How stupid!
I have gone and dropp'd it...
Will you quickly go and get it?

The Count

Perhaps I'd better.

Rosina *(to the Count)*

Pst! Got it?

The Count *(stepping out)*

I heard you... Yes, I've got it!

Bartolo

I'm here. Where is it?

Rosina

The breeze blew it away, try there...

Bartolo

I still can't find it... Hey little bossy boots it's
not here.
(Damnation. I'm sure she's up to something.)

Go inside and shut the window!
Go, hurry up! Do you hear me?
I said go in!

Rosina

Alright, Alright! Keep your wig on!

Bartolo

That damn window, I'll have it cemented!
Get inside there.

Rosina

Must I always be tormented?

Scene 4

(The Count and Figaro, later Bartolo)

The Count *(stepping out with Figaro)*

¹⁰ Poor little innocent creature!

Such a terrible existence makes me all the more
determined!

Figaro

Quickly, quickly. Let's see what she has written.

The Count

Go on then, read it.

Figaro *(reading)*

Your frequent appearances have aroused my
curiosity. As soon as my guardian has gone out,
find some means of telling me your name, your
title and your intentions. It is impossible for me
to come out onto the balcony without arousing
the suspicion of my tyrannical guardian. But rest

assured that in order to break her chains every possible means will be tried by the unfortunate Rosina.

The Count

Yes, yes! She must be saved! Just a moment, is her guardian as awful as he seems?

Figaro

Much worse. He's tight-fisted, suspicious, avaricious, always grumbling. He's obviously past it but he still thinks he's attractive. You won't believe this: he's hell bent on marrying Rosina. His only reason is she's worth a fortune and he can't wait to get his hands on it...
(Hearing the door of Bartolo's house opening, they get back in a hurry.)
Look out, Sir!

The Count

What?

Figaro

The door is opening.

Bartolo (*speaking back into the house*)

Now then, I'll be back in a moment.
(*coming out*)
Keep the door locked at all costs.
If Don Basilio comes here to find me, make him wait.
(*He locks the door behind him.*)

I must marry the girl without delay.
Yes, the arrangements must be made today.

The Count (*forward with Figaro*)

Today he will marry my Rosina!
The lecherous old weasel!
But tell me, my friend, who is this Don Basilio?

Figaro

Another nasty piece of work, a marriage-broker of the worst kind; a useless good-for-nothing who is always cadging money... Hey, he's a professor of music and teaches poor Rosina.

The Count

That's worth knowing, now I think I've got the picture.

Figaro

Now quickly tell me what you wish to say to Rosina in answer to her letter.

The Count

I will not tell her my name or my title. It's important to find out whether she loves me, and loves me for myself, not for the wealth and title of Count Almaviva.

Figaro

Keep your voice down! We're within earshot: look up there... I'm sure I'm not mistaken. Up there behind the shutters I see Rosina. Quick now's your chance – no one's looking. A charming canzonetta is all that's needed to tell her how much you are in love.

(*He offers his guitar to the Count.*)

The Count

A canzonetta?

Figaro

Surely! Borrow my guitar, quickly do it.

The Count

Well, really...

Figaro

God give me patience.

The Count

All right! Let's try it!

(*He takes the guitar and sings to his own accompaniment.*)

[11] Canzone

The Count

My poor heart is so full of emotion,
I must sing to you of my devotion.
I am Lindoro, I truly adore you,
be mine I implore you,
my heart's burning for you,
and Rosina's the one word I say
from the dawn to the end of the day.

Rosina (*her voice is heard singing the ritornello from her window.*)

Oh, continue beloved I pray!

Figaro

You hear her... you're doing well!

The Count

Oh, I'm so happy?

Figaro

The next verse... come on... keep going!

The Count (*He sings again.*)

Your Lindoro sincerely confesses
that his pedigree scarcely impresses.
I lay no fortune or title before you,
I've come here to tell you, I truly adore you.
With a sigh of affection I'll stay
from the dawn to the dusk of each day,
from the dawn to the end of each day.

Rosina

Your Rosina sincerely confesses
that her heart for Lindo...

(*One hears the sound of the window being closed.*)

Recitative

The Count

[12] What's happened?

Figaro

It must be that someone has come into the room.
Try again some other time...

The Count (*emphatically*)

No, I can't wait! I'm going crazy, I want her...
whatever happens I must see her today...
I must speak to her. And you, I'm relying on you...

Figaro

Hey, hey, such passion, I'll see what I can do!

The Count

That's the spirit. By sunset I want you to get me into the house. Tell me, how can we do it? Come on, you're so clever – think of something.

Figaro

I'm so clever?... Thank you, we'll see, today though...

The Count

Oh, come on man, what's the problem? Ah-ha, I get the message, you needn't worry, you will be well rewarded.

Figaro

You mean it?

The Count

I mean it.

Figaro

So you'll make it worth my while?

The Count

Money's no object. Answer me quickly!

Figaro

All right then. Ah, you don't realise what an effect one small word can have upon me. My dear Lindoro, it's really rather funny, but I'm inspired when someone mentions money.

13 Duet

Figaro

You need only mention money, precious metal, divine pesetas! And my mind erupts like hot volcanic craters, overflowing with a million bright ideas.

The Count

Well, let's see what money can accomplish, what effect it has on your imagination. Can this powerful volcanic inspiration put an ending to my cares, yes, can this mighty inspiration put an ending to my cares?

Figaro

For a start we must disguise you... For example, as a soldier?

The Count

As a soldier?

Figaro

Yes, Signore.

The Count

As a soldier? But tell me why.

Figaro

There's a regiment arriving.

The Count

Yes, and I know the colonel well.

Figaro

Very good.

The Count

And then?

Figaro

It's simple. We'll arrange official papers, billet you within that house. What d'you think then, my Lindoro? What d'you say? Will that not do? I'm a genius, Machiavelli! Bravo, bravo, what a plan! How ingenious!

The Count

He's a genius, Machiavelli! Bravo, bravo, what a plan! How ingenious!

Figaro

Wait though, another brainwave! See how money helps me think! You'll be plastered, yes, you'll pretend that you've had far too much to drink!

The Count

I'll be plastered?

Figaro

Yes, Signore.

The Count

I'll be plastered? Tell my why?

Figaro

Why? If you'd too much to drink, if you seem drunk as a lord, that old man will never think, will never suspect you intend to steal his ward. I'm a genius, Machiavelli!

The Count

He's a genius! Machiavelli!

The Count and Figaro

How ingenious, bravo, bravo what a plan!

The Count

Now what?

Figaro

To work, Sir!

The Count

Let's go then! To battle! Oh, how stupid! I've forgotten the most important question... Tell me where can I find you, Where's your shop then? Tell me where.

Figaro

Where to find me? You can't miss it! Don't you worry. My shop is there. (*pointing offstage*) Look for my barber's pole striped red and white, Sir, number fifteen, Sir. First on the right, Sir. Wigs in the window, all shapes and sizes. Look for the lantern, I've got disguises, powders and potions for the complexion, lacquers and lotions quite a selection. That's where you'll find me. I'll meet you there.

The Count

I understand you.

Figaro

Now we must hurry!

The Count

You'll get what's needed?

Figaro

You needn't worry.

The Count

You will not fail me...

Figaro

I'm here to serve you.

The Count

God bless you, Figaro...

Figaro

May heaven preserve you...

The Count

I will be bringing...

Figaro

Plenty of money!

The Count

Money to burn, but first you must earn it...

Figaro

I can smell victory,
all will be well.

The Count

Ah, how love's fever sets my heart burning,
tender and passionate, aching and yearning.
Love never felt before rises within me
and how it makes me more of a man.
Fortune has smiled on me,
made my dream a reality.

