



*International
Presentations of
Music & Dance*

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

NY 
CITY OPERA NATIONAL COMPANY

BEVERLY SILLS, *General Director*

NANCY KELLY, *Administrative Director* TED TAYLOR, *Music Director*

THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 4, 1988, AT 8:00
POWER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

The Barber of Seville

Music by GIOACCHINO ROSSINI

Libretto by CESARE STERBINI

(after the play *Le Barbier de Seville* by Beaumarchais)

World première: February 20, 1816, Teatro Argentina, Rome

Conducted by WILLIAM ROBERTSON

Directed by DUGG McDONOUGH

Scenery designed by LLOYD EVANS

Costumes coordinated by JOSEPH A. CITARELLA

Lighting designed by WILLIAM D. ANDERSON

English supertitles by SONYA FRIEDMAN

Cast

(in order of vocal appearance)

Fiorello	Steven Paul Aiken
Count Almaviva	Robert Swensen
Figaro	Richard Byrne
Dr. Bartolo	Paul Milkie
Ambrogio	Mark Allen Tobias
Rosina	Stella Zambalis
Don Basilio	Henry Kiichli
Berta	Susan Nicely
An Official	Mark Moliterno
A Notary	Gregory Moore
Musicians, soldiers	Steven Paul Aiken, Kevin Layne Anderson, Erik Johanson, Eric McCluskey, Mark Moliterno, Jack Scott Montgomery, Gregory Moore, Michael Putsch, Peter Randsman, Mark Allen Tobias, John Welch

Cameras and recording devices are not allowed in the auditorium.

The Barber of Seville

One of opera's most intriguing figures, Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868) was, from an early age, an accomplished performer on the harpsichord, violin, and piano, as well as a boy soprano in the opera. He entered the Bologna Conservatory at the age of 14 and wrote his first opera while a student. This and other early works were not successful, but they did earn him a reputation as an inspired melodist. His first success, *The Touchstone*, was premièred in 1812 at Milan's prestigious Teatro alla Scala. Then followed four operas produced in Venice in 1813, two of which — *Tancredi* and *The Italian Girl in Algiers* — established Rossini's fame outside of Italy. Naples attracted the young composer in 1814, when he became music director of both opera houses in that city. He wrote *Elizabeth Queen of England* in 1815 for Isabella Colbran, a soprano he had met while a student in Bologna. (Isabella went on to create the leading roles in several Rossini operas; she assumed the leading role in the composer's life in 1824, when she became his wife.)

In Rossini's Neapolitan operas, the intention of the composer came to be far more respected than in the past. The *bel canto* (beautiful singing) period in which he wrote was a time when the singer reigned supreme. In order to display their technical virtuosity, singers improvised elaborate embellishments, often obscuring the arias beyond recognition. By writing out the vocal decorations himself and insisting that the singers adhere to them, Rossini contributed to the rise of the composer as the dominant musical personality.

One of the commissions Rossini accepted during his tenure in Naples was for *The Barber of Seville*, which has become a masterpiece of the comic *bel canto* repertory. It was written with Rossini's usual celerity — he claimed to have produced its 600 pages of music in a mere eleven days. A remarkably seamless and well-balanced work, instances of the composer's inventive imagination abound, while the action, like the music, never comes to a standstill.

The Barber of Seville is based on the first in a trilogy of droll, satirical plays by French author Pierre Beaumarchais. (The second of these plays served as the inspiration for Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, which deals with the same characters several years after the events of *The Barber of Seville*.) Rossini took a gamble in composing an opera on this subject, since Italy already had a *Barber of Seville* opera, by Giovanni Paisiello, that had been extremely popular for the past 30 years. Taking no chances, Rossini premièred his version of the story under the title *Almaviva, Or The Useless Precaution*. The Paisiello faction was not deceived by this *Barber-in-disguise*, however, and, at the opera's first performance in Rome, they came out in full force to voice their disapproval. Eventually, Rossini's *Barber* received an impartial appraisal and was judged vastly superior to Paisiello's work. It quickly became one of the most popular comic operas ever written — a distinction which continues to this day.

With wits as sharp as his razor, Figaro, the busiest barber in Seville, is at the center of every intrigue. This time he is in the employ of the handsome Count of Almaviva, who has fallen in love with a charming girl named Rosina. There is a problem, though: Rosina is kept under lock and key by her stodgy old guardian, Doctor Bartolo, who intends to marry her himself. It is up to Figaro to foil these plans and ensure the success of his lovestruck master. With the assistance of Rosina, who matches Figaro for inventiveness, the barber devises various schemes to bring the lovers together, often with hilarious results. The outcome, however, is never in doubt; true love triumphs once more as Bartolo admits he has been outsmarted and bestows a reluctant blessing on the newlyweds.

