



## **Education Study Guide**

# **The Barber of Seville**

**Music by Gioachino Rossini**

Libretto by Cesare Sterbini

First Performance February 5, 1816, Teatro Argentina, Rome

Opera 101, Wednesday February 19, 2014

Children's Performance February 22 at 1pm

Performances February 21 & 22 at 7:30 pm. Matinée February 23 at 2:00 pm

At the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts

In Italian with English Surtitles

## **CAST & CREATIVE TEAM**

Conductor: Patrick Fournillier\*

Director: Christopher Mattaliano\*

Figaro: Rodion Pogossov\*

Rosina: Silvia Tro Santafe\*

Count Almaviva: David Portillo\*

Dr. Bartolo: Bruno Pratico

Don Basilio: Wayne Tigges\*

*\*Palm Beach Opera Debut*



GIAOCHINO ROSSINI, Composer

## **THE BARBER OF SEVILLE** **COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY** **GIAOCHINO ROSSINI**

**Gioachino Antonio Rossini** (February 29, 1792 – November 13, 1868) is one of the most prolific, enduring and popular composers in the history of opera. He wrote 39 operas, including the famous *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (The Barber of Seville), *La Cenerentola* (Cinderella), and *Guillaume Tell* (William Tell). His musical style is characterized by distinctive, song-like melodies that, combined with his operas' lighthearted stories, have captivated audiences to the present day. Rossini was born in Pesaro, Italy on February 29, 1792 to musical parents. As a boy he learned to sing and play the horn, and sang in at least one opera in Bologna. Though he wrote an opera that went unperformed for several years at the age of 13 or 14, the official beginning of his operatic career occurred at the age of 18, with a one-act comedy for the opera in Venice, and further commissions followed from Bologna, Ferrara, Venice, and Milan, where *La Pietra del Paragone* was a success at La Scala in 1812. This opera was one of seven that Rossini wrote in only sixteen months.

This prodigious level of activity continued in the ensuing years, and Rossini first began to win international acclaim for his operas in 1813, though his works were not always met with praise. In 1815 Rossini went to Naples to become the musical and artistic director of the Teatro San Carlo, which led him to focus on serious opera. His contract allowed him to compose for other theatres, and during this time he wrote two of his best comedies, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *La Cenerentola*, both of which premiered in Rome. *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* was written in 1816, and though it was not favorably received at its premiere it quickly became the most loved of Rossini's comic works, with admirers as notable as Beethoven and Verdi. With its elegant melodies, exhilarating rhythms and superb ensemble writing, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* is now often considered to be the greatest of all Italian comic operas, eternally fresh in its wit and its inventiveness. *La Cenerentola*, a charmingly sentimental version of the Cinderella story, followed in 1817. The role of Cenerentola was written with a brilliant and expressive range, and took the leading character on her journey from scullery maid to princess using different musical styles to represent her change of status (from folk tune to sparkling coloratura).

While in Naples, Rossini met leading soprano Isabella Colbran, whom he married in 1822, though unfortunately, they were not happy together for long. Rossini's most important operas through the 1820's show his maturity as a musical dramatist. Among the masterpieces from this period are *Maometto II* (1820) and *Semiramide* (1823), as well as one of Rossini's most important works, *Guillaume Tell* (1829), which was composed while Rossini was working in London and Paris. *Guillaume Tell* is very long and difficult to produce, and is a rich tapestry of his most inspired music, with elaborate orchestration, many ensembles, spectacular ballets and processions in the French tradition.

And then, Rossini suddenly stopped composing for opera. At the age of 37 he retired, and in 1837 he moved to Italy while suffering a prolonged and painful illness. His wife, Isabella, died in 1845, and the next year he married Olympe Pelissier, who had tended to him through his ill health. He hardly composed at all during this period, but in 1855 he moved back to Paris and as his health and humor returned, so did his urge to compose and he wrote a quantity of pieces for piano and voices that he called "*Péchés de Vieillesse*" (Sins of Old Age). Rossini died, universally honored, in Passy on November 13, 1868.

## **SYNOPSIS**

### **ACT I**

At night, Count Almaviva brings a band of musicians to serenade Rosina, ward of Dr. Bartolo, who keeps the girl confined in his house. When Rosina fails to answer his song, the count pays the players, and they leave. At the sound of Figaro's voice, Almaviva steps away as the barber bounds in, boasting of his busy life as the neighborhood factotum. Figaro, though currently in Bartolo's employ, encounters Almaviva and promises to help him win Rosina - for a suitable reward. No sooner has Bartolo left the house to arrange his own marriage with Rosina than Almaviva launches into a second serenade, calling himself "Lindoro," a poor creature who can offer only love. Figaro suggests Almaviva disguise himself as a drunken soldier billeted to Bartolo's house.

Alone in the house, Rosina muses on the voice that has touched her heart and resolves to outwit Bartolo. Figaro joins her, but they leave on hearing footsteps. Bartolo enters with the music master, Don Basilio, who tells him Almaviva is a rival for Rosina's hand and advises slandering the nobleman's reputation. Bartolo agrees, but Figaro overhears them. Warning Rosina that Bartolo plans to marry her himself the very next day, the barber promises to deliver a note she has written to "Lindoro." Rosina, alone with Bartolo, undergoes an interrogation, then listens to his boast that he is far too clever to be tricked. Berta, the housekeeper, answers violent knocking at the door, returning with Almaviva disguised as a drunken soldier in search of lodging. While arguing with Bartolo, Almaviva manages to slip a love letter to Rosina. But when Bartolo demands to see the letter, the girl substitutes a laundry list. Figaro dashes in to warn that their hubbub has attracted a crowd. Police arrive to silence the disturbance. As an officer is about to arrest him, Almaviva whispers his identity and is released. Rosina, Berta, Bartolo and Basilio are stupefied by everything that is happening.