Figaro

Think of the money I will be earning.

Thanks to my talents I'm a rich man.

Think of it! I'll be a rich man, no longer poor!

Unusual daring rises within me,
ah, how it makes me more of a man.

Scene 5

(A four-doored room in Doctor Bartolo's house, the windows with blinds as in Scene 1. A writing desk at the right. Rosina with a letter in her hand.)

^[14] **Cavatina**

Rosina

In my heart a gentle voice
spoke of love at break of day
and my heart has made its choice,
with Lindoro I want to stay.
Yes, Lindoro shall be mine,
I'm determined I'll have my way.
Though the doctor may intend
to propose to me one day,
I'll defeat him in the end,
leave his plans in disarray.

^[15] I can be so demure,

I can be charming,
and quite respectful,
sweet and disarming.
Treat me with due respect,
the least that I expect,
and I'll play fair.
But if you cross my way

then I will make you pay
and with a viper's venomous fang,
a hundred tricks I'll play
until I have my way,
let him beware.

Recitative

Rosina

^[16] Oh yes, I'll win the day, but first I must find a
way to send this note to him. Who'll take it?
There is no one I trust here and my guardian has
eyes in the back of his head. I might as well send
it. Perhaps Figaro would help, I saw him out
there, he was chatting with Lindoro half the
morning. Surely he'll take the letter, he knows
my situation and looking after lovers is his
vocation!

Scene 6

Figaro

^[17] Good morning, Signorina.

Rosina

Good morning, Signor Figaro!

Figaro

And tell me, how are you?

Rosina

Life here's so boring,

Figaro

That's terrible, is it possible? A young lady so
beautiful and high-spirited...

Rosina

Ah, don't make me laugh.
But what's the use of being beautiful
if no one ever sees me?
I'm shackled to that fossilised crustacean,
whose single aim in life is my incarceration.

Figaro

Incarceration?... Oh, no!
(taking her aside)

Now listen, I want to...

(They hear footsteps.)

Rosina

There's my guardian.

Figaro

Are you certain?

Rosina

Yes, I'm certain, those are his footsteps.

Figaro

Then I will hide, when the coast's clear I'll come
and find you. I've got something to tell you.

Rosina

And so have I, Signor Figaro.

Figaro

Excellent. I'm off.

(Figaro hides, but he can be seen peeping out from time to time.)

Rosina

¹⁸ Where would I be without him?

Scene 7

(Bartolo and Rosina, later Berta and Ambrogio)

Bartolo

Damn that confounded Figaro!
He's always in the house, the man's a menace!

Rosina

Here we go, always grumbling.

Bartolo

What could he have been saying, and how long
did he stay here?
I really must be tougher; that wretched barber,
one day I'll make him suffer!
Signorina, where's the barber? Have you seen him?

Rosina

But why?

Bartolo

Because I wish to know.

Rosina

Perhaps he gets on your nerves.

Bartolo

What if he does?

Rosina

Alright then if you must know.
Yes, I have seen him and we talked.

I like him, he's so lively,
I find him funny and very sympathetic.
(That should go down well, like an emetic!)

Bartolo

I simply can't resist her.
I love her, yet she does nothing but insult me.
I feel certain that the barber puts her up to this
mischief. I wonder what he told her.

¹⁹ Who'd know?

Scene 8

(Bartolo, then Don Basilio)

Bartolo

Oh! Don Basilio! Your timing is perfect.
Oh, I tell you, by fair means or by foul,
first thing tomorrow I marry my Rosina.
You understand me?

Basilio

I understand you perfectly.

Bartolo

Good!

Basilio

What's more, I've news which makes the matter
urgent... but keep it quiet... he's here!

Bartolo

Who?

Basilio

Count Almaviva.

Bartolo

What? The one who's been chasing after my
Rosina?

Basilio

That one precisely.

Bartolo

That's all I need!
We must find a way to stop him!

Basilio

Certainly but... very discreetly.

Bartolo

What do you mean?

Basilio

What if we start a rumour...
invent some misdemeanour
from his past to discredit him,
to ruin him, destroy his reputation,
blacken his name so thoroughly that he'll have
no option but to leave Seville for ever... and I'm
the man to do it:
in less than four days,
you mark my words,
Basilio guarantees it,
he'll be hounded out of town,
just you believe it.

Bartolo

You really think so?

Basilio

I know so! I have a system, and it's fool proof.

Bartolo

But that would be slander.

Basilio

Ah-ha, slander... if it gets what you want, would
you disdain it?

Bartolo

I don't like it.

Basilio

No? Then listen. I'll explain it.

²⁰ **Aria**

Basilio

Innuendo, the slightest whisper,
mere suggestion, somewhat pervasive,
something subtle and persuasive,
plant it gently, oh, so gently,
watch it grow and grow until it's taken root.
Keep it quiet, hardly breathe it,
don't confirm it, don't conceal it.
So a sly insinuation
grows with each exaggeration,
fan the flames and watch them flicker,
first a nudge and then a wink and then a snicker
all create the wrong impression
'til our little indiscretion
gets repeated and repeated
and the mud begins to stick.
What began diminuendo
grows towards a great crescendo,
fact is quickly lost in fiction,

past all hope of contradiction.
Soon the noise is loud as thunder,
tearing all the town asunder,
banging, crashing, booming, clashing,
'til complete confusion reigns.
This volcano of corruption
overflows in an eruption
causing damage and corrosion!
With the mightiest explosion,
it's as if the world is ending,
or the wrath of God descending,
storming, raging, never ending
'til the world is upside down.
Though the slander is unfounded,
its poor victim is so hounded,
ostracised, humiliated
that he wishes he were dead.

Recitative

Basilio

[21] Well, what d'you think?

Bartolo

No, I'd rather do it my way.
I must marry her today.
Come and help me prepare the marriage
contract this very minute. Once she and I are
married, I'll keep her from those fancy
Casanovas that hang around here, they'll get
their come-uppance!

Basilio

As long as I'm paid,
I couldn't care tuppence!

Scene 9

(Figaro enters cautiously, then Rosina.)

Figaro

[22] So that's it!
The old devils!
Now I know ev'rything!
Good luck to you old doctor.
Don't be so absurd!
Her husband!
Come off it!
I'll make you eat your words.
Now that they're in his study,
I must break the happy news to Rosina.
Ah, here she is.

Rosina

What's happened, Signor Figaro?

Figaro

I'm not sure that you can take it...

Rosina

Well, try me.

Figaro

I can hear church bells ringing...

Rosina

What on earth do you mean?

Figaro

I mean to tell you that by this very evening your
darling guardian has decided to become your
blushing bridegroom!

Rosina

You're joking!

Figaro

For once I'm serious.
He's drawing up the contract with that slimy
Basilio in there this very minute.

Rosina

What, how stupid can he be?
He must be crazy, he'll have to deal with me.
But tell me, Signor Figaro, a little while ago,
there beneath my window, you were talking to a
stranger.

Figaro

Ah! That was my cousin, a fine upstanding fellow,
quite intelligent and yet romantic.
He's come here to Seville as a student and the
poor boy hopes that he'll make his fortune.

Rosina

His fortune?
Oh, I'm sure he will!

Figaro

Oh, one can't be too certain for, between you
and me, he's got a serious problem.

Rosina

A serious problem?

Figaro

Oh, enormous!
He's head over heels in love.

Rosina

Oh, really. This poor young man, your cousin,
perhaps I could be of help to him.

Figaro

You help him?

Rosina

Don't you believe me?

Figaro

Oh, yes!

Rosina

And his beloved, tell me, is she far away?

Figaro

No, no! She's here, I mean quite close.