Act I A square in Seville, Spain, dawn

Intermission

Act II A room in Dr. Bartolo's house, shortly thereafter

Intermission

Act III Several hours later

Act I

Following the celebrated overture, the Count of Almaviva, assisted by a group of musicians, sings a gracious serenade, *Ecco, ridente in cielo* (Behold, smiling in the sky); the balcony window to which he addresses his song remains closed, however, and the disappointed nobleman dismisses his importunate band. Singing the lively *Largo al factotum* (Make way for the factotum), Figaro, town barber and jack-of-all-trades, appears. Upon learning that the Count has come to Seville in the hopes of winning a certain beautiful young woman, Figaro reveals that the girl is the ward of a pompous old doctor named Bartolo.

The two men observe a confrontation on the balcony between the girl and her guardian, during which the young woman manages to let fall a letter before she returns to her room. The note reveals the young woman's name — Rosina — and further discloses that she is determined to escape her oppressive existence and trust herself to her unknown suitor, should his intentions be honorable. Figaro explains that Dr. Bartolo, intent on gaining Rosina's fortune by marrying her, keeps her closely confined in her room. At that moment, the old man emerges from the house and goes off, muttering that he shall wed his ward this very day.

Testing Rosina's true affections, the Count tells her in another serenade, *Se il mio nome saper voi bramate* (If you wish to know my name), that, his name is "Lindoro," and that, though poor, he wishes to marry her for love. Encouraged by Rosina's favorable reply, Almaviva solicits Figaro's aid in gaining access to the girl, priming his imagination with a bag of gold. *All'idea di quel metallo* (At the thought of money), sings Figaro, beginning a lively duet in which he conceives a plan to disguise the Count as a drunken soldier who will force his way into Dr. Bartolo's house with a bogus billeting order. Overjoyed at the plan, the two conspirators depart.

Act II

In a dazzling aria, *Una voce poco fa* (A voice just now), Rosina expresses her determination to overcome her guardian and marry Lindoro. Figaro arrives to confer with her, but at the approach of Dr. Bartolo he is forced to withdraw. After exchanging some heated words with the old man, Rosina herself departs. The unctuous, disreputable music master, Don Basilio, appears and assuages Bartolo's fear that the Count of Almaviva is secretly wooing Rosina by advising in a bombastic aria, *La calunnia* (Slander), that they eliminate their rival with a few well-planted falsehoods. Still, the crochety doctor prefers to secure his success by marrying his ward at once.

As the two men leave, Figaro returns with Rosina and discloses Bartolo's plan. Turning to more interesting matters, the girl coyly questions him about her young suitor. *Dunque io son* (Then it is I) she sings, exulting in the information that "Lindoro" loves her and presenting Figaro with a note for him to take to her sweetheart. The barber departs to seek out the Count, leaving the young woman to the wrath of the suspicious Dr. Bartolo, who sputters in a bombastic tirade, *A un dottor della mia sorte* (To a doctor of my caliber), that she will have to be clever indeed to outwit him.

Bartolo is summoned by the shouts of a drunken soldier — really the Count in disguise — who forces his way into the house and presents a billeting order. In the midst of the ensuing clamor, the "soldier" manages to sneak a note to Rosina. Other members of the household join in the fracas until Figaro bursts in and enjoins them to silence. Too late, though, for in a moment the police are at the door. When their commander moves to arrest the "soldier," a quick word from the prisoner causes the officer to pull back respectfully. *Fredda ed immobile* (Frozen and motionless) is how the onlookers find themselves at this unexpected turn of events. At last a bewildered Bartolo awakens from his torpor and leads an excited finale expressing everyone's utter confusion as the act concludes.

Act III

Dr. Bartolo's musings are interrupted by the arrival of a peculiar-looking fellow who introduces himself as Don Alonso, a pupil of Don Basilio. He says that he has come to give Rosina her music lesson in place of his master, who is ill. When Bartolo insists upon visiting his sick friend at once, the visitor (none other than the disguised Almaviva) forestalls him by showing him Rosina's letter, which, he says, she sent to the Count of Almaviva. He suggests that Bartolo show the note to his ward and tell her that the Count gave it to one of his mistresses; thus she will think her suitor has merely been toying with her affections.

Rosina joyfully recognizes "Lindoro" when she comes into the room. Under the suspicious eye of her guardian, she maintains her composure and begins her music lesson with an aria, *Contro un cor che accende amore* (Against a heart inflamed with love). Figaro arrives and, hoping to give the lovers a moment's unobserved conversation, he insists upon shaving Bartolo (and even manages to pilfer the key to Rosina's balcony in the bargain). The unexpected arrival of the supposedly ailing Don Basilio threatens to expose "Don Alonso," but the Count manages to purchase the music master's cooperation with a bag of gold; in an amusing quintet, *Buona sera* (Good evening), Basilio is persuaded to return to his sickbed. Resuming their whispered conversation, Almaviva tells Rosina that he will come for her at midnight. Before he can explain how he was forced to use her note, however, his deception is uncovered by Dr. Bartolo, whose wrath causes the three conspirators to beat a hasty retreat.

