

## THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

The Barber of Seville (Il Barbiere di Siviglia) was originally known as known as The Useless Precaution (Almaviva, ossia L'inutile precauzione).

Historically, barbers were the precursors to surgeons and as such they were much respected by their community. Rossini's Il Barbiere di Siviglia is a two-act comic opera founded upon the text Le Barbier de Séville by Pierre Beaumarchais. Giovanni Paisiello had also created a production of The Barber of Seville which was more popular in it's time. Indeed Rossini's debut performance of Il Barbiere at the Teatro Argentina in Rome, February 20, 1816, was disrupted by fans of Paisiello. It was only renamed to the current title after Paisiello's death. Rossini's version has stood the test of time and consistently ranks amongst the top five of most performed operas along with Madama Butterfly, La Boheme, La Traviata and Carmen.

The most popular and recognizable music are Figaro's celebrated Largo al factotum, Rosina's Una voce poco fa and the duet they have together Dunque io son.

Composer: Gioacchino, Rossini

Librettist: Cesare Sterbini

Dramatist: Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais (1732-1799)

### SYNOPSIS:

Melodramma buffo in due atti

### ACT I

SCENE I, Seville.

In a public square outside Dr. Bartolo's house a band of musicians and a poor student named Lindoro are serenading to no avail the window of Rosina (Ecco ridente il cielo.) Lindoro, Count Almaviva in disguise, hopes to make the beautiful Rosina love him for himself - not his money. Almaviva pays the musicians who depart leaving him to brood. No sooner is the Count alone then he hears Figaro, the town barber, approach whereupon he hides. Figaro enters full of bluster and self importance (Largo al factotum) and Almaviva recognizes him as his former servant. After getting promise of a reward Figaro begins plotting how to introduce Almaviva to Rosina. Rosina appears at the window, drops a note to Lindoro before Dr. Bartolo pulls his ward from the window. Figaro convinces Almaviva to disguise himself as a drunken soldier and declare domicile rights at Dr. Bartolo's house as a means to get closer to Rosina.

### SCENE II

Rosina dreamily recounts Lindoro's voice (Una voce poco fa) and resolves to outwit Bartolo. Rosina's music tutor, Don Basilio, alerts Bartolo that Almaviva has been seen in town and may be a suitor after Rosina. Dr. Bartolo wants to marry Rosina himself, not for any love or affection but for her money. Basilio suggests scheming to discredit the Count. Figaro secretly plans with Rosina a means to meet her lover Lindoro (Dunque io son.) Dr. Bartolo, ever suspicious, finally loses patience with his wards "excuses and lies" and will not be tricked (A un dottor della mia sorte.) Berta, the housekeeper admits Lindoro/Almaviva who is disguised as a drunken soldier demanding lodging. Bartolo refuses on account of his exemption. A love letter is

exchanged between Lindoro and Rosina but Bartolo witnesses it and demands to see it. Rosina hands it over after switching it with Berta's laundry list. A ruckus ensues, Figaro warns of a crowd gathering outside and finally the police arrive. The Count secretly reveals himself to the sergeant and avoids arrest to everyone's astonishment.

## ACT II SCENE I

The Count disguises himself as Don Alonso, a music tutor. Don Alonso convinces Bartolo (*Pace e gioia*) that he was sent by the ailing Don Basilio to discredit the Count to Rosina. During the music lesson in which Rosina sings *Contro un cor*, Rosina and Alonso/Lindoro/Almaviva express their feelings for each other. Bartolo sings a counter Aria in the style of castrato Caffariello. Figaro arrives to shave the Doctor and further distract him from his wards blossoming romance. Bartolo gives a set of keys to Figaro to fetch the basin and a large crash is heard as Figaro breaks the Doctors china. Meanwhile, Don Basilio unexpectedly arrives and must be bribed into illness (*Buona sera, mio signore*) before departing. While the lovers plot of escaping by the balcony whose key that Figaro just stole, Bartolo overhears the conspiracy and sends everyone away. Bartolo confronts Rosina with Almaviva's unsuitability and charges that Lindoro is a mere agent, negotiating for the Count. Berta is distracted by all the confusion and laments the poor behaviour of her housemates (*Il vecchiotto cerca moglie.*)

Prepared for an elopement, the Count and Figaro enter that evening via the balcony. Almaviva reveals his true identity to the hesitant Rosina and they make for their escape (*Zitti, zitti, piano, piano.*) Bartolo, a step ahead, has removed the ladder from the balcony. Basilio enters with a notary too early, intending to marry Bartolo to Rosina, and after suitable bribing the Notary instead witnesses the marriage of Rosina to Almaviva. Dr. Bartolo arrives a step too late and resigns himself to his fate after Almaviva gestures that he can have Rosina's fortune because, after all, he has married for love.

### **DRAMATIS PERSONAE / CHARACTERS:**

II CONTE D'ALMAVIVA: The Count (Tenor)  
DR. BARTOLO: Medical Doctor (Bass)  
ROSINA: Ward of Dr Bartolo (Soprano/Mezzo soprano)  
FIGARO: Barber (Baritone)  
DON BASILIO: Music tutor (Bass)  
BERTA: Housekeeper of Bartolo (Mezzo soprano)  
FIORELLO: Servant of Almaviva (Tenor)  
AMBROGIO: Servant of Bartolo (Bass)  
AN OFFICIAL: (Bass)

Additional Persons: MAGISTRATE, NOTARY PUBLIC, CHORUS