Rosina

Is she pretty?

Figaro

Oh, very pretty!
How can I do justice to such beauty?
She's shapely, very witty with hair in ringlets,
cheeks like summer roses, eyes full of laughter
and the daintiest little fingers.

Rosina

Her name is?

Figaro

You want her name too? Her name is...
Ah, it's so lovely. Her name is...

Rosina

Come on. Her name is?...

Figaro

Perhaps you've seen her, her name is
R... o... Ro... s... i... si... Rosi... n... a...
na... Rosina.

²³ **Duet**

Rosina

Then it's me...
You would not tease me?
Then it's me...
He really loves me!
But I had already guessed it,
I had known it all along.

Figaro

I assure you that Lindoro,
he adores you, dear Rosina.
What a cunning little schemer,
but she'll have to deal with me.

Rosina

Listen, listen...
I can't wait to see him, you must tell me how?

Figaro

Don't you worry, he'll be here to see you any
moment now.

Rosina

Here to see me?
Oh, how lovely, does he know the situation?

I am dying of anticipation!
What's the cause of his delay?

Figaro

He is waiting for a signal,
poor young man in such dejection.
Send a token of affection
and he'll soon be on his way,
send a letter, he's on his way,
just a letter and he'll soon be on his way.
What's the matter?

Rosina

I'm too shy...

Figaro

No, have courage.

Rosina

Don't know why...

Figaro

Just a message.

Rosina

I'm embarrassed...

Figaro

There's no need, come on.
Quickly, write the letter!

(She takes a letter from her pocket and gives it to him.)

Rosina

Write a letter... Well, here it is.

Figaro (*astonished*)

What... already written!
What a woman,
she's no need of education!

Rosina

I am filled with such elation,
I begin to breathe again!

Figaro

She's a source of inspiration
when it comes to luring men!

Rosina

Love's my only consolation,
love's my only guiding star.

Figaro

Women are beyond me,
fascinating and bizarre.

Rosina

Tell me, where's Lindoro?

Figaro

On his way.
He has told me he'll be coming here today.

Rosina

Does he know the situation?

Figaro

I have told him what to say!

Scene 10

(Rosina, then Bartolo)

Recititative

Rosina

²⁴ Now I feel so much better.
That Figaro is full of good ideas.

Bartolo (*entering*)

(Some sweet talk, that should do it.)
My little dumpling, tell your dear old guardian
what Figaro was doing here this morning.

Rosina

Figaro?
I know nothing.

Bartolo

But you spoke?

Rosina

Yes, we spoke.

Bartolo

What did you speak of?

Rosina

Oh, this and that, things of no importance:
What they are wearing in Paris,
and the illness of his daughter Marcellina...

Bartolo

Oh, really?
And I would wager that he brought you an
answer to your letter!

Rosina

What letter?

Bartolo

Oh, come now!

The aria from 'The Girl who Lov'd a Stranger'
that you dropped 'by mistake' out of the window.

Why are we blushing?

I've caught her good and proper!

If you haven't been writing, please account for
that ink-stain.

Rosina

Ink-stain?

That's nothing!

That's where I burned my finger
and I put some ink on it.

It's getting better.

Bartolo

Ludicrous. These sheets of paper... only five here.
There were six.

Rosina

That paper?

You're right;

I used one of them to wrap up some chocolates
for Marcellina.

Bartolo

How kind of you, but in that case this pen
would not be inky.

Rosina

Damnation!

The pen... I used to draw a flower on my sewing!

Bartolo

A flower?

Rosina

A flower!

Bartolo

A flower?

Ah, you hussy!

Rosina

I swear...

Bartolo

Silence!

Rosina

Believe me...

Bartolo

I've had enough!

Rosina

Signore...

Bartolo

You can't deceive me.

[25] Aria

Bartolo

Dare you offer such excuses

to an eminent physician?

From a girl in your position

I expected better lies,

I expected something better.

Sending sweets to Marcellina?

Sketching flowers to embroider?

Burnt your finger?

What nonsense!

You must find a taller story

or I'll cut you down to size.

You must find me something taller.

Where's that missing sheet of paper?

Don't deny you wrote a letter,

you should really know me better,

don't you think that you can charm me...

hold your tongue, you can't placate me.

No, my dear girl, don't underrate me

or you're in for a big surprise!

Come, Rosina, don't be stubborn,

and I promise I won't be vexed.

Pretty villain, still so sullen?

Then I know what I'll do next.

In the future when I leave you

I will see that you are guarded,

tell the servants you're regarded

now as under house arrest.

Do not try to win me over

with your crying and your sighing.

Now the penalty for lying

could be more than you had guessed.

For my innocent Rosina,

now it's solit'ry confinement...

Yes, yes, 'til you show me some refinement,

I will teach you who knows best.

If you offer such excuses

then you're in for a big surprise.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Scene 13

*(The Count dressed as a cavalryman, then
Bartolo)*

[1] Finale I

The Count

Where's the master?

Where's the mistress?

No one's here then?

Hey!

Bartolo *(entering)*

Who's this fellow?

Some kind of soldier?

He's been drinking!

Why's he here?

The Count

Where's the landlord?

Lousy service!

Hey!

Bartolo

What d'you want?

Hey, that's my brandy!

The Count

Ah... At last!

How nice to meet you!

Bartolo

What on earth is going on?

The Count

Just a moment.
I've got the name here.
You must be this Doctor Barnado?

Bartolo

Not Barnado!

The Count

Ah, Bastardo.

Bartolo

I most certainly am not, Sir!
Try to get it right, young man!
Doctor Bartolo!

The Count

Ah, I've got it now: Doctor Bungalow.

Bartolo

He's plastered!

The Count

Makes no difference whatsoever.

Bartolo

I am quickly losing patience.
I must try to keep my head!

The Count

Where's my darling?
I must find her!
What's she doing... Still in bed?
So, Signore... You are a doctor?

Bartolo

That's correct, Sir... I'm a doctor!

The Count

Ah! Coincidence!
Let me kiss you!
We are colleagues!

Bartolo

Get off me!

The Count (*He roughly embraces Bartolo.*)

Come!... I'm a doctor in the forces,
and I specialise in horses!
(*showing him his paper*)

And my billet is in your house,
here's the order see for yourself!

[2] Ah! How long 'til I behold her?

Bartolo

This is more than I can tolerate,
what is it all about?

The Count

Ah! When will my arms enfold her?

Bartolo

Oh, I simply can't communicate,
I'll have to throw him out, that's enough!

Scene 14

(*Rosina, and the others*)

Rosina

Who's this soldier...
(*She stops, looking at Bartolo.*)
with my guardian?
What can this be all about?

(*She comes forward.*)

The Count

Come Rosina, my beloved,
I must seek my darling out.
(*seeing Rosina*)
It's Rosina, at last I've found her.

Rosina

He has seen me, he's approaching!

The Count (*softly to Rosina*)

I'm Lindoro.

Rosina

I can't believe it!
Do be careful, now my heart is fill'd with fear!

Bartolo (*seeing Rosina*)

Why, Rosina, are you staring?
Can't you see that we are busy?

Rosina

You're the one whose eyes are glaring.

Bartolo

Quickly leave us, go get out of here!

The Count

Signorina, I'll come with you!

Bartolo

And where do you think you're going?

The Count

To my bedroom...

Bartolo

To your bedroom?...

The Count

To start unpacking.

Bartolo

To your bedroom? Are you joking?

The Count

Darling!

Rosina

Oh, heavens...

Bartolo

This is outrageous.

The Count

(*to Bartolo, as the Count starts towards the inner rooms*)
Let's get going...