As Bartolo goes off, the servant Berta comes in and, in an aria, *Il vecchiotto cerca moglie* (The old man wants a wife), expresses her opinions about the unsettling effect of love. She leaves as her master ushers in Don Basilio, who is dispatched at once to fetch a notary. Bartolo summons Rosina and, showing her her own letter, tells her that "Lindoro" is in league with Figaro to abduct her for the immoral purposes of the Count of Almaviva; the girl, in despair, consents to wed her guardian immediately and tells him of the proposed elopement. Furious, Dr. Bartolo hurries away to fetch the authorities.

During the tempestuous musical interlude depicting a violent thunderstorm, the Count and Figaro scurry in and clamber up a ladder to Rosina's balcony. When she scornfully accuses "Lindoro" of betraying her to the Count of Almaviva, he startles her with the information that he is, himself, the Count. *Ah, quel colpo* (Ah, what news), she sings in delight, as she and her paramour pledge undying devotion. Urged by a nervous Figaro, the trio finally prepares to escape, singing *Zitti, zitti* (Quiet, quiet). To their dismay, they discover that the ladder has disappeared and that someone is approaching. The arrivals turn out to be Don Basilio and the notary, who are easily bribed to perform the wedding ceremony for Rosina and Almaviva. Immediately thereafter, the intended bridegroom himself appears at the head of a band of soldiers, but he is forced to admit that he has been outwitted. *Di sì felice innesto* (Such a happy union) sings Figaro, leading the assemblage in a joyous finale celebrating the newly wedded couple.

About the Company

Founded by Beverly Sills in 1979 as the touring arm of the New York City Opera, the National Company continues to live up to its original mandate: to provide talented young artists with valuable performing experience while fulfilling the Company's role as America's National Opera. Each production features the creativity and energy of America's best new singers, instrumentalists, and designers, and is also the ideal environment for veteran singers who wish to develop new roles.

This season, *The Barber of Seville* is being presented in twenty-one states, over a period of six weeks. It features City Opera's popular and much-praised supertitles, a revolutionary innovation in opera comprehension that clarifies all of the action onstage while preserving the integrity of the original-language libretto.

This evening's performance marks the National Company's third Ann Arbor appearance — first in 1985 with *Rigoletto* and in 1987 with *Madama Butterfly*.

Conductor William Robertson, a native of New York City, earned his bachelor's degree at Yale University and his master's degree in the conducting program at The University of Michigan. While in Ann Arbor, he served as conductor and assistant conductor to the University Symphony Orchestra in the United States and Europe and was assistant conductor and musical coach for the University Opera Workshop and Opera Department. Among the many productions in which he was involved was Robert Altman's 1982 rendering of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. His honors at Michigan included the Eugene Ormandy Conducting Scholarship and (twice) the Thor Johnson Memorial Conducting Fellowship with the Musical Society's University Choral Union. After graduating from U-M, he won a fellowship from the Belgian American Educational Foundation, which took him to Brussels to study contemporary European music. He remained in Europe to serve a conducting apprenticeship at the Stadtische Bühnen in Frankfurt, before the New York City Opera called him back to New York as recipient of the Julius Rudel Award for young conductors. His conducting debut at the New York City Opera came with *South Pacific* in the spring of 1987, and *The Barber of Seville* represents Maestro Robertson's debut with the National Company.

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New York City Opera National Company Orchestra

<i>Violins</i> Marshall Coid, <i>Concertmaster</i> Susan Lorentsen, <i>Assistant Concertmaster</i> Moirsheen Kelly, <i>Principal Second</i> Henry Kao Joyce Kim Wende Namkung Robert Shaw Elizabeth Storm Gina Tavelli	<i>Basses</i> Matthew Zory, <i>Principal</i> Gail Kruvand	<i>Bassoons</i> Stephen Wisner, <i>Principal</i> John Falcone
<i>Violas</i> Emily Onderdonk, <i>Principal</i> Allegra Askew	<i>Flutes</i> Peter Ader, <i>Principal</i> Karla Moe	<i>French Horns</i> Donna Dolson, <i>Principal</i> Ann M. Teehan
<i>Cellos</i> Barbara Hosler, <i>Principal</i> Daniele Doctorow Roger Shell	<i>Piccolos</i> Peter Ader, <i>Principal</i> Karla Moe	<i>Trumpets</i> Kenneth De Carlo, <i>Principal</i> John Sheppard
	<i>Oboe</i> Linda Kaplan	<i>Timpani</i> Daniel Haskins
	<i>Clarinets</i> David Stanton, <i>Principal</i> Cheryl A. Hill	<i>Percussion</i> Daniel Haskins

Pre-concert Presentations

Complement your concertgoing with these presentations designed to enhance your musical experience via the expertise of the following speakers. The place is the Rackham Building at 7:00 p.m., open to the public at \$3, tickets at the door; complimentary admission for *Encore* and *Cheers!* members and faculty and students with valid I.D. For further information, call 764-8489.

Saturday, Mar. 12, preceding Hubbard Street Dance Company — *The Dance of Theater and Cinema: Making Entertainment Art* Peter Sparling, Associate Professor of Dance, U-M

Saturday, Apr. 2, preceding André Watts — *Being Critical: Observations on the Role of the Music Critic* Paul Boylan, Professor/Dean, U-M School of Music

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