### **ACT II**

Bartolo receives a young music teacher, "Don Alonso" (again Almaviva in disguise), who claims to be a substitute for the ailing Basilio. Rosina enters, recognizes her suitor and begins her singing lesson as Bartolo dozes in his chair. Figaro arrives to shave the doctor and manages to steal the key to the balcony window. Basilio now comes in, looking the picture of health; bribed by Almaviva, he feigns illness and departs. Figaro shaves Bartolo while Almaviva and Rosina plan their elopement that night. They are overheard by the doctor, who drives Figaro and Almaviva from the house and Rosina to her room, then sends again for Basilio. Berta, unnerved by all the confusion, complains she is going mad. Bartolo dispatches Basilio for a notary, then tricks Rosina into believing "Lindoro" is really a flunky of Almaviva.

After a thunderstorm, Almaviva arrives with Figaro and climbs through a balcony window to abduct Rosina. At first the girl rebuffs "Lindoro," but when he explains that he and Almaviva are one and the same, she falls into his arms. Figaro urges haste, but before they can leave, their ladder is taken away. Basilio enters with the notary. Though summoned to wed Rosina and Bartolo, the official marries her instead to Almaviva, who bribes Basilio. Rushing in too late, Bartolo finds the lovers already wed. When Almaviva allows him to keep Rosina's dowry, the old man accepts the situation.

## **Resources and Links**

The Guardian: The Good Opera Guide: Rossini's The Barber of Seville

<http://www.theguardian.com/music/interactive/2013/feb/13/denis-forman-guide-barber-of-seville>

Online guide for The Barber of Seville.

Internet Archive: Capital Public Radio: Friday Night at the Opera 11/13/2009

[http://archive.org/details/FridayOpera\\_091113](http://archive.org/details/FridayOpera_091113)

This live recording from 1964 stars Sesto Bruscantini, Luigi Alva, Fiorenza Cossotto, and Nicolai Ghiaurov. Gabriele Santini conducts.

Internet Archive: Il Barbiere di Siviglia: a comic opera in three acts ([19--?])

<http://archive.org/stream/cu31924090833181>

Read online or download .pdf of libretto for Rossini's opera, Il Barbiere di Siviglia. In Italian with English Translation.

Lyric Opera of Chicago: The Barber of Seville Commentary

<http://www.lyricopera.org/education/commentaries.aspx>

Commentary by Jesse Gram, Audience Education Manager



Caricature of Rossini by H. Mailly on the cover of Le Hanneton, July 4, 1867

# **Palm Beach Opera's**

## **Education Program: The Barber of Seville**

### **The Barber of Seville Classroom Activities 2013/2014 Season**

#### **Common Core Standards & Sunshine State Standards**

#### **STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, & Math) Enhanced**

#### **Middle School & High School**

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### **LANGUAGE ARTS**

Metaphors: Count Almaviva's reputation is described as a natural disaster in the opera. How do metaphors work? What are some other metaphors in the opera? Can you think of any that apply, even though they're not in the opera?

#### **Creative writing:**

Reinterpret the story and create a new version. Create your own characters or change the opera's time period and setting. Ex. Count = movie star. Create your own characters that are missing from the opera.

Explore different genres of writing: poetry, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, autobiography, short story, historical novel, etc.

Write a different ending for the opera.

Interview characters in *The Barber of Seville*; write a news story based on the interviews.

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### **SCIENCE**

Research the sources of light during Rossini's time. How would a theater have been illuminated?

List references to nature in *The Barber of Seville*.

Explore the characters' psychological motivations.

Explore how spinning works. What is spinning used for? What has replaced spinning wheels today? What kind of fabrics can be made by spinning?

What kind of animals spin fibers?

Research the development of spinning technology and how weaving is related to the development of computers.

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## **TECHNOLOGY**

After reviewing the storyline of *The Barber of Seville*, create your own scene from *The Barber of Seville* using either iMovie, Windows MovieMaker or a similar filmmaking program. Use images found through research of *The Barber of Seville*, and sound clips from the materials provided.

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## **ENGINEERING & MATH**

Design a deck of trading cards based on the characters of *The Barber of Seville*.

Research remonetizing formula; how do economists determine how much money was worth then vs. now?

Design ambigrams for the names in *The Barber of Seville*.

Create costume patterns for *The Barber of Seville*. Use yourself as a size model and design the patterns to fit you.

Build a scale model of a set for *The Barber of Seville*. What, and what quantities of, materials would you need to build it? Think about much of the stage will be the courtyard and how much will be the house; how you will you divide the space? What are the percentages? What is usable stage vs. non-usable stage?

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## **VISUAL ARTS**

Create a storyboard of *The Barber of Seville* produced in the style of a sitcom episode (Glee) or comic soap opera.

- *Special thanks to San Francisco Opera for use of their The Barber of Seville Educational Materials.*