Bartolo

Oh no, Signore, there's no bedroom for you here.

The Count

Why not?

Bartolo

Because I'm telling you!
I've a warrant of exemption.

The Count

An exemption?

Bartolo

Wait a minute and I'll show you, it's in here.

(He goes to the writing table.)

The Count *(to Rosina)*

Just in case I cannot stay here,
take this letter...

Rosina

Look out, he'll catch us.

Bartolo *(searching the writing-table)*

Where on earth can I have put it?

Rosina

Be careful!...

Bartolo

Damn the thing, I'm sure it's here.

Rosina

We must pray he doesn't find it
or he'll throw you out, I fear.

The Count

We must pray he doesn't find it
or the game is up, I fear.

Bartolo *(coming forward)*

Ah! Here it is!

(He reads.)

This is to certify Dr Bartolo
is hereby exempted from...

The Count *(throwing the parchment in the air)*

So much for your document!
It's invalid
from today.

Bartolo

What the hell d'you think you're doing?

The Count

Can't you hear me, Doctor. Deafness?
In this house I have been quartered,
in this house I mean to stay!

Bartolo

Is that so?...

The Count

It is indeed, Sir!

Bartolo

You may think you're very dashing,
but I'm sure a damn good thrashing
will soon send you on your way.
You had better heed my warning.

The Count

So you're serious?
You want to fight me?
Fine! I'm ready for a fight!
I love fighting, but we must plan it,
let's be sure to get it right!
(amiably approaching Bartolo)
Pay attention, here's the ramparts,
you're my enemy in battle.
(giving Bartolo a push)
On your guard!
And my allies...
(quietly to Rosina as he goes near and shows her the letter)

Now drop your handkerchief!

*(He seizes the moment when Bartolo's attention is
distracted and drops his letter. Rosina drops her
handkerchief over it.)*

And my allies, they are here.

On your guard.

Bartolo

Just one moment!...

The Count

What is it?...

*(Turning, he pretends he has just seen the letter
and picks it up.)*

Bartolo

What's that paper?

The Count

Oh, it's only a prescription!
No! It's a letter... you must have dropped it,
since it seems to be for you.

*(He bows before Rosina and gives her the letter and
the handkerchief.)*

Rosina

Thank you!

(She exchanges the letter for another piece of paper.)

Bartolo

Thank you!

Hand it over.

I can see what you are up to,
did you hear me, give it here!

The Count

So you'll fight me?
On your guard!
Hey!

Rosina

Please, don't get in such a temper.
I had dropp'd it in my hurry.
It's the laundry list, don't worry.

Bartolo *(tearing the paper out of her hand)*

You are lying, hand it over, give it here!
Combinations!

Berta

Here they are, Sir... combinations!

Bartolo

She was not lying!
It's the laundry!
How amazing!

The Count and Rosina

Now his mind is really racing,
we have caught him in our trap.

Berta

I'm quite baffled, it's amazing.
why are they in such a flap?

Basilio

So so so doh re mi fa re so mi la fa ti so doh,
Why are they in such a flap.

Bartolo

Ah, my mind is really racing.
They have caught me in their trap!

Rosina

All my life...
the same old story,
always scolded and suspected,
kept in prison and neglected,
I can't bear it any more.

Bartolo (*approaching her*)
Poor Rosina...

The Count (*threatening Bartolo and grabbing her arm*)
Get away, you have upset her...

Bartolo
This is your fault... you must forget her...

The Count
Ah, you traitor, I will teach you...

(*drawing his sword*)

Rosina (*restraining the Count*)
Don't be violent, we beseech you!

Berta, Bartolo and Basilio
Don't be violent, we beseech you!

The Count
You're about to meet your fate!
Let go of me!

Rosina, Berta, Bartolo and Basilio
Someone help us, he will murder him...
Quick before it is too late!

Scene 15

Figaro

[3] Stop this noise!
What's going on here?
Why all this bawling?
Have you gone crazy?
This is appalling!
People are wond'ring
what all the trouble is.
There is confusion all over town.
Signor, be careful. You must calm down.

Bartolo
Cocky young upstart!

(*pointing to the Count*)

The Count (*pointing to Bartolo*)
Bloated old lecher!

Bartolo
I'll knock your block off.

The Count
I'll smash your face in!

(*raising the basin as if threatening*)

Figaro
Now, Mister Soldier, don't be so headstrong,
if you don't stop this I'll have to knock you out,
if you don't heed me I'll knock you down.

The Count (*to Bartolo*)
Ugly old fogey!

Bartolo

Impudent ruffian!

Rosina, Berta and Figaro.
Doctor, be quiet.

Bartolo
I won't be quiet!

Rosina, Berta and Figaro
Don't be so violent.

The Count
I'll start a riot.

Rosina, Berta, Figaro and Basilio
People will hear you all over town.

The Count
Now I will murder him,
I'll knock him down!

Rosina, Berta and Figaro
[4] Someone is at the door.

Rosina, Berta, the Count, Figaro, Bartolo and Basilio
Who can it be?

Bartolo
Who's there?

Chorus (*offstage*)
The army, so let us in.

Rosina, Berta, the Count, Figaro, Bartolo and Basilio
The army! How terrible!...

Figaro and Basilio

Now you have done it!

The Count and Bartolo
No need to worry, let them come in!

Bartolo, Basilio, Rosina, the Count and Berta
What a disaster.
How will it end?

Last Scene

Chorus

[5] Pay attention! What's the trouble?
Who's the culprit? No one move!
Who has started this disturbance?
What can anybody prove?
Why this noise?

Bartolo

This young blackguard has abused me,
he has set on me and bruised me,
yes indeed.

Figaro

I was passing by this way
and found the place in disarray,
yes indeed.

Basilio and Berta

All this couldn't be absurder,
he was threatening to murder,
yes indeed.

The Count

This is where I had my billet
but this fool won't let me stay,
yes indeed.

Rosina

You can blame the situation
on this man's inebriation,
yes indeed.

Officer

It's clear now.
Come along...
I must arrest you...
Off to prison...
(*The soldiers move to surround the Count.*)
Off we go!

The Count

Me arrested? Really? Not so fast!

- [6] (*With a commanding gesture, he makes the soldiers stand back. He takes the Officer aside and shows him a paper. The Officer reads it, showing surprise. He orders the soldiers to move back. All stand frozen in amazement.*)

Rosina, the Count, Bartolo and Basilio

Frozen and motionless
just like a monument,
I'm rooted to the spot
and don't dare breathe!

Figaro

Look at Don Bartolo!

Doesn't know what to think.
Ah, how hysterical, I cannot breathe!

The Count

Wide-eyed with wonderment,
frozen and petrified,
they're rooted to the spot,
I cannot breathe.

Stretta

Bartolo (*to the Officer*)

- [7] If I may...
Let me say...
I protest...
I request...

Bartolo, Berta and Basilio

But if we...
But if he...
But if she...
Don't you see... ?

Chorus

No, you can't,
No, you shan't,
What about?...
Don't you shout!
If you what?
He did not.
If she what?
We do not!
You may go about your business,
we declare this matter closed.

Berta and Rosina

We agree.
So we see we are free.

The Count, Figaro and Basilio

That suits me.
So we see we are free.

Bartolo

Let me tell you,
you must listen!

Rosina, Berta, the Count, Figaro, Bartolo, Basilio and Chorus

In my head a blacksmith's hammer
beats and pounds upon its anvil.
Raising such a piercing clamour,
rising, falling, quite appalling,
loud enough to wake the dead.
Now it's banging, now it's crashing,
like two mighty armies clashing,
it's as if the world were ending,
Armageddon in my head.
Pounding, beating, still repeating,
now advancing, now retreating,
my poor brain is overheating,
it's enough to drive you mad.

Act II

Scene 1

(*A room in Bartolo's house, with a seat and a pianoforte on which lie pieces of music*)

Recitative

Bartolo

- [8] I've got to find the answer!
My enquiries about that drunken soldier all
came to nothing...
As no one seems to know him.
I wonder...
Oh, I've got it, I think he's spying for the Count
Almaviva, who sent him here to sound out my
Rosina, to see it she could be his latest conquest.
A man cannot feel safe not even in his own house.
But if I...
(*a knock on the door*)
Who's knocking?
Hey, who's there?
Berta, have you gone deaf? No need to fear:
Let them all in, Doctor Bartolo is here.

Scene 2

- [9] **Duet**

The Count

Peace and joy be yours for ever.
Joy and peace and ev'ry blessing.
Peace and joy be yours forever.
Joy and peace and ev'ry blessing.
All my plans went wrong this morning
but I'll still avoid detection,
As a loony music teacher
I will trick him yet again.
Ah yes, I'll trick him yet again.
Live in peace and live contented.

Once again I have deceived him
What a feeling of elation!
Ah, my love, your music master
soon will carry you away!
He will carry you away.
Ah, your music master soon will take you,
I have come, I will carry you away.

Bartolo

Thank you kindly, much obliged to you.
Very gracious, if I may say.
Thank you kindly, pray don't mention it.
Absolutely, just as you say.
In my mind the thought is dawning
I've a hazy recollection,
I am sure I've met this creature
but I don't know where or when.
Yes, I heard you (the man's demented).
Can you stop it? What a bore!
Have you finished?
It's never-ending!
Joy and peace and ...
Peace and joy and ...
Stop it! What a bore!
All my visitors are frightful!
What a trial and tribulation!
It's a chapter of disaster,
this is not my lucky day!

Recitative

Bartolo

^[10] I don't think we have met, Sir,
who are you? And keep it short.

The Count

Don Alonso, a professor of singing
and a pupil of Don Basilio.

Bartolo

Continue...

The Count

Don Basilio has taken to his bed.
I've come instead of him.

Bartolo

He's ill? I'll go and see him.

(starting to go)

The Count

There is no need to, he is not feeling that bad.

Bartolo

This is rather suspicious.
I'm going, come with me.

The Count *(decisively)*

Wait a minute...

Bartolo

What's that?

The Count *(in a low voice, drawing Bartolo aside)*

Something to tell you...

Bartolo

Speak a bit louder.

The Count

What?

Bartolo

Louder!
Speak up, man!

The Count *(also angrily, raising his voice)*

All right!
Just as you please, but it's clear you have no
notion with whom you're dealing.
I have come from Almaviva...

Bartolo *(more persuasive, holding him back)*

Keep your voice down.
Go on tell me, I'm list'ning...

The Count

His Lordship...

Bartolo

Please, not quite so loud.

The Count *(calming down)*

I'm lodging in the same place as he is,
and this morning, guess what happened?
(showing a letter)
I found this letter, it fell into my hands...
It's from Rosina to the Count Almaviva.
Look at the writing.

Bartolo *(taking the letter and looking at it)*

Good heavens! From Rosina.

The Count

Don Basilio knows nothing of the letter,
and I just thought I'd come to give a lesson to
Rosina,

and by doing so I might do you a favour...
(with feigned embarrassment, as if to justify himself)
because... using the letter... I could try to...

Bartolo

Try what?...

The Count

I'll explain... It would be to your advantage.
If I could see her...

Bartolo

I'm not sure about that young man.

The Count

I'd tell her how I got it from a woman who's
known to be a mistress of Almaviva.
Thus I could prove to her that his intentions are
unworthy and dishonest and in this way...

Bartolo

Just one moment, you mean a slander!
Oh, bravo!
(He embraces the Count and puts the letter in his pocket.)
You are a worthy pupil of Don Basilio!
Such a delightful conspiracy is just the job
and you'll be well rewarded.
I'll go and call my Rosina.
This is more than I'd hoped for.
I'm very grateful, you've done me such a favour.

The Count

Thank you, don't mention it!
(Bartolo enters Rosina's room.)

That business of the letter was a slip of the tongue,
quite unwitting, what could I do?
I had to say something to avoid being exposed as
an impostor.
I've got to take my chance,
now I must tell her all.
Will she accept me?
It's time to take a sounding.
Here she comes at last...
Ah! How my heart is pounding!

Scene 3

(Bartolo bringing Rosina; the Count)

Bartolo

¹¹ Come along, my dear, and listen:
this young man has come here to teach you.
His name is Don Alonso.

Rosina *(seeing the Count)*
Ah!

Bartolo
What's the matter?...

Rosina
Sudden cramp in my ankle.

The Count
Allow me... sit down beside me here, my dear
young lady; if you don't mind, I've come to take
your lesson instead of Don Basilio who is sick.

Rosina
Ah, that will be a pleasure, shall we begin?

The Count

What will you sing for us?

Rosina

I'll sing you my new aria: it's the one from
'The Girl who lov'd a Stranger'...

Bartolo

That title begins to haunt me,
'The Girl who lov'd a Stranger'.

Rosina

I thought I'd told you:
it's all the rage, this new Rossini opera.

Bartolo

It may be, but I think it's frightful!

Rosina

Ah, here it is.

The Count

Let's see now... It looks delightful.

*(He sits at the pianoforte; Rosina sings to his
accompaniment. Bartolo sits and listens.)*

¹² **Aria**

Rosina

When a heart for love is yearning
its most passionate flame is burning.
Though the tyrant tries to thwart it
he will find there's nought to gain.
Love will always be the victor,
cruel persecution attacks in vain.
(Bartolo dozes off.)

Ah, Lindoro, my beloved,
if you knew how he abused me...
He's like Cereberus the watchdog,
he will drive me mad, I know!
You must save me from his clutches,
where you lead me I will go.

The Count

Do not fear, I will be with you,
we shall witness his overthrow.

Rosina

You will save me...?

The Count

You have my promise...

Rosina

And our love?...

The Count

Will grow and grow!

(Bartolo wakes up.)

Rosina

Dearest of all beguiling visions,
sweetest image of love's desire.
When you're smiling your love inspires me,
you bring joy into my heart.

(Bartolo dozes off again.)

The Count

Have no fear.
I will be with you,
we shall witness his overthrow.

Rosina

You will save me...?

The Count

You have my promise.

Rosina

And our love...

The Count

... will grow and grow!

Rosina

You must save me from his clutches,
you have given me new hope.

Recitative

The Count

¹³ What a talent. Bravissima!

Rosina

Oh, thank you, thank you...

Bartolo

I grant you she has talent,
but that blasted modern music is so discordant.
In my days things were different,
opera was opera and men were sopranos.
I remember Caffariello.
He sang a lovely aria: la la la la la...
Now that's what I call music.
Listen to this!

(interrupting himself)

¹⁴ **Arietta**

Bartolo

Sweet little seventeena,
adorable Rosina...
(*with a gesture toward Rosina*)
I know it says Giannina,
but I always sing Rosina...
Her smile is so entrancing,
one look and I am dancing...

(*He dances. Figaro has entered and now comes behind Bartolo and imitates him. Figaro has his basin with him.*)

Recitative

Bartolo

¹⁵ Bravo, Signor Figaro, oh, bravo.

Figaro

Oh, it was nothing. Sorry, I couldn't help it.

Bartolo

All right, just tell me why you're here?

Figaro

Oh, really, I have come here to shave you.
Today is your day.

Bartolo

Today, impossible.

Figaro (*putting the basin on the table and taking out a memorandum book*)

Today impossible, tomorrow impossible for me.

Because I'm fully booked.

I'm trimming beards and whiskers for all the senior officers of the new regiment.

Then there's Countess Andronica who wants some chestnut tinting in her blond wig...

On to old Count Bombé who wears his quiff in ringlets...

Then I must take a laxative to the lawyer Bernardone who has a stubborn case of constipation...

And then... it's endless... why bother?
(*putting the book back in his pocket*)

I can't fit you in.

Bartolo

All right, let's not discuss it:
today I don't want shaving.

Figaro

No? Damnation!

Who do you think I am?

I come this morning and the house is pandemonium, and now you try to tell me: 'Today, impossible'. I am simply not prepared to be messed about by you like a servant. You'll find another barber.

(*He picks up the basin as if preparing to leave.*)

Me, I'm going home.

Bartolo

All right then, have it your own way.

Oh, what a prima donna!

Go and fetch me a towel, they're in the cupboard.

(*He takes a bunch of keys from his belt, gives them to Figaro, then takes them back.*)

No, I'll go myself.

(*He goes in.*)

Figaro

Ah, if I could get my hands on that wretched bunch of keys we'd be home and dry.
(*to Rosina, with emphasis*)

Tell me, is one of those the key which would open the window?

Rosina

That's right, it's the shiny new one.

Bartolo (*returning*)

No, it's too risky leaving her alone here with that devil of a barber!

(*He gives the keys to Figaro.*)

You can fetch what's needed. Go down there to my room, open the cupboard you'll find fresh linen. Careful, don't you go snooping!

Figaro

Me!

I'm not nosey! (Terrific!)

Back in a moment.

(Now things look quite rosy!)

Bartolo (*to the Count*)

He's the one – the one who delivered the letter, Rosina's private postman.

The Count

I wouldn't trust him further than I could throw him.

Bartolo

Well... he's met his match in me!
(*a loud crash of breaking dishes*)
Ah, now what's he done?

Rosina

Is something broken?

Bartolo

The clumsy oaf!
I knew I couldn't trust him.

(*He goes out.*)

The Count (*to Rosina*)

What would we do without him?

Now that we're alone, answer me, my darling, are you willing to share my future and take me as your husband?

Be honest!...

Rosina (*with enthusiasm*)

Ah, my Lindoro,
you are all I long for!

(*She composes herself as Bartolo and Figaro return.*)

The Count

What's happened?

Bartolo

Everything's broken!
Six vases, eight crystal glasses, the soup tureen...

Figaro (*He shows the Count the key to the balcony which he has taken from the ring.*)

It could have been much worse!

But I was lucky...
I couldn't see a thing in that damn passage.
If I had not held onto this precious key
I'd have fallen with the contents of the cupboard
on my head.
Why must you live in darkness?
And then, and then?

Bartolo
That will do!

Figaro (*to the Count and Rosina*)
Let's get on.
(Be careful.)

Bartolo (*He sits down to be shaved. At this moment Basilio enters.*)
I'm ready.

Scene 4

(*Don Basilio and the others*)

¹⁶ Quintet

Rosina
Don Basilio...

The Count
This means trouble.

Figaro
Now we're for it...

Bartolo
Aren't you ill?

Basilio
Peace and joy be yours forever.

Bartolo
But I thought he was in bed.

Rosina
My heart is filled with dread.

The Count
Now's the time to use your head.

Figaro
Now's the time to use your head.

Bartolo (*astonished*)
Don Basilio, you've recovered?

Basilio
What do you mean?

Figaro (*interrupting*)
No time for talking.
Do you still want me to shave you,
make your mind up, yes or no?

Bartolo (*to Figaro*)
Wait a moment.
(*to Basilio*)
Eh...
Your assistant...

Basilio (*astonished*)
My assistant?

The Count (*to Bartolo*)
I told the Doctor that the whole affair was settled,
did I not?

Bartolo
Yes, that is so.

Basilio
But Don Bartolo, enlighten me...

The Count (*to Bartolo, interrupting*)
I must tell you something quickly.
(*to Basilio*)
Don Basilio I'll be with you.
Let me whisper in your ear!
You must tell him he should leave us,
it would really be much better.

Rosina
I am trembling with fear.

Figaro (*softly to Rosina*)
I'll look after you, my dear!

The Count
He knows nothing of the letter
or the reason I am here.

Basilio
Something strange is going on here,
what it is I've no idea.

Bartolo (*softly to the Count*)
You are right, it would be better,
we must get him out of here.

The Count
With a fever, Don Basilio,
(*Figaro listens carefully, ready to back up the Count's story.*)

was it wise to leave your bed when you're so
poorly?

Basilio (*astonished*)
With a fever?

The Count
You've surely noticed?
You are yellow, could be fatal.

Basilio
I am yellow?
Could be fatal.

Figaro (*feeling his pulse*)
This is serious...
Things look bad...
You are delirious...
Heartbeat pounding,
face is red, Sir,
it's astounding,
you're not dead, Sir.
This is clearly scarlet fever!

Basilio
Scarlet fever!

The Count (*The Count slips a purse to Basilio.*)
You must linger here no longer.
This will help you feel much stronger,
take it with you home to bed.

Figaro
Off you go and put your feet up.

The Count

Dim the lights and turn the heat up.

Rosina

Into bed and pull the sheet up.

Bartolo

Quickly, quickly home to bed.

Rosina, the Count, Figaro and Bartolo

Quickly, quickly home to bed.

Basilio (*astonished*)

Here's some money?...

To put my feet up...

Are they all, can they be all in this together?

Rosina, the Count, Figaro and Bartolo

Off to bed and put your feet up.

Basilio

I am not deaf yet,

I am going,

I will do what you suggest.

Figaro

You look yellow!

The Count

You look so awful...

Basilio

Do I really?

The Count, Figaro and Bartolo

Yes, really dreadful!

Basilio

Then I'm going!

Rosina, the Count, Figaro and Bartolo

Go then.

The Count and Rosina

Buona sera, Don Basilio.

Figaro

Buona sera, Don Basilio.

Off you go and get well soon.

Basilio

Buona sera, I'll go home now

and come back this afternoon.

Rosina, the Count and Figaro

He's completely dessicated and decrepit.

Off you go now, Don Basilio,

you must do what we have said.

Quickly, quickly home to bed.

Bartolo

Off you go now.

Basilio

Yes I heard you.

Thank you, I'll go home now

and come back this afternoon.

They have trapped the Doctor neatly.

Yes, I heard, no need to shout,

I am going home to bed.

Figaro

¹⁷ Now then, Signor Don Bartolo.

Bartolo

All right.

(*Bartolo sits down. Figaro ties a towel around his neck and gets ready to shave him, meanwhile screening the two lovers.*)

Tighter!

That's excellent.

The Count

Rosina!

Here, listen carefully.

Rosina

I'm listening, whisper, I'm here.

(*They sit down, pretending to study the music.*)

The Count (*to Rosina, cautiously*)

This key is all we neded,

our plan is going nicely.

At twelve o'clock precisely,

I'll come to set you free.

Figaro (*keeping Bartolo's attention*)

Ahi! Ahi!

Bartolo

What is the matter?...

Figaro

It is my eye,

I think there's something in it.

D'you see it?...

No, don't touch it!

Try blowing, try blowing it instead.

Rosina

At twelve o'clock precisely

I will be ready, waiting.

Soon we'll be celebrating

because I shall be free.

The Count

Darling, I think I'd better

(*Bartolo gets up and goes toward the lovers.*)

warn you about your letter,

I showed it to Don Bartolo

so my disguise would fool him.

Bartolo

So my disguise would fool him?

Ah! Ah!

Caught you, the pair of you!

Don Alonso, bravo, bravi...

Peace and joy...

You swindlers!

De-frauders!

Deceivers!

Marauders!

You liars,

you think you can beat me,

you think you can cheat me,

deceive and mistreat me

until I give in.

With all your surprises

and clever disguises,

of all shapes and sizes,

I'll do you all in.

Rosina, the Count and Figaro

Don't get in a temper,
be quiet, dear Doctor,
don't make such a din.

Bartolo

Get out of my sight,
or I'll make you regret it.

Rosina, the Count and Figaro

Oh, stop it, do try to forget it.
Be quiet, dear Doctor, don't make such a din.
He's ranting and raving,
he won't even listen to what we have said.
It's perfectly clear that he's gone off his head.
We've had quite enough
and we wish he'd drop dead.

Bartolo

Get out of my sight,
or I'll make you regret it.
I'm bursting with rage and I'm bursting with fury,
it's perfectly clear that you wish I'd drop dead.
You've driven me crazy and made me see red.

Scene 5

(Bartolo, then Berta and Ambrogio)

Recitative

Bartolo

- [18] Things can't get much worse.
But how...?
I never suspected a thing!

(after thinking it over)

Ah! Don Basilio knows more than he has told me.
Hey! Do you hear? Are you there?

(Ambrogio and Berta enter from opposite sides.)

Ah, Berta, now listen: quick, take a message
round to Don Basilio! Tell him I've got to see
him and it's extremely urgent... There are things
I must ask him. He'll have to come here
because... because I have confidential reasons.
Go quickly now.

(Ambrogio goes.)

(to Berta)

And Berta... stay there and guard the door, and
then... oh no... (I just can't trust her) I'll do the
job myself!

Scene 6

(Berta alone)

Berta

- [19] He wouldn't trust his mother!
Go yourself then,
I'll be glad to see the back of you!
Will there ever be a moment's peace in this house?
They're quarrelling or weeping, always something.
No, there's no rest for the wicked
with that old fossil causing such disruption,
what a household, all confusion and corruption.

[20] **Aria**

Berta

First the Doctor wants to marry,

then Rosina loves a stranger,
young and old are both in danger,
love has made them lose their heads.
But what is this strange condition
that has made them all go mad?
Love's a grave indisposition,
its effects are always bad.
It's a universal sickness,
it's an itch without a lotion,
a disease beyond all potion...
Even I know love's emotion,
for some memories never fade.
How I envy all young lovers,
spinsterhood is so depressing
Oh, my fate is too distressing,
I must die a sad old maid.

(She goes out.)

Scene 7

(Don Bartolo brings in Don Basilio.)

Recitative

Bartolo

- [21] So this pupil Alonso, you're sure you've never
met him.

Basilio

Quite sure.

Bartolo

So that's it. The Count must have sent him,
they must be planning something between them.

Basilio

I am sure that fellow Alonso was the Count
himself in person.

Bartolo

The Count!

Basilio

The Count. That bribe came from a rich man.

Bartolo

Be that as it may... Right now we need the lawyer,
I'll go to him this minute, that contract of
marriage must be ready this evening.

Basilio

The lawyer? Are you mad? It's raining buckets,
besides, he is busy this evening, he's been booked
by our friend Figaro. The barber is marrying off
his niece.

Bartolo

Marrying off his niece. What rubbish!... That
damned barber hasn't got a niece! There's
something very wrong here. Those two villains
must be plotting something new for tonight.
Quickly, fetch the lawyer, we mustn't lose a
moment.

(giving him a key)

Wait! Here's the key to get back in with: if you're
quick, we might just foil their tricks.

(He goes.)

Basilio

Don't you worry, I'll be back in two ticks.

Scene 8

(Bartolo, then Rosina)

Bartolo

²² By force or persuasion, Rosina has to marry me. Good heavens!... I've just had an idea. *(He takes from his pocket the letter given to him by the Count.)*

Here is the letter, the one Rosina wrote to Almaviva: it might just work. A brilliant inspiration! Don Alonso, you villain, you have unwittingly pass'd me the perfect weapon. *(Rosina comes out of her room without speaking.)* Hey! Rosina! Rosina, come here, child, a moment. I have some news about your lover. Poor innocent young creature! The sad fact is... It's clear he's been trifling with your affections... He finds your love amusing, something to laugh at when with another mistress: this serves to prove it.

(He gives the letter to Rosina.)

Rosina

My letter! Who gave you that?

Bartolo

Don Alonso: he and the barber are planning to abduct you, don't let them do it. They're hoping to sell you to another; to the Count Almaviva.

Rosina

Count Almaviva! I can't believe it. Oh, Lindoro! How you've betrayed me! I'll get my own back!

I'll show you! I'll show you just what I am made of. Tell me, Signor, do you still wish that you and I should marry?

Bartolo

Need you ask me?

Rosina

All right, let's do it. I'm yours... I accept you! But we should hurry... At midnight that rogue Lindoro will be here to fetch me with his accomplice Figaro... I promised I would run away and we'd be married...

Bartolo

Oh, we must stop them! I'll go and bar the door...

Rosina

That will be useless! They're coming through the window.

Bartolo

What?

Rosina

They have the key.

Bartolo

Then I won't budge from here!

Wait! They might be carrying weapons... Now, my dearest, since you've so sweetly put me in the picture, here's what we'll do. Lock yourself in your bedroom while I call out the soldiers: I'll say that we have burglars... They'll be arrested... We'll have the last laugh. This should be entertaining! Now child, go to your room. I'll be back directly.

Rosina

Why does misfortune always seem to find me.

(She goes.)

²³ **Thunderstorm**

(Through the windows frequent flashes of lightning are seen, and the sound of thunder is heard. After the music Figaro and the Count appear, both wrapped in wet cloaks. Figaro is carrying a lantern.)

Scene 9

(The Count and Figaro, later Rosina)

Recitative

Figaro

²⁴ We've made it, so far so good.

The Count

Figaro, lend a hand. This wretched weather could not be less romantic!

Figaro

Lovers don't mind the weather!...

The Count

Ehi... Shine the light here. *(Figaro makes a light.)* Where will we find Rosina?

(looking around)

Figaro

She must be hiding...

(Rosina enters.)

Ah, here she is.

The Count *(ecstatically)*

At last, my angel!

Rosina *(pushing him away)*

Don't touch me, you treacherous deceiver! I've come here to tell you just what I think of your behaviour and the way you have betray'd me. I'll show you what I am made of and what kind of woman you're losing. How could you do it? Curses upon you!

The Count

I don't believe this!

Figaro

I don't believe it either.

The Count

For pity's sake!

Rosina

Silence!

You have been ordered to come here and abduct me for your lecherous master Almaviva...

The Count

Almaviva!

I see what's happened!

Ah, you poor darling...

Look at me dear Rosina:
there is no Lindoro, I'm Almaviva.

[25] Trio

Rosina

Almaviva, not Lindoro!
I'm astounded! Ah, heav'ns! Salvation!
In my fondest imagination
I could never believe this true.

Figaro

They will see when they recover
it was all my inspiration,
with a little motivation
there is nothing I can't do!

The Count

Ah, Rosina!
What a triumph to discover
such ecstatic, unknown elation!
Ah, I feel such exhilaration.
I could never believe this true!

Rosina

But Signor...
How should I address you?

The Count

Ah, my love, do not let my name distress you!
If you take me as your husband,
that's the only name I need!

Rosina

What? The Countess Almaviva!
This is happiness indeed!

The Count

Are you happy?

Rosina

Ah, never happier.
Now forever we'll stay united,
for such payment for such desiring.
Ah, to find my love's requited
is a joy beyond compare.

The Count

Let's go now. Now forever we'll stay united,
Sweet repayment for such desire.
Ah, to find my love's requited
is a joy beyond compare.

Figaro

Hurry. Let's go now!
'Ever!' Hurry, let's go now!
'Payment!' Let's get going.
Hurry, hurry! Quickly, quickly!
Let's get going.
There'll be time for all that later,
hurry up, I'm getting scared!
Come along, come along, come along,
I'm getting scared!
I'm afraid we'll be discovered,
get a move on, do take care.
Yes, yes! Get a move on.
Ah! Disaster!
I knew it!
In the doorway there is a lantern!
There are two men, what to do?

The Count

Are you certain?

Figaro

Yes, Signor.

The Count

Is it two men?...

Figaro

Yes, Signor.

The Count

And with a lantern?

Figaro

In the doorway, yes, Signor...

Rosina, the Count and Figaro

What to do?

The Count

Quickly, quickly, softly, softly
down the ladder, hurry, hurry!
If we're quick no need to worry,
we can safely slip away!

The Count, Rosina and Figaro

Quickly, quickly, softly, softly
down the ladder, hurry, hurry!
If we're quick no need to worry,
we can safely slip away!
Through the window, down the ladder,
we can safely slip away!

(They go to leave by the window.)

Recitative

Figaro

[26] Ah! That's all we needed!
What can we do?

The Count

Whatever's happened?

Figaro

The ladder!

The Count

Well what?...

Figaro

The ladder has vanished.

The Count

You mean it?

Figaro

I mean it, someone's taken it...

The Count

We are stranded, what now?...

Rosina

I'm so unlucky!

Figaro

Be quiet!
Someone's coming!
We're caught red handed.
Think of something,
they're getting near.

(He wraps himself in his cloak.)

The Count

My Rosina, be brave.

(They go to the side.)

Figaro

Look out, they're here.

Scene 10

(Don Basilio enters with a lantern. With him is a notary with a document in his hand.)

Basilio *(at the opposite side, whispering)*

²⁷ Don Bartolo, Don Bartolo...

Figaro *(to the Count)*

Don Basilio.

The Count

Who's with him?

Figaro *(Basilio and the notary stop in surprise. The notary goes toward Figaro.)*

Well, well, my good friend the lawyer...

Couldn't be better...

You leave it all to me!

How good to see you;

you remember the appointment that we made

for this evening to perform the marriage of

Count Almaviva to my niece?...

The couple happen to be here.

I hope you've brought the contract with you?...

(The notary shows the document.)

That's excellent!

Basilio

One moment, Don Bartolo's not here?...

The Count *(Drawing a ring from his finger, he calls Basilio aside, signalling to him to be quiet.)*

Hey! Don Basilio, take this ring and keep your mouth shut.

Basilio

But this is...

The Count *(drawing a pistol)*

You'd better, or you will get a bullet between the eyes. Which would you rather?

Basilio *(taking the ring)*

I'll take the ring, where are the signatories?

The Count *(signing)*

All of us here:

You are a witness,

Figaro can be the other.

Now we are married.

(As the Count is kissing Rosina's hand, and as Figaro is grotesquely embracing Basilio, Bartolo enters with the officer and the soldiers.)

Figaro

Eviva!

The Count

You're mine forever!

Rosina

I've never been so happy!

Yes, I am yours!

Figaro and Basilio

Eviva!

Last Scene

(Don Bartolo, an Officer, soldiers and the others)

Bartolo

²⁸ Don't move a muscle! Look, there they are!

(He points out Figaro and the Count to the Officer and the soldiers and hurls himself at Figaro.)

Figaro

Take it easy, Signor.

Bartolo

Those two, they're robbers.

Arrest them!

Officer

First things first... Sir, your name?

The Count

Count Almaviva in person.

²⁹ **Finaletto II**

(Figaro, Berta, Bartolo, Basilio, Rosina, the Count, Chorus)

Figaro

I love a happy ending,
our plans have all succeeded.

This lantern then is needed
to light their way no more.

Berta, Bartolo, Basilio and Chorus

And may the happy couple be bless'd for evermore.

Rosina

So ends my lonely sadness
in unexpected laughter,
you'll be forever after
the one that I adore.

The Count

Lindoro loves Rosina
and so does Almaviva,
my heart is in a fever
I've never known before.

English translation © Amanda and Anthony Holden



Della Jones and Alan Opie
(English National Opera)

Bill Rafferty

From English National Opera's production of *The Barber of Seville*

Bill Rafferty



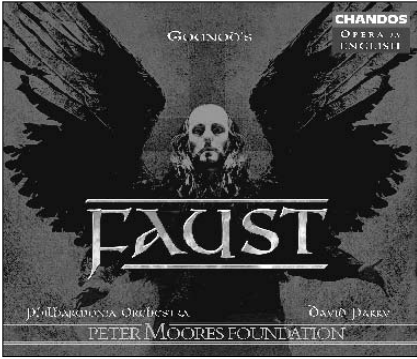
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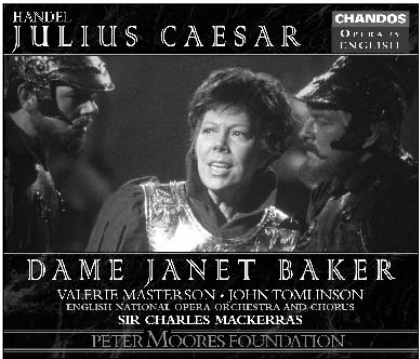


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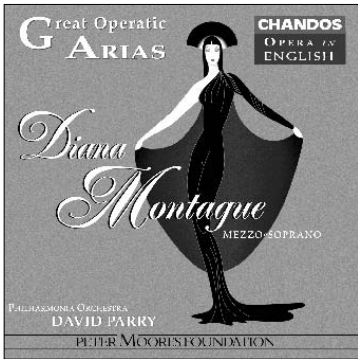


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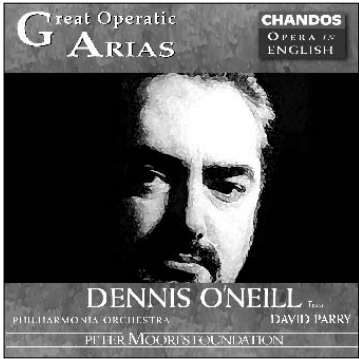
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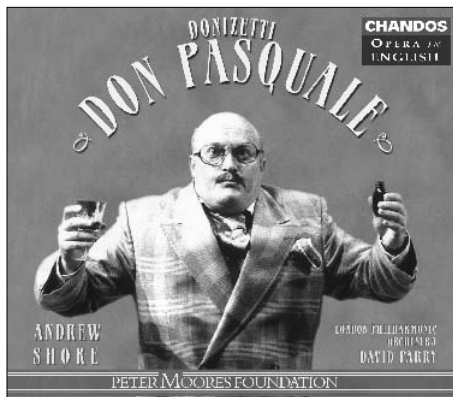


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Staff Director: Henry B. Little

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Assistant engineer Richard Smoker

Editor Peter Newble

Recording venue Goldsmiths College, London; 9–14 August 1994

Front cover Montage of photograph of Bruce Ford by Winnie Klatz and photograph of *Lillie and Barbed Wire* © Photonica by Rieder Walsh

Back cover Photograph of Gabriele Bellini

Design Cass Cassidy

Booklet typeset by Dave Partridge

Publisher G. Ricordi & C SpA, Milan

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Printed in the EU

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Don Basilio, music teacher and hypocritePeter Rose *bass*
Fiorello, Count Almaviva's servant.....Peter Snipp *baritone*
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